

level C category which possibly has an instance having spatial or temporal parts.

(D3) x is abstract =_d x is non-concrete.

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consciousness The terms 'conscious' and 'consciousness' cover a number of phenomena, all of them central to our mental lives. Though closely related, these phenomena are distinct, and it's important to distinguish them.

One phenomenon has to do roughly with being awake. A person or other animal is conscious when it is awake and mentally responsive to its environment; otherwise it is unconscious. It is this phenomenon we talk about most often in everyday contexts.

A second phenomenon we call consciousness is equivalent to being aware of something. We are conscious of something when we perceive it or think about it.

We also use the term 'consciousness' to refer to a property of mental states. We describe mental states as being conscious when we are aware of them in a way that is intuitively immediate. Thus LOCKE wrote that '[c]onsciousness is the perception of what passes in a Man's own Mind' (Locke, 1700, II, i, 19).

Usually we do not focus attention on our conscious states; they just occur within the scope of our awareness. Those we do deliberately attend to we describe as being introspectively conscious. It is through such introspective consciousness that we are conscious of ourselves as distinctively mental beings (see SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS). Locke, like DESCARTES, held that mental functioning is always conscious; as Descartes put it, 'we cannot have any thought of which we are not aware at the very moment when it is in us' (Descartes, 1641, vol. II, p. 171). This thesis in effect identifies mind with consciousness; mental states are all conscious because being conscious is essential to being mental.

Not everybody accepts this claim. FREUD maintained that many mental states occur without being conscious; most contemporary cognitive and social psychologists agree, though for somewhat different reasons. Even common sense seems to countenance mental states that are not conscious; we sometimes know that somebody wants or feels something even though that person is wholly unaware of wanting or feeling it.

Mental states fall into two broad categories: intentional states, such as thoughts and desires (see INTENTIONALITY), and sensory states, such as pains and sensations of red (see SENSE). So it might be that all the states in one category are conscious, but not all those in the other. Descartes, who believed that all mental states are intentional states, held that intentional states are always conscious. By contrast, many today who believe that intentional states are not always conscious would still insist that all sensory states are. How, they ask, could a sensory quality such as redness or painfulness occur without our being immediately conscious of it? What would such a quality be like?

The idea that all sensory states are conscious is inviting; even Freud denied that feelings can, strictly speaking, be unconscious. Indeed, those who hold that sensory states are always conscious sometimes use 'consciousness' just to mean conscious

sensory quality; this is a sense of 'consciousness' distinct from those described above.

A conscious creature apprehends things in a characteristic way and from a particular point of view. And an individual's point of view brings a certain unity to its conscious states. This apparent unity is yet another phenomenon called consciousness (see PERSONS AND PERSONAL IDENTITY).

Each of these distinct kinds of consciousness helps to capture the various ways in which people differ from everything else. However, some theorists have gone further and held that consciousness marks an unbridgeable gulf separating us from the rest of reality. Many find this idea tempting; we have all experienced that odd cognitive disorientation which results from reflecting on how we, as conscious beings, could possibly fit into the natural order (see MENTAL/PHYSICAL; MIND/BODY PROBLEM).

Our sense of mystery about consciousness is reinforced if being mental implies being conscious. We cannot, of course, explain consciousness without appeal to mental phenomena. But if being mental presupposes consciousness, explaining consciousness in mental terms will be circular. And if no satisfactory explanation of consciousness is possible, we cannot hope to bridge the gap between mind and non-mental reality.

Nagel (1974) has raised a related challenge about whether any objective account of consciousness is possible. Having conscious experiences, he urges, means that there is something that it is like to be a creature with those experiences. And this can be understood only from the point of view of the relevant kind of creature. But an objective account of something, Nagel holds, must be independent of any particular point of view. Since consciousness is tied essentially to particular points of view, he concludes that no objective account of it is possible.

But dependence on viewpoints need not preclude objectivity. Points of view are essential to consciousness because the qualitative properties of experiences depend on

a creature's perceptual apparatus. This dependence is wholly objective. It does not matter that we cannot always extrapolate from a particular perceptual mechanism to the resulting kind of experience. Without help from a suitable scientific theory, we cannot always extrapolate from micro-processes to their macroscopic effects, even when those effects are uncontroversially objective. Nor, it seems, is objectivity undermined by points of view understood in any other way — for example, one's vantage point in place and time.

The notion of what it is like to have a conscious experience seems to cover the various phenomena we call consciousness. But because of that, this notion very likely runs together phenomena that require independent treatment. What it is like to have a conscious experience involves both sensory quality and our immediate awareness of these qualities. These are distinct phenomena. Even if sensory states were always conscious, they would differ, as MOORE (1922) emphasized, in virtue of having distinct sensory qualities, even though they all share the very same property of being conscious. So the two kinds of property very likely demand different explanations.

A mental state's being conscious consists in our being immediately conscious of it. So this sense of consciousness is a matter of how we know about our mental states. Since Descartes, many have held that our access to our own mental states is strongly privileged. These theorists also tend to conceive of consciousness ontologically, as part of the nature of mental states. In effect they infer from the way we know about our mental states to their nature — from our having infallible or exhaustive or incorrigible access to our mental states to something in their nature that might explain this access. But how we know about things is often an unreliable guide to their nature; so it is questionable whether the way we know about our own mental states tells us anything significant about their intrinsic nature.

Moreover, a straightforward explanation is possible of what it is for mental states to

be conscious. A state's being conscious consists in one's being conscious of it. As in other cases of being conscious of something, being conscious of a mental state is just perceiving it or having a thought about it. The way we are conscious of our conscious states does seem to be immediate, but that may well be simply because our perceptions or thoughts of these states seem not to rely on inference.

Mental states that we do not perceive or think about will not be conscious. So even when we do perceive or think about a mental state, our thought or perception of it may itself not be conscious. Indeed, it usually will not be; we are normally unaware of any such thoughts or perceptions. Introspection is the special case in which our thought or perception of a mental state is actually conscious. So the fact that we do not seem to be aware of any such thoughts or perceptions is no objection to this account. Explaining consciousness this way, in terms of states that are mental but not conscious, helps diminish the gulf that seems to separate consciousness from nonmental reality.

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content Mental states appear to come in two distinct kinds. On the one hand, there are states, like pains or tickles, whose nature is exhausted by what it *feels* like to have them, by their individuating phenomenologies. Such states appear not to be 'about' anything or to 'mean' anything. On the other hand, there are states, like believing that snow is white, or desiring that the cat not scratch the furniture, which appear to have no interesting phenomenologies whatever, but which do seem to be about things, to mean something.

For these latter sorts of state - states which RUSSUL dubbed 'propositional attitudes' - what they mean is referred to as their *propositional content*, or content for short. (The other part, the part designated by such psychological verbs as 'believe' and 'desire', is the *attitude* adopted towards the propositional content.) The content of a propositional attitude is typically specified, in language, through the use of a 'that-clause' - Jane desires *that the cat not scratch the furniture*, John believes *that snow is white*.

The notion of propositional content raises a number of vexed questions in metaphysics, about which there is nothing but controversy. On the face of it, a belief attribution like the one mentioned in the preceding paragraph (*mutatis mutandis* for the

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