

CAUSAL-RECOGNITIONAL ACCOUNT OF PHENOMENAL CONCEPTS: AN ALTERNATIVE
PHYSICALIST ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract

This paper proposes and advocates the causal-recognitional account of phenomenal concept strategy as an alternative physicalist attempt to solve the problem of consciousness. Consciousness, according to antiphysicalists, has been said to be unsusceptible to physicalist explanation. The problem of consciousness stems, among others, from the difficulty of why and how phenomenal experiences arise from physical basis. This difficulty signifies a gap, which antiphysicalists have claimed to be explanatory, epistemic and ontological, hence the claim that consciousness does not yield to physicalism or physicalist explanation. This paper will develop a physicalist method to address the problem of consciousness. Section I discusses the problem of consciousness. Section II discusses the physicalist approach of the phenomenal concept strategy. Section III discusses the recognitional account of phenomenal concepts as a foundation for the causal-recognitional account and the last section discusses the causal-recognitional account of phenomenal concepts as a physicalist method of solving the problem of consciousness.

Keywords: Consciousness, Antiphysicalists, Physicalism, Phenomenal Concept Strategy, Causal-Recognition Account, Mind-Body Problem

Introduction

The mind-body problem is one of the longest-standing problems in philosophy. Many of the theories developed to proffer solution to this problem can be categorized into two broad classifications: dualism and monism. With regards to the mind-body problem, dualism asserts the existence of both body and mental phenomena while monism asserts the existence of either of the two. Monism can either be idealism, the view that the one thing that exists is the mental, or physicalism, the view that the one thing that exists is physical. However, most contemporary philosophers of mind have focused on the prospect of physicalism and most of the recent discourses on the mind-body problem have been under the distinction and opposition between dualism and physicalism.¹ “Physicalism stands for the widespread conviction that all phenomena of our world can ultimately be explained in physical processes.”² Physicalism is in a general sense the view that there is nothing over and above the physical. It holds that mental phenomena can be explained in physicalist terms and as such are nothing over and above physical phenomena.

Despite this growing support for physicalism, there is an aspect of the mind which remains elusive to the approach of physicalism. This aspect of the mind is consciousness and it has been stated as a reason why physicalism cannot be completely true. Some physicalists have, in turn, resorted to the phenomenal concept strategy. This strategy appeals to phenomenal concepts which are ‘the concepts we exercise when (but not only when) we notice or become aware of the phenomenal character of our experiences and feelings via introspection’.³ The ‘what it is like’ to be in a phenomenal conscious state forms the phenomenal property of that conscious state which in turn is subsumed under a concept. Whenever one is in a phenomenal conscious state, one brings such state to

bear under a concept and this is referred to as a phenomenal concept. Phenomenal concepts are held as the concepts associated with the knowledge of the conscious experience i.e. the knowledge that expresses phenomenal qualities from the point of view of the experiencing subject.

The Problem of Consciousness

Consciousness, according to antiphysicalists' views, refers to the subjective character of experience, the *what it is like* to be something that has consciousness.⁴ In dealing with these questions about the nature of consciousness, philosophers have come up with different answers. For instance, in dealing with the question of whether consciousness exists or not, some philosophers have developed a sceptist view while some philosophers' view could be termed mysterianism.⁵ The consciousness sceptists, according to Guzeldere, "doubt the coherence of the very concept of consciousness and the merits of consciousness itself as a phenomena fit for scientific or philosophical investigation".⁶ Some of the consciousness sceptists such as Patricia Churchland and Kathleen Wilkes hold eliminativist view about consciousness such that they compare consciousness to some now defunct concepts such as "ether", "phlogiston" and so on, which are all empirically extinct.⁷ Thus, their stand on the existence of consciousness can be summed as a radical sceptist position which sees (the concept and the phenomenon of) consciousness as non-existent.

For the likes of Collin McGinn who hold a mysterian view, the existence of consciousness remains a mystery just as the origin of the universe, time, space, life and reproduction used to be mysteries. But, unlike these other mysteries, which have all been tamed by science, the mystery of consciousness is still as confusing to both philosophers and psychologists alike.⁸ Unlike the consciousness sceptists, the position of mysterians does not suggest that consciousness does not exist or can be eliminated from our language, the mystery is not about the ontology of consciousness but rather its epistemic status, that is, the mystery about consciousness is in the fact that human beings lack the cognitive power to understand or explain the phenomenon called "consciousness".⁹ The bane of mysterianism about consciousness is the pessimism that beclouds it. Human knowledge is evolving and the fact that a problem seems unsolvable at a point in time does not mean that it will remain so forever. In the same vein, that other mysteries have confounded human beings in the past but have now been tamed, the mystery of consciousness is not to be an exception on any ground.

In dealing with the question of the nature of (phenomenal) consciousness, there is a myriad of opinions among philosophers such as Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers.¹⁰ At this point, it is taken for granted that consciousness exists (contrary to the consciousness sceptists' position) but its ontological nature is not one which has been agreed upon among philosophers. Despite the divergence of opinion among philosophers as regards the ontological nature of consciousness, there is a subtle subscription among antiphysicalists to Thomas Nagel's "classical" submission that "an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something it is like to be that organism – something it is like for that organism".¹¹ This is the subjective experience of an organism which distinguishes it from other organisms. There is something it is like to be a parrot, there is something it is like to be a human being and even at this, there is something it is like to be human being A as different from what it is like to be human being B and so on. More so, there is something it is like to be in a conscious mental state. In other words, being in a mental state is one thing and what it is like to be in that mental state is another. For instance, the mental experience of seeing a shade of blue is quite different from the mental experience of being in pain as a result of burn so also are the subjective character of these experiences. Being in a conscious state or to say that a mental state is

conscious presupposes a kind of qualitative feel associated with the mental state. It is the problem of explaining this qualitative feel that David Chalmers termed the hard problem of consciousness.¹² This hard problem is what is considered an intractable one for philosophers who have attempted to explain the nature of consciousness using a materialist/physicalist approach.¹³

Just as it has been stated earlier, the success of science in many areas of philosophy of mind partly accounts for the attempts at explaining phenomenal consciousness in physicalist terms. This, notwithstanding, the antiphysicalists have presented some puzzles in which the problem of consciousness manifests itself. These puzzles which have been presented in the form of thought experiments and arguments include the knowledge argument, the conceivability argument (zombie argument) and the explanatory gap.¹⁴

David Chalmers proposes the zombie argument when he considers the possibility of a world of zombies which are similar to human beings in every physical aspect but lack the conscious experience that human beings possess.¹⁵ Thus, it is argued that if it is intelligibly conceivable that there is a possible world where zombies are in all microphysical aspects similar to conscious human beings but these zombies lack the phenomenal consciousness of what it is like to be a zombie or to be in a conscious state, it follows that physicalism has no exhaustive explanation of all that is in our world. It shows that there are non-physical aspects in our world.

The knowledge argument holds that given the complete knowledge of all physical facts, there are some facts about the world that remained unknown. The knowledge argument is made popular by Frank Jackson's thought experiment in his paper *Epiphenomenal Qualia*. Jackson's thought experiment is that there is a neuroscientist by the name Mary, who has been locked up in a black-and-white room since birth and has come to learn everything about physical facts and neurophysiology in physicalistic terms. However, when Mary was released from the black-and-white room, and she has the first experience of seeing red, she learns something new. This suggests that Mary "does not know all there is to knowfor she will learn what it is like to see something red".¹⁶ The implication of this is that the physical is not all there is to know in this world. There is the non-physical aspect evidenced in the fact that Mary learns a new thing when she sees the colour red and also has the consciousness of what it is like to see the colour red. Thus, physicalism cannot give a complete account of the world.

In the explanatory gap puzzle, it is argued that no amount of explanation of mental states in physical terms is sufficient and adequate to explain mental states.¹⁷ Joseph Levine states that there is a difference between psycho-physical identities (such as: Pain is the firing of C-fibres) and other theoretical identities (such as: Heat is the motion of molecules). He argues that psycho-physical identities are conceivably false since it is possible to have a world where mental phenomenon occurs without a correspondent physical activity and vice-versa. Thus, the explanatory gap in psycho-physical identities, or physicalism in general, is the fact that such identities do not give explanation of the qualitative character of mental phenomenon i.e. they fail to explain why a mental phenomenon should feel the way it does to the experiencing agent.¹⁸ The explanatory gap argument points to the fact that we have no satisfactory explanation for the possibility of conscious experience given the relevant physical information.

Phenomenal Concept Strategy: A Physicalist Approach

Many physicalists have responded to these puzzles of consciousness which tend to show that consciousness does not yield to physicalist explanation. One method that has been employed by physicalists is the phenomenal concept strategy. This strategy appeals to phenomenal concepts which

are ‘the concepts we exercise when (but not only when) we notice or become aware of the phenomenal character of our experiences and feelings via introspection’.¹⁹ The ‘what it is like’ to be in a phenomenal conscious state forms the phenomenal property of that conscious state which in turn is subsumed under a concept. Whenever one is in a phenomenal conscious state, one brings such state to bear under a concept and this is referred to as a phenomenal concept. Phenomenal concepts are held as the concepts associated with the knowledge of the conscious experience i.e. the knowledge that expresses phenomenal qualities from the point of view of the experiencing subject.

There are various formulations of the phenomenal concept strategy but one of their common features include the fact that concepts of consciousness are special in a way that concepts of physical phenomena are not and that this prompts the antiphysicalists’ erroneous view about what phenomenal concepts pick out (refer to).²⁰ It has been argued that phenomenal concepts are not a priori reducible to physical concepts. One way that phenomenal concept strategists have responded to this criticism is to argue that there are many concepts, such as ‘the’ and ‘that’, which are not physical concepts but do not refer to non-physical entities. Thus, they argue, the fact that phenomenal concepts are irreducible to physical concepts does not mean that they are not explainable in physicalist terms. Proponents of the phenomenal concept strategy argue that, despite the special nature of the concepts of consciousness, an experiencing subject’s possession of the concepts can be explained in physicalist terms.²¹ They hold that the puzzles of consciousness are mistaken for granting that the epistemic gap that is entailed in the view that phenomenal concepts are not a priori reducible to physical concepts implies a metaphysical gap i.e. there is a difference between phenomenal consciousness and the physical in reality.

Causal-Recognitional Account of Phenomenal Concept Strategy

Prior to giving an account of the causal-recognitional account of phenomenal concepts, it is pertinent to give a brief account of the recognitional account which serves as the basis upon which the causal-recognitional account takes off. This will show the flaws in the recognitional account that warrant its modification. The recognitional account portrays phenomenal concepts as concepts which pick out their referents in a direct manner without any mediating factor. Brian Loar, a foremost advocate of the recognitional account, states that:

Phenomenal concepts belong to a wide class of concepts that I will call recognitional concepts. They have the form ‘x is one of that kind’; they are type-demonstratives. These type-demonstratives are grounded in dispositions to classify, by way of perceptual discriminations, certain objects, events situations. Suppose you... spot a succulent never seen before. You become adept at recognizing instances, and gain a recognitional command of their kind, without a name for it, you are disposed to identify positive and negative instances and thereby pick out a kind.²²

From the above, the following can be deduced from the recognitional account of phenomenal concepts strategy: Exclusive of some general features of phenomenal concepts such as being conceptually different from and *a priori* irreducible to physical concepts, the first thing to infer from the recognitional account is the directness with which phenomenal concepts pick out their referents and without any mediating factor. For instance, when a conscious being has a conscious experience, say pain, the phenomenal concept that the conscious being employs to refer to this conscious experience (pain) is fixed in such a way that the conscious being directly experiences the conscious experience of pain and recognises this experience as having certain phenomenal character.

In other words, the recognitional feature of phenomenal concepts is one which makes it possible to deploy phenomenal concepts to capture the phenomenal experiences which have been recognized as having a kind of phenomenal character. Another deducible factor is that the recognitional account is a form of what Daniel Stoljar calls the *Experience Thesis* of phenomenal concept. The Experience Thesis states that a conscious being *S* possesses the (phenomenal) concept *C* of experience *E* only if *S* has actually had experience *E*.²³ In other words, the thesis holds that the possession of a phenomenal concept is dependent on the experience of a phenomenal state to which such phenomenal concept refers to. However, there is a slight difference between the recognitional account and a thorough-going version of the phenomenal concept strategy susceptible to the Experience Thesis.

It is true that the recognitional account holds that possessing a phenomenal concept requires direct and introspective experience of phenomenal experience which makes it a kind of the Experience Thesis. The recognitional account differs slightly in the sense that for every particular phenomenal experience, there is the presupposition that there is a general kind to which such phenomenal experience belongs and every other phenomenal experiences that fall within the same general kind are recognized as such and as well can be referred to in the form “physical thing of that (perceived) kind or internal state of that kind”.²⁴ Thus, for the recognitional account, one only needs to recognise the general kind to which a particular phenomenal experience belongs in order to deploy phenomenal concepts that would pick such experience out.

Stoljar also identifies another difference by citing that the recognitional account can be expressed in what he terms the *Recognition Thesis*. This, Stoljar posits, states that a conscious being “*S* possesses the (phenomenal) concept *C* of experience *E* only if *S* has certain dispositions to recognize, discriminate and identify *E* if *S* has or undergoes *E*”.²⁵ This indicates that recognitional account places primacy on recognition of the object of experience than the experience of the object itself. However, this does not mean that experience is not essential in the recognitional account’s formulation. However, the ability to recognise the phenomenal state as an instance of a general kind is most stressed.

Michael Tye argues that Loar’s view on the recognitional account of phenomenal concepts has only helped to explain that conceptual independence does not indicate that concepts cannot pick out the same referents. Tye maintains that on Loar’s account, the claim that “painfulness” is identical to “brain state B” is informative if the two concepts pick out the same entity. For Tye, this identity claim on the conception of phenomenal concepts have only explained why there is a conceptual gap between physical truths/processes and phenomenal truths/processes, it does not help to explain the puzzle involved in the explanatory gap intuition.²⁶ He holds that it still remains a puzzle how those concepts share the identity they portray, if they do at all. For him, there is a sort of perplexity that comes with the expression that conscious experience is identical with some physical goings-on in the body. It should be recalled that Tye used to be an advocate of the phenomenal concept strategy as a support for physicalism, hence his implicit agreement with some of Loar’s position on the recognitional account of the phenomenal concept strategy. However, the objection Tye raises against the account is not one that could jeopardise the main objective of the recognitional account of phenomenal concept strategy, namely, that phenomenal concepts pick directly the conscious experience they refer to given that a conscious being is able to introspectively recognise the phenomenal character of his/her conscious experience. The recognitional account, after explaining how phenomenal concepts pick out their referents and how they relate to physical concepts, does not preclude the possibility of a die-hard opponent of phenomenal concept strategy to maintain a position such as Tye’s (that is, that there still persists a perplexity in holding that phenomenal concepts and

physical concepts pick out the same referents). This indicates that the objection does not pose any serious threat to the foundation and objective of the recognitional account.

Karol Polcyn identifies two flaws with the recognitional account of phenomenal concepts as presented by Loar.²⁷ This wrong assertion, according to Polcyn, is that conceptual independence of phenomenal concepts does not imply ontological independence. She argues that the conceptual independence of phenomenal concepts is a pointer to the fact that they pick out properties which are different from the properties picked out by physical concepts. She argues that

...from the mere fact that different concepts have different conceptual roles it just does not follow that the conceptual independence of such concepts can be explained without assuming that they express distinct properties. The inference would be valid only if the difference between conceptual roles was a purely conceptual difference that did not imply the distinctness of expressed properties. But whether or not this is true is contentious. There is no inconsistency in assuming that the difference between conceptual roles does imply the expression of distinct properties. In other words, it is not obvious that the difference between conceptual roles is a purely conceptual difference, as Loar tacitly assumes.²⁸

The basis of Polcyn's argument proceeds from the following line of reasoning: If two concepts, namely P and Q are said to pick out the same referent R under different modes of presentation, this would mean that P picks out R as F and Q picks out R as G where F and G are different properties of R. Thus, the properties expressed by P are not the same as those expressed by Q.²⁹ The import of this on phenomenal concepts/physical concepts relations with their referents is that phenomenal concepts pick out their referents under phenomenal description as different from the physical description by which physical concepts pick out their own referents. Loar's defence against this charge, as pointed out by Polcyn, is that the fact that phenomenal concepts pick out their referents through phenomenal, and not physical, description, does not mean that phenomenal concepts present their referents as non-physical.³⁰ Polcyn maintains that Loar's defence of the recognitional account against this charge is unconvincing. The conceptual independence of phenomenal concepts already indicates that they are not *a priori* related to physical concepts, hence, there must be an *a posteriori* explanation for how they both refer to same referents.

Given the arguments above, Polcyn submits that the first problem with the recognitional account of phenomenal concepts is that it is incoherent since it does not follow that one object can have different essential properties that do not interchangeably define the object.³¹ This problem derives from the fact that phenomenal concepts and physical concepts pick out different properties and to say that these properties are of the same object when they cannot be said to essentially define such object at the same time is incoherent. Even if it is granted that the properties expressed by the different description of phenomenal concepts and physical concepts pick out the same object, another problem that would arise is that the nature of objects in this category would be obscure. Polcyn explains her point thus;

Assume that the kind *P* has one essential property and two different essential descriptions, '*F*' and '*G*'. If we ask about the essence of *P*, we would have to say that relative to the description '*F*', *P* is essentially *F*, and that relative to the description '*G*', *P* is essentially *G*. We could not specify the essence of *P* without relativizing it to a description even though, by assumption, *P* has only one essential property. Of course, the trouble is that this is not how we normally think

of essences. Essential properties are not supposed to be relative to descriptions in this sense.³²

When expressed in the physical/phenomenal concepts language, the above implies that the nature of the referents of physical and phenomenal concepts would have relativised conception depending on which description one wants to attribute to it. Polcyn's arguments succeed in exposing the recognitional account's shortcoming in dealing with the conceptual independence nature of phenomenal concepts which has been identified as a unique feature of phenomenal concepts.

It is upon this background of the flaws identified with the recognitional account that I will proceed to develop arguments in its modification to present the causal-recognitional account of phenomenal concepts which will avoid those flaws and provide a strong backing for physicalism in the attempt to solve the problem of consciousness.

The causal-recognitional account of phenomenal concepts shares in the positions of both the Experience and Recognition Theses but with an additional condition of its own that stands it out. Thus, it holds that a conscious being possesses a phenomenal concept of an experience on the conditions that the conscious being actually had the experience (or remembers a past experience she has had), the conscious being can recognise or discriminate the experience as an instance of a general kind and, most importantly, the experience has a causal connection with the conscious being's ability to recognise it as such. In other words, the way a phenomenal state/experience is presented or experienced has a causal connection with a conscious being's ability to recognise it as an instance of a kind.

For instance, using the case of Mary (in the Knowledge Argument) as an example, the experience of seeing red after her release from the black-and-white room has the following conditions as its explanation on the causal-recognitional account formulation: The first is that she actually had the experience of seeing red. The second is that she recognises that experience as an instance of a kind and lastly, the experience causally connects with her ability to recognise it as an instance of a kind.³³ Thus, the position of the causal-recognitional account is such that phenomenal states are causally-enabling and play a role in how they are being recognised as instances. The implication of this position would then include that it is not possible to have a phenomenal concept without a corresponding phenomenal experience for the experience has a causal ability to elicit in a conscious being the ability to develop such phenomenal concept. In addition, this causal connection between a phenomenal state/experience and the conscious beings' ability to recognise and pick them out with designated phenomenal concepts does not in any way grant that phenomenal states are ontologically independent but that the fact that they are identical with physical states and goings-on in the body earns them this factor.

Given this background of what the causal-recognitional account of phenomenal concepts asserts, one can then draw lines of differences between it and the recognitional account. The first noticeable difference between them is the idea of a causal connection between a phenomenal state and a conscious being's ability to recognise that state. While this feature is incorporated in the causal-recognitional account, it is not included in the formulation of the recognitional account. Also, as a kind of the Experience Thesis, the recognitional account holds that phenomenal concepts refer directly to their referents. This has two further implications. It does not preclude the fact that a phenomenal concept cannot refer to a past phenomenal experience, (say pain) which a conscious being could still remember. After all, at the time of experiencing the pain, the conscious being had a phenomenal concept that directly refers to that experience. If remembering a past experience and the phenomenal concept that picks it out could not be said to be direct in the sense in which a current phenomenal

experience is picked out, then the idea of directness will be contextual with regards to the time frame of the experience in question. The causal-recognitional account accommodates the fact that experiences that a conscious being has had in the past could still be picked out by phenomenal concepts developed by a conscious being who could still remember the experience for the causal connection created at the time of having the experience still holds. Even though remembering a past experience may not be as sharp as when it was currently had, the fact that the experience, at the time of its currency, was directly and introspectively picked out with the idea of a phenomenal concept indicates that remembering a past experience and its phenomenal concept is no less important than a current experience.

Assessing the Causal-Recognitional Account of Phenomenal Concepts

Having presented the thesis of the causal-recognitional account, it is also important to assess the account in the face of the antiphysicalist challenges that constitute the puzzles of consciousness. However, the concentration here will be on the knowledge argument. The argument is based on the case of Mary, who learnt all physical facts in a black-and-white room, but when she leaves the room and experiences red for the first time, she learns a new thing different from the physical facts she had acquired in the black-and-white room. What this implies is that after leaving a realm where only physical knowledge and truth reign supreme (that is, the black-and-white room), there is another realm (that is, post-release outside world) where Mary would get to learn something new which would not come under the categorisation of the kind of knowledge she has had in her black-and-white room. Thus, the knowledge argument states that given the complete knowledge of all physical facts, there are some facts of the world that remained unknown.³⁴

Dealing with the challenge of the knowledge argument from a causal recognitional account's point of view, the first point to start with is to assess the manner with which what Mary knows in her black-and-white room and how the supposed new knowledge she acquired on her post-release period come to her. Mary is presented as one who has, all her life prior to being released, been learning all physical facts through the means of a black-and-white television also in a black-and-white room. The experience of what Mary learnt in the black-and-white room has a causal connection with her knowledge claim about it. The same goes for what she comes to know after her release, that is, her experience of red. What this means, in other words, is that Mary's experiences and knowledge of physical truths or facts through the black-and-white learning process have a causal means of presenting themselves as the sort of experiences they are. In other words, the physical facts she learnt has causal connection with her ability to learn them and have the knowledge of what they are. When examined from this standpoint, there seems to be no difference between what Mary knows during her pre-release and post-release time.

However, the question that may arise from the above may be that; is it enough, from the causal means through which Mary's objects of knowledge are known, to hold that there is no difference between the objects of knowledge involved?³⁵ In other words, an antiphysicalist may object to the claim that the causal means through which other physical truths and phenomenal truths are made known to a conscious being do not justify their identity, sameness or oneness. The means through which these knowledge claims come do not have anything to do with their end-result, which according to antiphysicalist, is a point of difference indicating the distinctness between physical truths and phenomenal truths. This argument sounds appealing from an antiphysicalist standpoint but it misses a point.

The position of the causal-recognitional account about objects of knowledge playing causal roles in how they are recognised and become known does not strictly imply that there cannot be differences between such objects of knowledge. However, in Mary's case where it is supposed that the knowledge of the phenomenal truth she gains after her release from the black-and-white room is not subsumable under the category of the physicalist knowledge she had acquired prior to her release, it is a good starting point to show that the similarity between the manner in which phenomenal truths are recognised and brought under phenomenal concepts which are used to refer to them and the manner physical truths are recognised implies some degrees of identity, that is, both phenomenal and physical truths/facts causally elicit the ability in a conscious being to recognise them. This does not refer to the experiences. Since there are different kinds of experiences that give physical and phenomenal truths but the manner in which what is experienced has presented itself to the conscious being who is under such experience is what is considered here. For instance, using the case of Mary again, the objects of her knowledge claim present themselves to her by causally prompting in her their own recognition. All what she knows in and outside of the black-and-white room come through this causal connection. Thus, it could be argued that the way objects of phenomenal truths and objects of physical truths present themselves through a causal means of making them recognisable by a conscious being indicate they are identical.

Citing the case of Mary as presented in the knowledge argument, the experience of seeing red triggers some kind of recognitional ability in her. After her release, when she sees red, her experience causes her to recognise that experience. But the idea that that post-release experience is not subsumable under the category of physical facts and knowledge derived from her pre-release experience can be resolved with the idea that the manner of presentation of her post-release experience which is identical with that of her pre-release experience is a pointer to the fact that she learns nothing new and different but something she had known in a different way. The subsumption of Mary's phenomenal experiences in the physical experiences she has had prior to her release from the standpoint of causal-recognitional account, derives from the general features of phenomenal concepts such as being conceptually different or isolated and the additional feature that developing these concepts have causal connection with the experience to which these concepts are referred to.

Given Peter Carruthers' and Benedicte Veillet's argument that the nature of conceptual isolation makes phenomenal concepts so unique and different such that physical knowledge do not give *a priori* idea of them (that is, phenomenal concepts)³⁶ and the additional feature of a phenomenal concept from the standpoint of causal-recognitional account (that is, phenomenal concepts arise as a result of the causal connection of the objects of knowledge/experience they pick out), the mistake of antiphenomenalists to hold that the fact that phenomenal concepts pick out phenomenal experiences while physical concepts pick out physical experiences is a form of distinction, becomes clear. The antiphenomenalist claim is based on the erroneous belief that those features of phenomenal concepts imply that what they refer to must be ontologically different from what physical concepts refer to. All of these point to the fact that the causal-recognitional account of phenomenal concepts has an answer to the antiphenomenalist challenge posed by the knowledge argument to physicalism.

Thus, the plausibility of the causal-recognitional account can be seen in some of the advantages it has over the recognitional and quotational accounts of phenomenal concepts. In the first place, it incorporates some of the good features of some of these other versions and tries to avoid their flaws. For instance, the causal-recognitional account of phenomenal concepts has root in the basics of the recognitional account by retaining the idea that phenomenal concepts pick out their referents directly. The causal-recognitional account is as well a category of the experience thesis the same way

the recognitional account is, where possessing a phenomenal concept is partly dependent upon a conscious being's experience of a phenomenal state.

How then can the causal-recognitional account deal with some of the flaws identified with the recognitional account? Karol Polcyn argues that the recognitional account's conception of the conceptual independence of phenomenal concepts suggests that phenomenal concepts and physical concepts refer to different properties as their referents and this will either lead to the problem of incoherence in thought, whereby it would be absurd to have an entity with different essential properties that do not define it, or the nature of such entity or referent becomes obscure as it can only be relatively described based on the property being used to refer to it. The causal-recognitional account also upholds that phenomenal concepts are conceptually independent as there is no *a priori* relationship between them and physical concepts, but the condition that phenomenal experiences have causal connection to make conscious beings aware of them thereby developing phenomenal concepts to refer to them just the same way physical concepts are deployed to pick out their referents show that phenomenal concepts and physical concepts pick out the same properties in their referents. The condition of causal connection being referred to here is that the experience of a conscious being cause the ability in that conscious being to recognise that experience as an instance of a general sort of experience which is identical with physical states in the conscious being's system. Understood this way, the charge that a phenomenal concept picks out essential properties different from that picked out by a physical concept in their referent will not stand since whatever properties that referent has will be causally connected to how they are referred to and as such the properties of the referents cannot be said to be isolated or independently different the way that the phenomenal concepts are.

The advantage that the causal-recognitional account has over the recognitional account is, then, clearly seen in its additional feature that referents of phenomenal concepts have causal connection with the way they are recognised and the way they are referred to. This only implies the conceptual independence of phenomenal concepts which antiphysicalists have erroneously banked on to argue that phenomenal truths/processes have a distinct ontological existence from physical truths. The difference or uniqueness of causal-recognitional phenomenal concepts is in the fact that they get a lead from what they refer to since these referents (phenomenal states in this case), have that causal ability to cause, in the conscious being that is experiencing them, the trigger to develop phenomenal concepts that will accordingly refer to them.

From the foregoing, the claim of the causal-recognitional account in support of physicalism in solving the problem of consciousness becomes clearer. Discussions, so far, have shown the contention between physicalists/the thesis of physicalism and antiphysicalists/problem of consciousness. The physicalists have claimed that nothing is over and above physical entities or what is supervenient upon physical entities. On the other hand, antiphysicalists claim that the problem of consciousness is genuine and denies the truth of physicalism. Several attempts by physicalists and different formulations of physicalism (such as the identity theory, functionalism and so on) have shown in one way or the other how the problem of consciousness can be addressed but they are found to be inadequate. The phenomenal concept strategy provides an alternative means of addressing the problem of consciousness but there are identified problems with some of its version discussed in this thesis, namely the recognitional account and the quotational/constitutional account which prompts the argument for a modified version of the recognitional account, that is, the causal-recognitional account.

Conclusion

It is, thus, necessary to note that the general idea common to most, if not all, versions of the phenomenal concept strategy is that the antiphysicalists' claim that consciousness is irreducibly physical is based on the mistaken belief that phenomenal concepts are different from physical concepts thereby implying that what these concepts refer to are also different. This is the starting point of the causal-recognitional account of phenomenal concepts. The causal-recognitional account also upholds conceptual dualism but maintains monism in reality. Thus, it allows that zombies can be conceived, Mary (in the knowledge argument) can develop a conceptually different concept for her phenomenal experience outside the black-and-white room but all of these stop at the level of concepts and do not imply ontological status of what is involved. Consciousness, being the what it is like in having an experience, has no ontological status which sets it apart from physical goings-on in the body, but the concepts which are used to refer to its experience are the only things which have a unique feature and different presentation.

The causal-recognitional account is developed as a version of the phenomenal concept strategy which provides a stronger backing for physicalism in the attempt to solve the problem of consciousness. This, as I have argued, is a result of the formulation of the causal-recognitional account which makes it avoid some of the problems identified with the recognitional account of phenomenal concepts

End Note

1. Crane, T. *Elements of Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.), p. 43.
2. Schopman, J. "Chaos Theory, the End of Physicalism?", *Journal for General Philosophy of Science*, 26 (1), 1995: 135
3. Tye, M. *Consciousness Revisited: Materialism without Phenomenal Concepts*, p. 41.
4. Nagel, T. "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?" in Block, N. et al (eds.) *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*, p. 519
5. This idea is from Guven Guzeldere's introduction to the book *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates* edited by Block, N et al, pp. 2-5
6. Guzeldere, G. "The Many Faces of Consciousness: A Field Guide" in Block, N. et al (eds.) *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*, p. 5
7. See Wilkes, J. "Is Consciousness Important?" *British Journal of Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 35, 1984 and Churchland, P. "Consciousness: The Transmutation of a Concept", *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 64, 1983.
8. Dennett, D. *Consciousness Explained*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1991, pp. 21-22
9. McGinn, C. "Consciousness and Content" in Block, N. et al (eds.) *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*, p. 305
10. See Nagel, T. "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?" in Block, N. et al (eds.) *The Nature of*
11. *Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*, pp. 519-527 and Chalmers, D. J. *The Conscious Mind*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 3-31
12. Nagel, T. "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?" in Block, N. et al (eds.) *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*, p. 519
13. Chalmers, D. J. *The Character of Consciousness*, p. 5

14. Nagel, T. "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?" in Block, N. et al (eds.) *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*, p. 519
15. The explanation of these arguments here is in no way exhaustive of what they uphold.
16. Chalmers, D. J. *The Conscious Mind*, pp. 95-97.
17. Jackson, F. "Epiphenomenal Qualia" in Chalmers, D. J. (ed.) *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, (New York: Oxford University, 2002) pp. 273-280.
18. Levine, J. "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap" in Chalmers, D. J. (ed.) *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, pp. 354-361.
19. Levine, J. "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap", p. 356.
20. Tye, M. *Consciousness Revisited: Materialism without Phenomenal Concepts*, p. 41.
21. Alter, T. and Walter, S. (eds.) *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge, New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.5.
22. Chalmers, D. J. "Phenomenal Concepts and the Explanatory Gap" in Alter, T. and Walter, S. (eds.) *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge, New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism*, p. 167.
23. Loar, B. "Phenomenal States" in Chalmers, D. J. (ed.) *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 298
24. Stoljar, D. "Physicalism and Phenomenal Concepts", *Mind*, 20, 2005: 470-471
25. Loar, B. "Phenomenal States" in Chalmers, D. J. (ed.) *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, p. 298
26. Stoljar, D. "Physicalism and Phenomenal Concepts", *Mind*, 20, 2005: 476
27. Tye, M. *Consciousness Revisited: Materialism without Phenomenal Concepts*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009, p. 49
28. Polcyn, K. "Brian Loar on Physicalism and Phenomenal Concepts", *Diametros*, 11, 2007:10-39
29. Polcyn, K. "Brian Loar on Physicalism and Phenomenal Concepts", *Diametros*, 11, 2007: 28
30. Polcyn, K. "Brian Loar on Physicalism and Phenomenal Concepts", *Diametros*, 11, 2007: 19
31. Polcyn footnotes this, (note 11) while making reference to Loar's defence. See Loar, B. "Phenomenal States" in Chalmers, D. J. (ed.) *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, pp. 301-302
32. Polcyn, K. "Brian Loar on Physicalism and Phenomenal Concepts", *Diametros*, 11, 2007:35-36
33. Although, antiphysicalists have argued that Mary's experience of seeing red cannot be identified as an instance of the kind of the physical experiences and knowledge she has had in the black-and-white room, I think, it must be of such physical kind even if the connection is not one which is direct i.e. the connection between the experience of seeing red and that of the physical she has had prior to her release.
34. Jackson, F. "Epiphenomenal Qualia" in Chalmers, D. J. (ed.) *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, pp. 273-280
35. What is meant by object of knowledge here is Mary's knowledge claim which includes the physical truth in her pre-release time and the phenomenal truth in her post-release time.
36. Carruthers, P. and Veillet, B. "The Phenomenal Concept Strategy", *Journal of Consciousness*, 14 (9-10), 2007: 216