**A Conjecture About Phenomenality – The First Derivative** (Part 2 of a *Speculation About Consciousness*)

This is a conjecture about the conditions and operating structures that are required for the phenomenality of certain mental states. Specifically, full-blown phenomenality is assumed, as contrasted with constrained examples of phenomenal experience such as sensations of color and pain. Propositional attitudes and content, while not phenomenal *per se*, are standardly concurrent and may condition phenomenal states (e.g., when tied to false beliefs). It is conjectured that full phenomenality natively arises in coherent processes of situated sensory synthesis and representation (with conceptual content) that are looped, mereologically whole and multi-dimensional. And that phenomenal states are typically *phase-states* within a parameterized conjoint structure of world and experiencer processes that are causally modulated across *Markov blankets* (which are conditionally independent and may be nested: cf. M. Kirchoff, et. al., 2017, 2018; and T. Burge, 2010, re: anti-individualism). Though they may, it is not accepted that phenomenally conscious states *must be* targets of higher-order representations (cf. A. Byrne, 2004).

Phenomenal phase-states of experiencers are assumed to exhibit at least **six essential parameters** (i.e., discriminable independent variables instantiated in each conjoint structure): *relative world time* (i.e., external time within an inertial frame), *relative world space* (external relative position), *indexical time* (persisting subjective present through subjective time), *indexical space* (localized embodied orientation), *attention* (directed, peripheral and subliminal) and *coherent representations* of massively confluent signals and mental states, some of which are phenomenally conscious. Narrowly, the locus of phenomenal experience may be a single sensation; but each such sensation is taken to standardly occur in a complex mental and environmental context that is dimensionalized by these six parameters. Dimensionalization, as an ontological as well as an informational process centered on space, time and subject (cf. G. Northoff, 2021), is postulated as a key underpinning of the 'feel' of phenomenality (i.e., 'this' and 'that', 'here' and 'there' at convergent, yet non-identical, times). Crucially, parameters may be in and out of phase.

These parameters, and perhaps others, constitute the *phase-space* of phenomenal experience. As a product of evolutionary success, adaptation and cognitive activity, 'standard' phenomenal experience is assumed to be grounded in a near-enough veridical representation of the world and to be reliably stable in the contexts to which it is adapted (cf. D. Rosenthal re: holomorphism theory, 2005).

A *hyper-structure* (i.e., a stable structure of external phase-states that are causally linked -- through signaling, processing, activation, modeling and representation -- to an operationally stable structure of internal phase-states) is postulated as necessary for coherent phenomenality, and is assumed to exhibit: [a] **indexicality** (i.e., subjectivity), where personal space-time is dialectically weighted relative to world space-time in the construction of experience (conscious and non-conscious); [b] **sensing**, regarded as intrinsically phenomenal and usually conscious (affirmatively accessible) yet also often non-conscious as well as inaccurate, latent, imagined or ephemeral; [c] **holomorphism**, where phase-states are globally and recursively integrated (cf. F. Peters, 2021 and T. Metzinger, 2004 re: holism of the phenomenal self) to produce coherent intentional standpoints. Hyper-structures may also involve [d] **hidden processing** (in neural and informational layers) that imparts a 'felt sense' of intractable experiential opacity and [e] **graded experience**, where phenomenal states range from rich and reportable to peripherally conscious, phased and, perhaps, not reportable.

When phase-states are structurally, functionally and logically compatible they are assumed to support low-noise coherent constructions of experience as well as derivatively rich phenomenality. When they are not, phenomenality is assumed to be either minimal or undermined.

Critically, *full* phenomenality is thought to occur only when certain neural (cf. W.R. Klemm, "Neural Representations of the Sense of Self", *Advances in Cognitive Psychology*, 2011) and informational processes (e.g., gate activation, code interpretation, signal integration, global mapping, quasi-Bayesian modeling, etc.) produce key grounding effects in consciousness, such as indexical reference, coherence, range and richness. That is, when the hyper-structure is stable. Many of these effects are conjectured to extend to non-conscious and imaginary states.

Finally, underlying phenomenality are ontologically conjoint - yet causally discriminable and robust - neuro-informational networks that produce a self-generating and self-referring mental topology, or event phase-space, that we call experience.

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"At the phenomenal level, consciousness can be described as a singular, unified field of recursive self-awareness, consistently coherent in a particular way; that of a subject located both spatially and temporally in an egocentrically-extended domain, such that conscious self-awareness is explicitly characterized by I-ness, now-ness and here-ness. The psychological mechanism underwriting this spatiotemporal self-locatedness and its recursive processing style involves an evolutionary elaboration of the basic orientative reference frame which consistently structures ongoing spatiotemporal self-location computations as i-here-now. . . Over time, constant evolutionary pressures for energy efficiency have encouraged both the proliferation of anticipative feedforward processing mechanisms, and the elaboration, at the apex of the sensorimotor processing hierarchy, of self-activating, highly attenuated recursively-feedforward circuitry processing the basic orientational schema independent of external action output. As the primary reference frame of active waking cognition, this recursive i-here-now processing generates a zone of subjective self-awareness in terms of which it feels like something to be oneself here and now." Frederic Peters, *Nature Precedings*, 2008.

"Here we consider how a collective of Markov blankets can self-assemble into a global system that itself has a Markov blanket; thereby providing an illustration of how autonomous systems can be understood as having layers of nested and self-sustaining boundaries. This allows us to show that: (i) any living system is a Markov blanketed system and (ii) the boundaries of such systems need not be co-extensive with the biophysical boundaries of a living organism." Michael Kirchoff, *Journal of the Royal Society*, 2018; and Michael Kirchoff, et. al., "The Markov Blankets of Life," *Interface*, The Royal Society Publishing, 2017.

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