

Nature of Human Reports and Possible Hardness of the Meta Problem¹

Aliakbar Kouchakzadeh*, Shahriar Gharibzadeh

Laboratory for Theoretical Studies, Institute for Cognitive and Brain Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran

Main Text

The hard problem of consciousness is the problem of explaining subjective experience. This problem is based on the notion that explaining brain functions cannot lead to explaining experience (Chalmers, 1995). The meta problem of consciousness is the problem that why we think there is a hard problem of consciousness. David Chalmers suggests that solving the meta problem deals with human reports of the hard problem- named problem reports. He notes that since problem reports are facts of human behavior we can consider them explainable by functional terms. Therefore, the meta problem is an easy problem (Chalmers, 2018). In this article, we are trying to question the nature of human reports, and to leave open the possibility for hardness of the meta problem.

First, the nature of human reports:

Chalmers (2018) suggests that in order to solve the meta problem, we should explain dispositions to make specific problem reports and judgments. He names those dispositions as “problem intuitions”. It is not clear for us why Chalmers narrowed the view of problem reports to the problem intuitions. We think that the nature of human reports cannot be summarized in intuitions. At least, we can consider there have been lots of thoughts about the given subject before the examination of a specific intuition. This notion can be further developed to concurrent conceptual phenomenal states while making reports. If we pose an inclusivist position about those states, it is not clear that why we should eliminate them from the explanation.

Second, the possibility for hardness of the meta problem:

An explanatory solving of the meta problem through explaining reports, requires *a complete picture* of what happens during a single report. In order to have a complete picture, it should be considered that various phenomenal states exist at that moment when a human makes a single problem report. It seems to us that those phenomenal states are at least parts of a complete explanation for the question that why she thinks there is a hard problem. Therefore, in order to solve the meta problem, phenomenal aspects of the answering moments should also be explained. Thus, if it is true that explaining brain functions of problem reports will not lead to explaining problem reports, a hard problem will rise for the meta problem.

References

¹ This is the abstract of the presentation with the same title in The Science of Consciousness Conference 2022 (TSC 2022). To see the original version, check out the link:

https://consciousness.arizona.edu/sites/consciousness.arizona.edu/files/FINAL%20TSC2022_BOOK_V8.pdf

Pages 110-111, Concurrent Speakers, C1- the Hard Problem

Chalmers, D. (1995). Facing up to the problem of consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 2(3), 200-219.

Chalmers, D. (2018). The meta-problem of consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 25(9-10), 6-61.