

**THE QUIETIST POSIT: A METHODOLOGICALLY AGNOSTIC RESOLUTION
TO THE PROBLEM OF QUALIA**

BY

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Abstract

This thesis paper addresses the aim and methodology of an argument by Daniel Dennett (1988; 1992), who proposes an eliminativism with regards to the referent of the term “qualia”. Dennett’s argument centres on the purported failure for any property to meet the criteria for this term widely found in traditional philosophical literature. Dennett argues that this failure may be demonstrated as a result of the term failing to refer to any property which contains naturalistic methodological verification conditions.

I provide, in this paper, an outline of two key historical arguments by W.V. Quine and Ludwig Wittgenstein, respectively, whose influence on Dennett’s position will help clarify a certain vulnerability in the latter’s argument. I then provide a series of arguments to serve as important counterexamples to the methodology employed by Dennett which, I argue, reveal a dialectical stalemate between two sets of competing methodologies –methodological naturalism and phenomenology. I argue that this stalemate is indicative of a methodological underdetermination with regards to the question of whether qualia exist. I refer to this as the “methodological problem of qualia”.

I then propose that a resolution may be found for this problem by adopting a methodological agnosticism. I argue that upon this agnosticism, it is possible to positively assert methodological verification conditions according to which it may be determined whether the term “qualia” refers to a property which contains naturalistic methodological verification conditions. I argue that these are the conditions which hold upon the explicitly conditional, or “methodological”, assumption of a naturalistic methodological verificationism, as opposed to a phenomenological methodology, or vice versa.

I conclude that, under these conditions, the term “qualia” therefore may succeed in referring to a property which contains naturalistic methodological verification conditions. As such, I propose that Dennett is incorrect: neither the term nor its referent merit elimination, but rather the latter a quietist resolution, and the former its own meaningful place in language.

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Introduction

A set of arguments which I refer to as “methodological verificationist” has generated a motivation for the denial of what has been considered by another set of arguments, which I will call broadly “phenomenalistic”, an epistemically primitive posit. The conflict between these two sets of arguments, I will argue, stems from a conflict surrounding the basic methodological assumptions espoused in each set of arguments. For this reason, the conflict between these sets of arguments I will refer to as a conflict concerning the “methodological problem of qualia”. In this thesis, I will examine the methodological verificationist argument which is proposed against the existence of qualia and then evaluate it against several arguments which utilize a phenomenalistic methodology in defence of qualia. I will first begin by describing the set of historical arguments which propose the denial or the meaninglessness of a reference in language to intrinsically private experiences such as qualia. These historical arguments propose this denial on the basis of certain methodologically verificationist principles, and form the contextual framework for a contemporary critique of the concept of qualia proposed by Daniel Dennett (1988; 1992), which I will then seek to examine and evaluate. I will, after this, compare this critique with several broadly phenomenalistic arguments in defence of qualia, which I will employ to demonstrate a key flaw shared by both sets of arguments.

My thesis will seek to show that the set of arguments purporting to demonstrate either the denial, or meaninglessness, of the term “qualia” on the basis of methodological verificationist principles do so on a basis which cannot be supported by the very arguments they employ against qualia. These arguments proposed against qualia, I will claim, are premised on a methodological standard which cannot be justified independently. For this reason, I will argue, the arguments proposed against qualia are therefore unable to demonstrate the meaninglessness of the term “qualia” without the arbitrary assumption of a methodological standard.

This thesis will centre on an argument proposed by Daniel Dennett (1988; 1992), who, following Wittgenstein (1953) and Quine (1951; 1969), argues on the basis of a form of methodological verificationism, which I will refer to as “methodological naturalism”. Dennett’s argument holds that, given that the ontological posit of intrinsically private properties is underdetermined, the ontological status, as well as the meaning, of “qualia” must

be governed on a basis which is, to borrow from Quine (1951), “where rational, pragmatic” (p. 43). That is, the meaning, and the question of the existence, of qualia is a matter which cannot be resolved, except for by appeal to practical reasons. However, I will argue, the adoption of this methodology does not provide an independently justified framework for the evaluation of this issue, and thus amounts to a merely arbitrary methodological assumption.

As a result of this conclusion, I advocate for a different methodological standard to evaluate whether qualia exist, and whether the term “qualia” has meaning. I argue, specifically, for a methodologically agnostic evaluation of qualia on the basis of an underdetermination of methodology. I propose, in this way, a novel resolution to address the question whether qualia exist that adequately accounts for the methodological underdetermination evident in two traditional methodological approaches to this question. According to my resolution, “qualia” is a term which has methodological verification conditions, and which therefore has a meaning. I propose that these conditions are those which can be met by the explicitly conditional assumption of one of the competing methodologies over the other. To establish my conclusion and support this proposal, I will first begin by introducing two historical figures who helped inspire the methodological argument espoused by Daniel Dennett which I will later seek to address.

Chapter 1: Historical Foundations of Methodological Verificationism

Chapter Introduction

I will begin in *Chapter 1* by offering an overview of two arguments proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein and Willard Van Orman Quine, respectively. These arguments will provide context and support for an argument by Daniel Dennett against qualia, which I present in *Chapter 2*. I will begin first with an overview of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), in which the author attempts to determine the limits of language, thought, and the world.

Section 1: Wittgenstein and Verification

Part 1: Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

Wittgenstein's (1921) argument proposes a pictorial characterization of the relationship of language and thought to the world. The world, according to Wittgenstein, is determined according to the totality of facts that are present in the world. This is to say, the world is "all that is the case" (p. 5). According to Wittgenstein, the structure of language exhibits, but does not address, a direct relation to the world. That is, language uses the names of objects to make logico-pictorial arrangements called "thoughts". Thoughts, in turn, he says are those propositions that correspond to actual or possible arrangements of objects in the world. The actual arrangements of objects in the world are, then, what he calls "facts".

The aim of philosophy, according to Wittgenstein, is the logical clarification of propositions, using language, to determine the limits of thought. This is to say, his view of philosophy regards the clarification of what has sense, or meaning, as opposed to what has no sense, and is thus meaningless. He claims that if a proposition can actually or potentially represent the world through logico-pictorial representation, it has meaning, and if it does not, it has no meaning. Since it can only be sensibly said of the world, Wittgenstein claims, that it is made up of objects arranged in some actual or possible manner, the world cannot be configured other than in a way in which it can be spoken of in language. Thus, Wittgenstein argues, the limits of language are the limits of the world, and the limits of the world are the limits of language.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein argues, what lies outside the limits of language must include the relation of language, in which he includes the relation of mathematics and logic, to the world. Mathematics and logic, according to Wittgenstein, are not logico-pictorial representations that correspond to the world, and thus have no factual content or sense. Instead, they form "abbreviations" of language (Quinton, 1978). That is, mathematics and logic are reflections of the character of language that forms the limit of sense.

In Wittgenstein's (1921) view, tautologies and contradictions are the two "propositions of logic" by which logic reflects the limitations of language and the world (p. 24). In contrast, propositions with sense have sense by virtue of truth-conditions governed by the propositions of logic. The propositions of logic, however, are true or false "in the symbol alone" (p. 67). Wittgenstein argues that since language, including the norms governing the propositions of logic and thought, forms the limits of what can be described in the world, the relation between language and the world cannot, itself, be sensibly described. For similar reasons, Wittgenstein also deems meaningless the traditional propositions of ontology, as well as the

value theoretical propositions of ethics and aesthetics (p. 82). Ontological propositions such as realism, idealism, and solipsism, which deal with questions regarding the world in its entirety, as well as value theoretical propositions, are not, in his view, representations which correspond to the world. They are, instead, propositions that limit the meaningful representation of the world.

Wittgenstein, however, is left with a problem regarding how to reconcile the basis of his own argument regarding the relation of language and thought to the world with the consequences of his own argument. That is, he is left with the following problem: by what means can Wittgenstein advocate for a meaningful description of the relation of language and thought to the world which is not, itself, without meaning? Wittgenstein's solution to this problem lies in a distinction he proposes between what can be said, and what can be shown, meaningfully. He argues that that what is strictly without sense may still occupy a strictly demonstrative function (p. 81). The demonstrative function that Wittgenstein argues has legitimacy within philosophy is the functional clarification of what does, and does not, have meaning.

Wittgenstein ultimately describes the function of philosophy through the use of a metaphor. He argues that the legitimate role of philosophy, including the philosophical arguments contained within his (1921) work, is that played by a ladder employed in order to "see the world rightly" (p. 82). He argues that, once used for this purpose, however, the ladder must then be thrown away. He states summarily, "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (ibid.).

Several interpretations of Wittgenstein's final position his (1921) work can be found in the philosophical literature. Some traditional readings of this work accept the existence of what cannot be spoken, but only exemplified (Biletzki and Matar, 2020). Wittgenstein wrote in a letter to his publisher, in the preface and closing remarks of his (1921) work, as well as in the work's earliest edition (1971), that the most important part of the *Tractatus* is the part which is left out. Wittgenstein (1971) states,

My work consists of two parts, the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important point. ... I've managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it. . . For now I would recommend

you to read the preface and the conclusion, because they contain the most direct expression of the point. (p. 16)

Indeed, Wittgenstein (1921) even describes the metaphysical, ethical, and aesthetic propositions of philosophy, as well as the relation of language to the world, as what “make themselves manifest . . . [they are] what is mystical” (p. 81).

Other, more recent interpretations of the *Tractatus* regard that which cannot be spoken more literally –as meaningless and thus empty propositions (Biletzki and Matar, 2020). This involves treating Wittgenstein’s final mandate of discarding the “ladder” of his philosophy as paramount to his theory. According to this view, the *Tractatus* is not gesturing at the ineffable, but rather delivering a warning against taking such actions. As Frank Ramsey (1929) famously quipped, “what we can’t say we can’t say, and we can’t whistle it either” (p. 238).

For the purposes of my argument, I will refer to these two readings of Wittgenstein (1921) as, respectively, the “quietist” and “eliminativist” readings of his work on this topic. I purport to argue, in *Chapter 2*, that the eliminativist reading, as advanced by Dennett (1988; 1992), cannot be justified, while the quietist reading can. I will argue further, in *Chapter 3*, that the theoretical posit of qualia has equal justification as its theoretical elimination, upon methodological grounds. I will also argue that the existence, or non-existence, of qualia, as well as whether the term “qualia” has meaning, cannot be determined without an arbitrary methodological assumption. As such, I argue, whether qualia exist, or whether the term “qualia” has any meaning, is therefore methodologically underdetermined. In this way, that which I call the methodological problem of qualia arises.

To avoid the arbitrary assumption of a methodological framework, therefore, I will argue that the methodological problem of qualia is best resolved on the basis of a methodological agnosticism. In *Chapter 4*, I argue for a distinction between the characterization of qualia as an epistemologically primitive referent of a term, and as a behaviourally described reference, i.e. a term within a language. The first, I argue, assumes the ontological necessity of qualia, while the second does not. I advocate, in keeping with a quietist reading of Wittgenstein, and against Dennett, for a quietist account of qualia characterized as an epistemologically primitive referent. However, I argue against both Dennett and Wittgenstein for a positive

account of the term “qualia”, characterized behaviourally, as a meaningful term within language.

Part 2: Meaning and Wittgenstein

Header 1: From the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to the *Philosophical Investigations*

Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), though often understood by his critics and by Wittgenstein himself as a strong departure from his (1921) work, may also be understood as a continuation of some of the latter’s central themes. One of his central proposals in his (1921) work is that philosophy is a means of demonstrating the difference between the meaningful and meaningless uses of language. Crucially, he argues in this work, the legitimate aim of philosophy lies in its practical application, and not as a body of doctrine. His (1953) work continues this theme by aiming to more fully eliminate all dogmatic assumptions from its theoretical propositions (Biletzki and Matar, 2020).

As part of his transition away from the assumption of a normatively restricted standard of language, Wittgenstein (1921) exchanges the logico-pictorial theory of meaning for an explicit theory of “meaning-as-use” (1953, p. 20). In both works, Wittgenstein advocates for a theory of meaning in which the truth condition of a proposition is a function of its verification. However, Wittgenstein (1953) departs from his earlier work by proposing a revised standard of verification in which the truth condition of a proposition is a function not of its ontological verification, but rather of its verification conditions.

Header 2: Verificationism in Early and Late Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein’s earlier and later works stand in contrast with one another with regards to their respective positions regarding how meaning in language may be established. In his (1921) work, Wittgenstein advocates for a position in which meaning is determined according to the actual or possible correlation of a proposition to a fact. In his (1953) work, however, he advocates for a position in which meaning is determined according to the standard of the actual or possible correlation of a proposition to its verification conditions within a language. In this way, Wittgenstein shifts from a theory of meaning that is

determined on the basis of an ontological standard to a theory determined on the basis of a methodological standard.

While Wittgenstein's earlier work bears strong resemblance to what is often referred to as a "traditional" form of verificationism, his later work eclipses this approach and provides a more broadly accepted alternative, sometimes referred to as a "methodological verificationism" (Ewing, 2002, p. 68). I will describe each form of verificationism Wittgenstein proposes in order to provide a background and context for the set of arguments provided by Quine and Dennett, respectively, that make use of these ideas.

Sub-Header 1: Verificationism in Early Wittgenstein

Though he eschewed the label, Wittgenstein's earlier work follows in a similar pattern to the traditional verificationist philosophy espoused by the Vienna Circle. In fact, traditional verificationism is often attributed to an interpretation of the arguments he presents in his (1921) work (Blank, 2011). The view Wittgenstein presents in that work, which relates meaning to the existence of truth conditions and truth conditions to the correlation between propositions and facts, is described by Wittgenstein's colleague, Wrigley (1989), as a form of "implicit" verificationism (p. 285). Wittgenstein is said to have claimed before the Vienna Circle in the early 1930's that "the sense of a proposition is the method of its verification" (qtd. in Medina, 2001, p. 304). This form of verificationism, which was later adopted by members of the Vienna Circle, argues that a meaningful attribution of existence holds only with regard to propositions which may, actually or possibly, be verified by empirical observation.

This form of verificationism, however, has been widely discredited, owing to a line of argument proposed originally by Carl Hempel (1951), which is taken to show that the verificationist principle is internally inconsistent. This argument against the traditional form of verificationism is paraphrased by Ewing (2002) in the following way:

- A. By hypothesis, the verificationist principle cannot appeal to methods which cannot be verified through human observation. This is to say, then, that the verificationist principle cannot be verified, except through some empirical method.

- B. However, the verification principle is a form of universal proposition. As such, it cannot be established conclusively by empirical methods.
- C. Therefore, the principle is shown to be either meaningless or false. (pp. 16-17)

In this way, according to Ewing's description of Hempel's argument, the very principle of verification requires empirical verification. However, since it is a universal proposition its verification can never be fully established empirically. Thus, the argument shows, the principle of verification fails to meet its own criteria for verification, and is in this way self-refuting.

Sub-Header 2: Verificationism in Later Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein's theory of meaning in his later work, in contrast to his earlier work, does not make a fallacious commitment to an independent standard of verification. While his (1921) work is argued upon the premise that the clarification of meaning aims towards the discernment of fundamental, normative propositions of language, Wittgenstein's later work introduces the idea of meaning in terms of a conventionally codified framework of rules which govern language use. According to this characterization, he describes language as containing independent "propositional systems" (Medina, 2001).

Wittgenstein argues that meaning, under this theory, is not an atomic pictorial representation of facts about the world, as is the case in his (1921) work, but rather is determined according to the function of a proposition within some system of language use.

This theory of meaning for which Wittgenstein advocates in his later work, including his (1953) work, has been described as a "Satzsysteme" conception of language (Blank, 2011). According to the Satzsysteme theory, the meaning of a proposition is verified according to the "rules of grammar", which are themselves determined according to the relation of the propositional content within a language (Medina, 2001, p. 305). These in turn, he argues are determined according to their use as part of a natural activity, or a "form of life" (p. 23).

Wittgenstein (1930) argues, if you "[know] what is required for the proposition to be verified . . . you will then find out what other propositions can be mobilized to support it or to refute it" (§ 43). In this way, he argues, "Every significant proposition must teach us through its sense how we are to convince ourselves whether it is true or false" (ibid.). Thus, though

grammatical rules form the structural basis for propositional systems, Wittgenstein argues, they do not themselves contain a fixed standard of verification outside of language. Rather, he claims, their meaning is a function of their conditions for verification within a language system, which is in turn a product of its natural usage.

Wittgenstein, in this way, introduces a propositional system that employs a theory of meaning determined on the basis of verification conditions, as opposed to truth conditions. Wittgenstein's methodological verificationist theory of meaning, and his account of the role of verification in the creation of language structures, provide the groundwork for a well-known portion of his (1953) argument critiquing the ontological proposition of what he calls a "private language" (p. 92). This argument aims to demonstrate the falsity of traditional substantive accounts of meaning that propose ontological, as opposed to methodological, verification conditions.

Header 3: The Private Language Argument

As I have described, according to Wittgenstein, the meaning of a proposition determines, and is determined by, the rules governing its use within a language. For this reason, a proposition whose referent is external to a language refers to an object that cannot be verified methodologically. However, Wittgenstein argues, since the meaning of a proposition is a function of its methodological verification, a proposition whose reference is external to the propositional structure of a language is therefore meaningless. Wittgenstein draws this conclusion on the basis that, in order for a proposition to have meaning, it must propose a verification condition. The proposition thereby proposes a "sense" in which it can be confirmed, as opposed to disconfirmed. On this basis, Wittgenstein argues, a proposition contains within it the verification conditions according to which it has a meaning.

Sub-Header 1: The Private Language Argument and Cartesian Infallibility

Anthony Kenny (1966) proposes a reading of Wittgenstein's private language argument as, specifically, a critique of Cartesian substance dualism and the Cartesian concept of mental substance. Descartes's (1637) concept of "mental entities" helped establish the concepts of "ideas", "impressions", and "sense-data" later adopted by Locke, Hume, Berkeley, and other British empiricists (Kenny, 1966). These concepts were, for the British empiricists,

“epistemologically prior” to the external world, which was composed of what they referred to as a “physically extended substance” (Kenny, 1966, p. 353). Kenny then argues that the terms “consciousness”, “perception”, and “awareness of sensation” are denotive of an achievement of some mental cognition. That is, they are what he calls “success-verbs” (p. 357). This achievement, he argues, inherently implies the existence of the object of cognition. For Descartes, this object of cognition, or “cogitation”, is “immediate private sensation” (p. 362). The immediacy of private sensation, in Descartes’s view, renders it beyond the scope of what can be subject to doubt. That is, according to Descartes, mental substance implies its own existence.

Kenny interprets Wittgenstein’s argument as a clear rejection of Descartes’s position. Because Descartes’s mental cogitations imply the successful recognition of some object of cogitation, Kenny argues, there must be present in the cogitation a determinate judgement about that object. Namely, the judgement must be present that the object of cogitation exists. Kenny continues, arguing that a judgement regarding an object of perception must either constitute that object, so that “I know I am in pain” means “I am in pain,” or else it must comprise a separate expression about that object (p. 367). That is, a judgement of this sort must either be dependent upon, or independent of, the object of perception itself.

However, Kenny argues, the concept of a judgement is distinguished from the concept of perception by the possibility of error with regards to judgement, but not with regards to perception. Whereas the faculty of perception is infallible, he argues, it is possible for a judgement to be made that is not based upon the occurrence of a perception (ibid.). A judgement with regards to perception, as such, can be erroneous. If this is the case, and if a judgement about the existence of an object of perception comprises an expression made in good faith about that object, then it is possible, according to this view, for an incorrect judgement to be expressed in good faith about an object of perception. That is, it is possible to express a judgement, “I am in pain”, in good faith where there is in fact no occurrence of the object of perception, “pain”. This possibility stands in contradiction with the infallibility thesis, above, which Descartes proposes.

Alternatively, if a judgement regarding perception constitutes the object of perception itself, then there exists no distinction between the criterion for the judgement about the existence of the object of perception and the criterion for the existence of the object of perception itself. In such a case, Wittgenstein’s argues, “Whatever is going to seem right to

me is right” (p. 92). That is, he argues there is no sense by which the judgement about the existence of the object of perception can be confirmed, except by virtue of the judgement itself. Without a distinction between the content of a judgement and its verification condition, however, there is no sense in which this judgement may be considered “right”, as opposed to “wrong”. A judgement about an object of perception whose criterion is not independent from the criterion for the existence of the object of perception is thus, according to Wittgenstein, meaningless.

In either case, Kenny argues, a judgement regarding a perception fails to meet the criteria proposed by Descartes for immediate private sensation. As such, this judgement must either be fallible or meaningless. For this reason, he interprets Wittgenstein as claiming, an infallible private language whose propositions have meaning is therefore a false posit.

Section Conclusion

Wittgenstein’s methodological verificationism provides an alternative to the flawed traditional verificationism of the Vienna circle, and introduces a novel theoretical structure to account for meaning in language. The arguments against the concept of qualia which I introduce in the remaining portion of my thesis paper will rest upon this structure. As such, I will refer to the terminology and ideas I have thus far presented to elucidate the forthcoming arguments. In the next section, I will present several arguments proposed by Quine which help form the context for Dennett’s (1988; 1992) argument against qualia, which I will describe in *Chapter 2*.

Section 2: Quine and Methodological Naturalism

Section Introduction

Quine adopts a line of argument in many ways similar to the methodological verificationist argument proposed by Wittgenstein (1953). Like Wittgenstein, Quine adopts a stance in which the meaning of a sentence is determined by the framework of reference by which its meaning is endowed. Quine’s view is distinguished from Wittgenstein’s, however, in his (1951) rejection of the distinction between analytic and synthetic forms of empirical

knowledge, which he considered integrally related with the rejection of traditional verificationism.

As a result of his (1951) work, Quine adopts an ontologically relativistic “holism”, in which he argues against the traditional verificationist notion that the meaning of a sentence in isolation from the remainder of a language may be confirmed on the basis of experience (Hylton and Kemp, 2020). Quine argues that, instead, the meaning of a sentence must be verified holistically in relation to a larger body of scientific theories. He (1951) argues, on this basis, for the dissolution of the categorical boundaries between “speculative metaphysics” on the one side, and scientific theory on the other (p. 20). In this way, Quine (1969; 1970) argues in favour of a form of methodological naturalism which he calls “naturalistic epistemology”.

For the sake of my argument, I will expand on several of Quine’s methodologically naturalistic arguments as they relate to the problem of qualia, and clarify where they correlate with, and where they diverge from, Wittgenstein’s (1953) argument. In so doing, I will seek to describe the contextually defining role Quine’s theory plays in the argument by Dennett I address in *Chapter 2*.

Header 1: Quine and Wittgenstein

Quine’s methodological naturalism, like Wittgenstein’s (1953) theory of meaning as use, proposes that the meaning of a sentence is determined pragmatically in relation to the framework of reference by which its meaning is governed. Quine’s theory also argues, like Wittgenstein’s, that there exists no basis for the justification or verification of the meaning of a sentence independent of such a framework. For this reason, I argue, Quine’s theory is in keeping with Wittgenstein’s in proposing a “meaning holistic” form of methodological verificationism (Jackman, 2017).¹ However, whereas emphasis is placed in Wittgenstein’s theory on the normative function of ordinary language use, emphasis is placed in Quine’s on the descriptive function of language in relation to natural science (Kemp, 2014, p. 2).

¹ While Quine’s ontological theory may be interpreted as a form of falsificationism –on the basis that his argument for confirmation holism proposes that sentences cannot be falsified independently of a larger scientific corpus— I argue that his theory may also be interpreted as a form of methodological verificationism, on the basis that his argument for confirmation holism proposes such a corpus as the methodological verification conditions by which a sentence is granted meaning.

Quine and Wittgenstein are, in this way, distinguished by their approach to a historical divide between two forms of empirical knowledge. That is, between “synthetic” knowledge, which is true by virtue of its correspondence with fact, and “analytic knowledge”, which is true by virtue of meaning alone. Whereas Wittgenstein, like many of his contemporaries, is uncritical of this distinction, Quine makes a departure from this accepted view. The consequences of his departure are, for Quine, the dissolution of the distinction between metaphysical inquiry, inclusive of the postulate of qualia, and the method of natural science.

Sub-Header 1: The Elimination of the Analytic/Synthetic Distinction

According to Quine (1951), the traditional distinction in empiricism between analytic and synthetic knowledge is false. Quine’s argument against the existence of an analytic/synthetic distinction centres on his critique of the idea of analyticity. Quine formulates his argument against analyticity by addressing this concept in terms of the synonymy of sentences by definition, the synonymy of sentences by interchangeability *salva veritate*, by reference to semantic rules, and by appeal to empirical reduction. Under examination, he argues, each conceptualization of analyticity is shown to be reliant on a circular or arbitrary appeal to meanings.

Quine begins his argument by addressing the claim that an analytic sentence is logically true by appeal to the synonymy of the meaning of words used within it. He rejects the possibility that the synonymy of words can be known on the basis of their definition. He states that the lexicographer is an “empirical scientist,” whose formulation of a definition is based either on its usage in practice, on the basis of previously defined synonymies, or by mere fiat (p. 24). As such, he concludes, the synonymy of sentences cannot be discerned by definition without circularity or arbitrary declaration.

Quine then appeals to a criterion of interchangeability of linguistic forms *salva veritate*, i.e. without loss or change of meaning (p. 27). Linguistic forms, when understood as atomic words contained within a sentence, he argues, may be substituted for one another by appeal to necessity (p. 29). However, he argues, an appeal to necessity in this context implies an appeal to analyticity, which implies circularity.

Nor does the coextension of predicates within an extensional language assure their interchangeability *salva veritate*, he claims, given that two predicates may extend to the same things only by accident. Quine then addresses a defence of analyticity by appeal to semantic rules within artificial languages. He argues that, even with regards to artificial languages, the classification of sentences as analytic must presuppose an understanding of the meaning of analyticity. A semantic rule that stipulates analyticity, he argues, cannot provide a non-arbitrary designation of analyticity (p. 31).

Quine, in addition, compares semantical rules with the determination of the postulates of mathematical or logical notation. He holds these postulates may be stipulated by fiat according to an arbitrarily determined set of postulates. Barring this, however, he states that postulates must be determined specifically by the use governing their application (ibid.). As such, Quine holds that an appeal to semantic rules in artificial languages, as well as the postulates in logical and mathematical notations, must rely on a previous conception of analyticity, or they must be stipulated arbitrarily.

Quine then addresses the possibility of a traditional verificationist, or “reductionist”, appeal to analyticity. The analyticity of reductionist sentences, according to Quine, must also be understood in terms of synonymy (p. 35). Synonymous sentences, according to this theory, are those that can be confirmed or disconfirmed on the same basis empirically. Sentences are thus considered analytic when they may be substituted for one another *salva veritate*, and when they are, in addition, synonymous with a logically true sentence. However, Quine claims, reductionism commits the error of assuming that sentences can be confirmed or disconfirmed in isolation from the confirmation or disconfirmation of other sentences within a language. The confirmation or disconfirmation of any particular sentence, he holds, is underdetermined by empirical evidence.

In all of the above cases, Quine argues that what is analytic is determined arbitrarily or by circularity, whether by appeal to the definition of synonymous terms or by their interchangeability, by appeal to the semantic rules of artificial languages and notations, or the reduction of terms and sentences in a language to sentences about sense experience. Claims to knowledge are thus not determined according to the meaning of language nor on the basis of individual empirical observations, he argues, but rather on the pragmatic acceptance or rejection of observation sentences in relation to a relevant body of prior observation sentences.

Quine, as such, argues for the elimination of the analytic/synthetic distinction and its replacement with a holistic methodological verificationism. In this way, he argues for a theory compatible with Wittgenstein's methodological verificationism. Unlike Wittgenstein, however, Quine argues for a methodological verificationism whose standards for verification are just those observation sentences that may be subject to testing using the methods of natural science. Quine's ontological theory is considered, for this reason, a form of methodological naturalism, i.e. naturalistic epistemology.

Header 2: Quine's Naturalistic Epistemology

As a result of Quine's (1951) argument, he rejects traditional verificationism and proposes an ontological theory based upon naturalistic principles. Quine (1969) argues in favour of an ontology based on the following premises. He first argues in favour of this ontology on the basis of his confirmation holism, as described in his (1951) work, in which a body of theoretical knowledge may be subject to testing only as a corporate whole, and not by the testing of its component parts in isolation. Next, he argues that the resolution of his ontological theory primarily involves the resolution of the epistemological problem of explaining the relation between empirical observation sentences and the ontological theory itself. In other words, ontology primarily addresses the problem, how do we get "from stimulus to science?" (Quine, 1995, title).

Quine (1969) then argues that there are two potential methodological approaches that can be used, hypothetically, to explain the relationship between empirical observation sentences and ontological theory. The first is a logical reconstruction of ontological theory on the basis of phenomenal experience, such as was initially defended by Carnap (1928). The second approach, Quine argues, is based on the psychological study of behavioural "output" in the production of ontological theory on the basis of sensory "input" (Kim, 1988, p. 390).

Quine argues that the first approach cannot succeed, as was demonstrated both by Carnap's (1928) failure and by the result of Quine's (1951) argument.² As such, Quine argues, an ontological theory must be endeavoured on the basis of behavioural psychology in order to find success. Quine (1969), on this basis, proposes a naturalistic methodological

² I will refer to the reasons Quine provides to support this claim, against what he refers to as the "transcendental charge" of phenomenalism, in *Chapter 3*.

framework for his ontological theory, in which, he argues, “Epistemology, or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science” (p. 82).

Header 3: Epistemology as a “Chapter of Psychology”

Quine (1969) defends a behavioural psychological account of epistemology in which the sensory input and theoretical output for a subject are experimentally controlled. He argues, in this way, for a law-based, descriptive account of human cognition, rooted within a predictive-explanatory structure like any other empirical science (Kim, 1988). Quine (1969) defends this methodological strategy, arguing,

The stimulation of his sensory receptors is all the evidence anybody has had to go on, ultimately, in arriving at his picture of the world. Why not just see how this construction really proceeds? Why not settle for psychology? . . . Better to discover how science is in fact developed and learned than to fabricate a fictitious structure to a similar effect. (pp. 75-76)

Thus, Quine argues for an account of epistemological theory which avoids appeal to evidential factors external to those endorsed by natural science. Quine’s theory, in this way, restricts epistemology fully to the naturalistic scientific domain. A problem arises, however, with regards to the means by which his theory can justify naturalistic claims without the arbitrary or circular assumption of naturalistic methodological premises. In response to this problem, Quine appeals to an inference to the best explanation that runs counter to most historical strategies for epistemological justification. In the next section, I expand on this problem as well as Quine’s response.

Header 4: The Charge of Circularity

Historically, a direct appeal to physical properties as justification for an epistemological theory has been regarded as a form of circular reasoning (Kim, 1988). Because scientific theory has often been interpreted as a derivative of sensory experience, the employment of scientific data as a method for its justification has been viewed as fallacious. As Quine

(1969) acknowledges, “If the epistemologist’s goal is validation of the grounds of empirical science, he defeats his purpose by using psychology or other empirical science in the validation” (pp. 75-76).

In response to this objection, however, Quine echoes Hume in reasoning that, since it is impossible to adopt a perspective outside that of an empirical observer, an appeal to validation of theoretical knowledge external to this perspective is ill-conceived. Quine argues that such appeals “have little point once we have stopped dreaming of deducing science from observation” (ibid). Instead, Quine argues, the field of epistemology is better served by aiming to provide the best account of the relation between observation sentences and ontological theory that can be supported by the available empirical evidence.

This aim is best achieved, in Quine’s view, by making use of evidence from the very ontological theory whose relation to observation sentences is sought (Kim, 1988). Quine, in this way, seeks to provide an explanation based on naturalistic data to support his theory of epistemology. While he allows that this methodology does not produce infallible knowledge, he argues that such an expectation is unachievable, and thus unnecessary in order to justify his naturalistic epistemology.

In keeping with his naturalistic methodology, Quine then provides an account of observational data that explicitly excludes any appeal to *a priori* knowledge of ontological verification conditions, including knowledge of, or acquaintance with, qualia. To this end, he (1970) argues for an epistemological structure that explains sensory input in terms of observation sentences. This term he explicitly distinguishes from “introspective sentences” (p. 20), a distinction which will also provide a basis for a thesis proposed later by Dennett (1988; 1992), which I discuss in *Chapter 2*.

Header 5: Observation and Introspection Sentences

Integral to Quine’s naturalistic epistemology is the postulate of observation sentences. Quine (1970) is careful, however, to distinguish observation sentences from what he refers to as introspective sentences (p. 20). He clarifies that observation sentences are those which “all reasonable competent speakers of [a] language be disposed, if asked, to assent to . . . under the same stimulations of their sensory surfaces” (p. 19). He continues, stating that the criteria for an observation sentence is met when “all members of [a] community, nearly enough, will

say ‘Yes’ to it under the same stimulations, and all will say ‘No’ to it under the same stimulations” (ibid.). Such sentences are, in this way, behaviourally described, and thus publicly discernible.

Introspective sentences, Quine claims, are in contrast reserved for experiential reports, such as “I am in pain” and “I seem to see blue now” (p. 20). Quine argues that while the latter form of sentence is, in practice, incontestable, observation sentences are defeasible against further empirical evidence. He argues that observation sentences, however, are all the same “nearly” infallible because even their very meaning must be learned through ostensive associations between the observation sentence and the circumstances under which it is uttered (p. 16). However, Quine (1970) claims, circumstances exist in which an observation sentence must yield to the overwhelming counterevidence issued by a larger scientific body of theory. Under such circumstances, an observation sentence may need to be rejected.

Even under such circumstances, however, actual observation sentences are not directly subject to revision, he argues. Instead, what are subject to revision are the actual reports made in the present that have been inferred on the basis of recollected observation sentences made in the past. He argues the actual report of a recollected observation sentence, in these cases, may then be attributed to some “unexplained interference,” including theoretical noise or hallucination, and thus be subject to revision (p. 17). A similar distinction between present and recollected reports of private experience is used in Dennett’s argument against the existence of qualia which I present in the next chapter.

Chapter Conclusion

Quine’s ontological and naturalistic epistemological structure is central to the thesis defended by Dennett which I present next. Dennett, like Quine, argues for a methodologically naturalistic account of what the latter calls the “speculative” metaphysical postulates of philosophy (1951, p. 20). In keeping with Quine, Dennett argues against a substantive ontological structure containing postulates whose referents lie outside the domain of natural science.

Dennett, on the basis of his methodological naturalism, adopts an eliminativist position with regards to qualia, in contrast to a Wittgenstenian quietism. I will argue that Dennett’s eliminativism, however, cannot be supported on the basis of the argument he (1988; 1992)

proposes. I will also argue that Dennett is unjustified in his claim that, since it fails to refer to any naturalistically verifiable property, the term “qualia” is without meaning. I will argue this on the basis that, by his argument’s hypothesis, “qualia” refers to non-naturalistic properties. I will argue on this basis that Dennett is therefore unsuccessful either in eliminating, or addressing, the concept of qualia which he espouses within his own argument. I will later address, in *Chapter 3*, the methodological assumption implicit in Dennett’s argument, in adopting Quine’s methodological naturalism, and seek to demonstrate the reason this assumption is unjustified.

Chapter 2: Dennett and Qualia Eliminativism

Chapter Introduction

Daniel Dennett adopts and advances many similar positions to those proposed by Quine. In his own words, Dennett (2002) states,

. . . I have seen almost no reason to adopt any other ontology than Quine’s and when I look at the work in the philosophy of science and more particularly at the work in science, I do not find any ground yet for abandoning a Quinean view of ontology for something fancier. . . . I don’t see any of the complexities of science or philosophy of mind raising ontological issues that are more sophisticated than those a Quinean ontology could handle . . . (p. 1)

Dennett, accordingly, argues on the basis of a methodological naturalism in his (1988; 1992) critiques of qualia. Dennett (1988) argues that the concept of qualia may be construed in one of two ways: either qualia may be construed, under a Wittgenstenian interpretation, as an “empty” term of reference, devoid of meaning, or as a false postulate (p. 7). In either case, Dennett argues, “qualia” fails to meaningfully refer to a veridical class of referents.

I will seek to illustrate and then evaluate Dennett’s argument. In this chapter, I will specifically seek to show under which conditions Dennett’s claims are successful and under

which they fail. I will argue, ultimately, that Dennett fails either to address the postulate of qualia according to the criteria he proposes for them, or to provide sufficient justification for an eliminativist conclusion. In either case, I will show, Dennett's argument is unsuccessful in demonstrating the nonexistence of qualia.

Part 1: Dennett's Arguments against Qualia

Header 1: Characterizing Qualia

In Dennett's (1988; 1992) works, he argues against the meaningfulness of the term "qualia", and against the existence of the referent of qualia. By the term, Dennett (1988) picks out a reference long-standing in the 19th and 20th century philosophical canon (Crane, 2000) to "*the ways things seem to us*" (p. 1). Dennett (1988) advocates, in his argument, for a specific set of criteria for qualia, which he argues are justified by their traditional usage in the philosophical literature (p. 3).

He argues for a set of criteria for qualia as "properties of a subject's mental states that are a) ineffable, b) intrinsic, c) private, [and] d) directly or immediately apprehensible in consciousness" (*ibid.*, *format changed*). Qualia are ineffable in the sense that they may be referenced using language, but language cannot be used in place of them to convey their meaning. That is, he claims, the term "qualia" is best understood as referring to properties that cannot be reduced to language, and thus cannot be exhaustively described in language.

They are also intrinsic properties, he claims, which is to say that they are "atomic and unanalysable" –they are properties that do not require the existence of other properties as a condition for their own existence (p. 3). In addition, they are private properties, which is to say that they are accessible from the first-person perspective alone. Finally, they are "directly or immediately apprehensible in consciousness," which is to say that they are the means by which a subject is related to their conscious experiences (*ibid.*). On the basis of this set of criteria, Dennett (1988) proceeds to argue against the "pretheoretical or 'intuitive'" concept of qualia, which he claims underlies the various "technical or theoretical" concepts commonly found in the literature (p. 2). Dennett argues that there is no acceptable version of this "thoroughly confused" concept, and that it is therefore best "flush[ed] out – and then flush[ed] away" (*ibid.*). Dennett proposes that this end may be achieved on the basis of two

arguments. He argues first by appeal to Wittgenstein (1953) against qualia characterized as a Cartesian-style, infallibilistic posit. He then argues on the basis of a series of intuition pumps against qualia characterized as a fallibilistic posit. He proposes that these intuition pumps serve to undermine the intuitive appeal of the fallibilistic characterization. Dennett argues that neither characterization meets the criteria for qualia that he proposes by hypothesis.

In *Part 2* I will evaluate Dennett's two arguments against an infallibilistic and fallibilistic characterization of qualia, respectively. I will argue that Dennett's appeal to Wittgenstein (1953) against the former characterization fails to justify an eliminativist position with regards to the ontological referents of qualia. Then, I will argue that Dennett's argument against qualia, characterized as a fallibilistic posit, succeeds only against a false characterization of qualia, and is thus a straw-man argument.

Header 2: Against an Infallibilistic Characterization of Qualia

Dennett's (1988) argument explicitly relies on the assumption that a Wittgenstenian-style account of private experience demonstrates that an infallible or incorrigible account of private experience, as might have been defended by Descartes, has no distinct meaning. Dennett accepts, in accordance with Wittgenstein (1953), that where the criteria and reference for an intrinsically private property are indistinguishable, there exists no basis upon which to confirm, as opposed to disconfirm, a propositional statement concerning such a property. Dennett argues that such a statement can have no sense in which it is a true, as opposed to false. Dennett articulates this point, pointing to Wittgenstein's (1953) illustration of this claim, in which the latter states, "Imagine someone saying: 'But I know how tall I am!' and laying his hand on top of his head to prove it" (qtd. in Dennett, 1988, p. 7). Dennett ultimately declares that, "By diminishing one's claim until there is nothing left to be right or wrong about, one can achieve a certain empty invincibility . . ." (ibid.).

Dennett rejects qualia conceived as an infallibilistic posit on the basis that such a characterization renders claims regarding qualia as a causally inert, such that "absolutely nothing follows from this presumed knowledge" (ibid.). The threat of this particular characterization, then, is the postulation of a form of epiphenomenalism — the purported existence of some entity or property which is causally unrelated to any other existent entity or property. Under this characterization, to borrow a phrase from information theory, the

referents of qualia do not form a “difference which makes a difference,” and thus their reference is uninformative (Bateson, 1972).

Dennett (1988) thus argues that for the term “qualia” to be informative, which is to say meaningful, it must not refer infallibly to “properties of one's experience one cannot in principle misdiscover,” but instead fallibly to what he calls “*logical constructs* [formed] out of subjects' qualia-judgments” (p. 7). Dennett further clarifies this characterization, stating that for a given subject and a given quale, “a subject's experience has the quale if and only if the subject judges his experience to have quale” (ibid.). In this way, he claims, the postulate of qualia may be understood as being constituted on the basis of a subject's qualia-judgements by fiat. Dennett argues that qualia may be subject to confirmation or disconfirmation only if characterized in this way, and thus only have meaning under such a characterization. He argues, “The price you pay for the possibility of empirically confirming your assertions is the outside chance of being discredited” (ibid.). In *Part 2*, I will show why Dennett's characterization of the concept of qualia as fallible, however, fails to address the same concept of qualia which he adopts by hypothesis in his argument. As such, I will show why Dennett's argument against qualia, characterized in this way, amounts to a straw-man argument.

Header 3: Against a Fallibilistic Characterization of Qualia

Having rejected the infallibilistic characterization of qualia as meaningless on the basis of Wittgenstein's (1953) private language argument, Dennett (1988; 1992) then addresses a fallibilistic characterization of the term. In order to do so, he provides a series of intuition pumps which, he claims, serve to undermine the intuitive appeal of this second characterization. Dennett (1988) argues, on the basis of these intuition pumps, that there are no properties which meet the criteria for this characterization. I will focus on three of Dennett's intuition pumps to outline the basis for Dennett's claim.

Sub-Header 1: Dennett's "Quining Qualia"

The first two intuition pumps I will introduce from Dennett (1988) are called *The Neurosurgical Prank* and *Alternative Neurosurgery*. In the first of these, he describes a hypothetical scenario in which, he writes,

You wake up one morning to find that the grass has turned red, the sky yellow, and so forth. No one else notices any color anomalies in the world, so [you reach the conclusion that] the problem must be in you. You are entitled, it seems, to conclude that you have undergone visual color qualia inversion (and we later discover, if you like, just how the evil neurophysiologists tampered with your neurons to accomplish this). (p. 4)

He thus describes a case in which qualia inversion, and *a fortiori* qualia, can be etiologically explained by appeal to the neurophysiological adjustments performed by neurosurgery. Thus, he concludes, it appears that a qualia-judgement can be a "justifiably asserted [and] empirically verified" posit (p. 4).

In the second intuition pump, *Alternative Neurosurgery*, Dennett aims to demonstrate why this conclusion, though apparently intuitive, can be shown to be false. In this second intuition pump, Dennett employs a scenario which expands upon the first, and describes two different ways by which the neurosurgeon in the first scenario can achieve the qualia inversion it depicts. The first way he describes is:

- (I) Invert one of the "early" qualia-producing channels, e.g., in the optic nerve, so that all relevant neural events "downstream" are the "opposite" of their original and normal values. *Ex hypothesi* this inverts your qualia. (p. 5)

Otherwise, he continues:

- (II) Leave all those early pathways intact and simply invert certain memory-access links—whatever it is that accomplishes your tacit (and even unconscious!)

comparison of today's hues with those of yore. *Ex hypothesi* this does *not* invert your qualia at all, but just your memory-anchored dispositions to react to them. (ibid.)

In this way, Dennett provides two distinct means by which the appearance of a visual colour qualia inversion may plausibly be explained.

Dennett then describes a key predicament that a subject could face within this scenario. Specifically, he describes a situation in which a subject's qualia could appear inverted without the subject knowing if they have undergone procedure (I) or if they have undergone procedure (II). In such a case, Dennett proposes, the subject could be unaware of whether the apparent inversion of their qualia is the result of an actual qualia inversion or the result of an inversion of their memory-anchored disposition to react to their qualia. However, if such is the case, the subject within this scenario could then lack direct or immediate apprehension of their own qualia. For this reason, he proposes, what are regarded here as qualia can be shown, under certain circumstances, to fail to meet one of the criteria he proposes for qualia.

In his (1992) work, Dennett employs an intuition pump whose structure is similar to the ones described in his (1988) work. I will describe his (1992) intuition pump and its connection to the previous intuition pumps before evaluating the central argument Dennett proposes on the basis of all three intuition pumps in *Part 2*.

Sub-Header 2: Dennett's *Consciousness Explained*

Dennett (1992) seeks to demonstrate, in a similar fashion to his (1988) work, that there are no properties which meet the criteria for his fallibilistic characterization of qualia. He (1992) provides an intuition pump that he describes on the basis of what he refers to as "Orwellian" and "Stalinesque" theories of consciousness (p. 126). His theories of consciousness are named after two examples, one literary and the other historical, in which he claims it is possible for a subject to again fail to demonstrate direct or immediate apprehension of the state of their own qualia.

In the Orwellian example, a subject may fail to demonstrate direct or immediate apprehension of the state of their own qualia as the result of a *post-hoc* revision of their memory-anchored dispositions to react to qualia. In the Stalinesque theory, the failure to

demonstrate this apprehension is the result of a revision of their actual qualia. Dennett argues that, like in the previous scenario, a subject who has undergone either an Orwellian or a Stalinesque form of revision, but who is unaware of which one, may then demonstrably lack direct or immediate apprehension of the state of their own qualia. Dennett argues that, as such, what is regarded here as qualia again fail to meet the criteria for a fallibilistic account of qualia.

Dennett (1988; 1992) as such concludes, on the basis of his appeal to Wittgenstein (1953) and on the basis of his intuition pumps, that if “qualia” is a meaningful term of reference, then “there simply are no qualia at all” (p. 17). In *Part 2* of this chapter I will seek to evaluate Dennett’s arguments and show the ways in which they must either fail to undermine, or otherwise fail to address, the concept of qualia he adopts by hypothesis in his argument.

Part 2: Evaluation of Dennett’s Arguments

I will seek to show in this section that Dennett’s arguments against both a fallibilistic and infallibilistic characterization of qualia fail to support an eliminativist position with regards to the ontological referents of the term “qualia”, according to the criteria for this term Dennett (1988) proposes by hypothesis. I will argue that his fallibilistic characterization of qualia directly contradicts the criteria Dennett (1988) proposes for qualia. Characterized in this way, I will argue, Dennett’s critique of qualia is only successful in addressing a false characterization of qualia. I will then argue that Dennett’s argument against an infallibilistic characterization of qualia fails to provide support for an eliminativist, as opposed to a quietist, account of qualia. As such, I will argue Dennett’s critique of qualia is unsupported by both arguments he proposes.

Header 1: Dennett’s Success and Failure

Insofar as Dennett is justified, *arguendo*, in his rejection of an infallibilistic characterization of qualia in favour of a fallibilistic characterization, I hold that Dennett’s (1988) argument is successful (p. 7). That is, I hold that Dennett’s set of intuition pumps in his (1988) and (1992) works demonstrate the ways in which the concept of qualia, characterized fallibilistically, can be undermined.

I argue that, however, Dennett is not justified in the adoption of a fallibilistic characterization of qualia. Whereas the criteria for qualia Dennett (1988) proposes by hypothesis addresses a characterization of qualia as private, ineffable, intrinsic, and directly or immediately accessible, I argue Dennett implicitly rejects this hypothesis by adopting a fallibilistic characterization of qualia. That is, where Dennett argues against a fallibilistic characterization of qualia, I propose that the characterization that he argues against is not the same as the characterization of qualia which he proposes within his argument.

I support this claim on the basis that, according to the criteria that Dennett (1988) outlines within his argument, qualia are not public and effable properties subject to empirical verification. Dennett's description of "logical constructs out of subjects' qualia-judgement" is a behavioural description of qualia. As such, I argue, it is a description of a property which is public and effable. For this reason, Dennett's argument against qualia, characterized fallibilistically, is not an argument against qualia according to the criteria he outlines. As such, I argue Dennett's rejection of qualia characterized as publicly accessible logical constructs amounts to a rejection of a false characterization—which is to say, a straw man.

With regards to Dennett's appeal to Wittgenstein's (1953) argument against qualia conceived as an infallibilistic concept, I propose that Wittgenstein does not make any such eliminativist argument with regards to qualia. That is, Wittgenstein does not propose a positive thesis against the existence of qualia. As Wittgenstein (1953) argues, an intrinsically private reference is "not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either!" (p. 102). Wittgenstein instead argues that the an ontological referent described by a private language, lacking methodological verification conditions by which it may be confirmed, as opposed to disconfirmed, has no meaning. For this reason, he argues, it must lie outside the domain of what can be meaningfully referenced within a natural language. This finding alone, however, does not imply that the ontological referent of qualia thereby does not exist. Such an eliminativist position lacks any methodological verification conditions by which it may be confirmed, as opposed to disconfirmed. As such, a negative, eliminativist position with regards to qualia is as meaningless as a positive position. In this way, Wittgenstein's argument makes no commitment to the non-existence of qualia.

Dennett's methodologically naturalistic argument, however, in disavowing Wittgenstein's quietist solution in favour of an eliminativist commitment, encounters a problem that Wittgenstein's argument does not. In this way, Dennett argues for a position, which cannot

be meaningfully supported on the basis of Wittgenstein's (1953) argument. In proposing what he (1988) calls a "more radical stand than Wittgenstein's," Dennett fails to appreciate the motivation for this stand, and thus makes a false claim (p. 4).

Chapter Conclusion

I have thus provided an overview of Dennett's (1988; 1992) central argument against qualia, which he claims demonstrates the incoherence of even our pre-theoretical concept of qualia. In this argument, he claims that there are no properties which meet the criteria he proposes for qualia. In response, my evaluation of Dennett's argument has been the following. Dennett's argument must fail to address a characterization of qualia which is ineffable, intrinsic, private, and directly or immediately apprehensible, and thus succeeds solely in addressing a false characterization –a straw man. Otherwise, his argument must fail to support an eliminativist conclusion with regards to such a characterization.

In *Chapter 3*, I will argue that it is false that the concept of qualia refers to "no properties or features at all," as Dennett claims (1988, p. 5), but rather that what the term refers to is both ontologically and methodologically underdetermined. I will argue that Dennett's argument can only be justified, theoretically, if the methodological naturalism to which he appeals can be found to be more justified than any competing methodological approach. However, I will argue, the adoption of a methodologically naturalistic framework has no independent methodological justification which is not also available to another methodological framework, namely a broadly phenomenistic methodology. As such, I will argue that Dennett's argument against qualia relies on an unjustified methodological assumption. I will argue that, without further recourse, it is therefore most epistemically responsible to maintain a methodological agnosticism with regards to qualia.

Chapter 3: The Methodological Underdetermination of Qualia

Chapter Introduction:

To demonstrate a flaw common to both naturalistic and broadly phenomenistic methodological solutions to whether qualia exist, and whether the term "qualia" has meaning,

I will demonstrate how both methodological approaches commence on the basis of conflicting methodological assumptions. That is, I will argue that while the methodological naturalism Dennett adopts is fundamentally incompatible with the postulate of qualia, several broadly phenomenalist arguments I will introduce in this chapter adopt a methodology fundamentally incompatible with the non-existence of such a postulate. As such, the methodology adopted by both these critics and defendant of the concept of qualia, I will argue, beg the question against the other to form a dialectical stalemate.

Part 1: The Dialectical Stalemate

To demonstrate the incompatibility in methodological assumptions between methodological naturalism and phenomenism, I will present an overview of the methodological dialectic which exists between Dennett and Quine on one side, and several key defendants of qualia on the other. I will compare the methodological assumptions shared by the first side with the following key defendants: Thomas Nagel, David Chalmers, and John Searle, as well as those of two contemporary phenomenologists, Dan Zahavi and David Cerbone. To make this comparison, however, I will first begin by introducing the methodological assumptions Dennett, following Quine, explicitly espouses.

Header 1: Dennett's Methodological Assumption

In Dennett's (1989) work, he is explicit regarding the incompatibility of his methodological assumption with the assumptions of at least some canonical proponents of qualia. He states,

I declare my starting point to be the objective, materialistic, third-person world of the physical sciences. This is the orthodox choice today in the English-speaking philosophical world, but it has its detractors, most notably Nagel, who has devoted a book, *The View from Nowhere* (1989), to deploring the effects of this tactical choice. . . . To Nagel, this is mere scientism. . . . Since Nagel and I start from different perspectives, his arguments beg the question against a position like mine: what counts for him as flat obvious, and in need of no further support, often fails to impress me. . . . The feeling then is mutual; we beg the question against each other. (p. 5)

It is apparent that Dennett's methodological stance, even to Dennett himself, is inconsistent with that of Nagel and those whose stance is similar to Nagel's. Dennett defends his methodologically naturalistic assumption, arguing,

I do not presuppose that an alternative starting point such as Nagel's must be wrong or that everything in the universe worth taking seriously must be accessible from my starting point. I am impressed, however, with its proven yield of (apparent) comprehension, and even more so by its promise of future harvests. (p. 9)

Thus Dennett, like Quine, argues that this stance is justified principally for pragmatic reasons. He continues, stating,

Perhaps those who distrust the frankly materialistic assumptions and aspirations of the current scientific image are right to do so, but I doubt it The orthodoxy today of my scientific starting point might even be due as much to social and political factors as to any philosophical justification. My tactical hunch, however, is that even if this is so, the best way to come to understand the situation is by starting here and letting whatever revolutions are in the offing foment from within. I propose to see, then, just what the mind looks like from the third-person, materialistic perspective of contemporary science. (pp. 6-7)

In this way, Dennett argues his methodological approach can be justified as the best means to address traditional problems in philosophy, barring the availability of superior alternatives. I will now compare his justification with those proposed in several phenomenistic arguments in defence of qualia. I will make this comparison in order to show that the methodological justification proposed by neither side may succeed where the other must also, by the same account, fail. I will argue in *Chapter 4* that, as a consequence, the resolution to the methodological problem of qualia must lie outside the methodological domain of either side of this argument.

Header 2: The Methodological Assumption of Qualia Defendants

I will now proceed to present an account of the status of the dialectic which exists between naturalistic and phenomenistic methodological approaches, from the perspective of the latter. To begin, I will present an account of the status according to Thomas Nagel (1974), before addressing arguments presented by Chalmers, Searle, and the contemporary phenomenologists Zahavi and Cerbone, respectively. I will claim that arguments proposed by each of these individuals have a methodological assumption in common. That is, they share in the common the postulation of the irreducible, epistemically primitive posit, qualia.

Sub-Header 1: Thomas Nagel

According to Nagel (1974), a correct characterization of conscious experience must describe consciousness in terms of the intrinsically “subjective character of an experience” (p. 445). Nagel claims that this character cannot be explained entirely by appeal only to physical properties without making the error of first assuming an objective, third-person perspective. Explaining consciousness entirely in physicalistic terms, in his view, assumes a methodological stance in which experience occupies no privileged epistemological position. He argues that a third-person perspective, however, fails to account for the “point of view” from which such a perspective is possible, namely from that of the first-person (p. 449).

In Nagel’s view, the subjective character of experience, or “what it is like” to have an experience, is the essential property of the first-person perspective, which is necessarily omitted by an investigation of the first-person perspective conducted from the third-person perspective (p. 439). He defends this stance by arguing that a third-person hypothesis must mistakenly assume an objective assessment of the character of subjective properties, and in so doing, must fail to address the very problem it aims to resolve.

Nagel further argues that the implications of his view are not that the “physicalist hypothesis,” which assumes the third-person perspective, is false, but rather that it is a position which cannot be meaningfully understood “because we do not at present have any conception of how it might be true” (p. 446). Thus, Nagel argues, the very enterprise of investigation carried out purely from a third-person perspective takes the form of a meaningless abstraction from the prior fact that a first-person perspective exists. As such, he

argues the third-person scientific account of subjective experience is methodologically incoherent.

Sub-Header 2: David Chalmers

According to an argument proposed by David Chalmers (1996), the existence of conscious experience plays a fundamental role in support of the ontology he espouses called “naturalistic dualism”. Chalmers argues that any account of conscious experience in terms of physical processes will always fail to account for the further problem, why does conscious experience accompany these physical processes? The formal argument he proposes is the following:

- A. In our world, there are conscious experiences.
- B. There is a logically possible world physically identical to ours, in which the positive facts about consciousness in our world do not hold.
- C. Therefore, facts about consciousness are further facts about our world, over and above the physical facts. (p. 123, *format changed*)

Chalmers defends his first premise on the basis that the existence of conscious experience, for him, is an intuitively accessible fact. He defends his appeal to intuition, arguing that these claims on the basis of intuition are “natural and plain,” and their denial “forced” (p. 110). He continues, arguing that the existence of conscious experience is a “prima facie premise that only an extremely strong argument could overturn” (p. 167). Chalmers arrives at the conclusion that, barring any such argument, a naturalistic theory, if comprehensive, should include conscious experience as a “primitive” posit, whose relation to physics must be duly accommodated by a widening in scope of the natural sciences (p. 108).

Arguing on the offensive, Chalmers makes the charge against the methodological naturalist that to analyse consciousness merely in terms of its causal properties, i.e. functionally, is to change the subject entirely (p. 105). He argues,

What usually happens is that theorists implicitly rely on some psychological criterion for consciousness, such as the focus of attention, the control of behaviour, and most frequently the ability to make verbal reports about an internal state. (p. 115)

Chalmers argues that in each of these cases, the theorist makes the illicit assumption of a behaviouristic characterization of consciousness which begs the question against a phenomenalist defence of qualia. Rejecting this characterization, he calls on the methodological naturalist to produce an independently justified argument in defence of a naturalistic, “functionalist”, account of qualia. Chalmers offers a possible diagnosis for why, he claims, none appear forthcoming. He writes, “Perhaps our inner lives differ dramatically. Perhaps one of us is ‘cognitively closed’ to the insights of the other. More likely,” he claims, “one of us is confused or is in the grip of a dogma” (p. 167). However, he concludes, “once the dialectic has reached this point, it is a bridge that argument cannot cross Explicit argument can help us to isolate and characterize the clash,” he states, “but not to resolve it” (ibid).

Sub-Header 3: John Searle

John Searle (1997) proposes an argument which shares a key similarity to the argument presented by Chalmers. Like Chalmers, Searle argues that the concept of phenomenal consciousness is self-affirming. Searle’s support for this argument rests on the claim that, with regards to phenomenal consciousness, there can be no distinction between reality and appearances. Searle argues, in keeping with Kripke (1980), “If it consciously seems to me that I am conscious, then I am conscious” (p. 122). That is, if consciousness is apparent, then it can be affirmed to exist.

In direct response to Dennett (1992), Searle also claims that Dennett’s methodological stance denies part of the data requiring explanation. Because phenomenal consciousness, according to Searle, must have a “first-person or subjective ontology” (p. 122), an argument which appeals to the “the objectivity of science and verificationism” must necessarily fail to address it (p. 212). Thus, the reduction of consciousness to physical properties, he argues, is made impossible from the outset. In this way, Searle argues, the subjective ontology of

phenomenal consciousness is simply a “brute” fact, whose existence must in some way be reconciled with the objective ontology of the physical world (p. 158).

Sub-Header 4: The Phenomenalistic Position

I will next present an overview of the methodological assumption proposed by the contemporary phenomenologist Zahavi in response to the methodological assumption espoused by Dennett. Zahavi’s views, it will be apparent, bear striking similarity to the views of the qualia defendants I have introduced. I will then present an argument by Cerbone (2012) for why a phenomenalistic methodological assumption is justified. Cerbone’s argument is a response to the methodological naturalist’s charge that a phenomenalistic characterization of consciousness cannot be independently verified and is, as such, problematic. Cerbone argues that this is a problem that not only a phenomenalistic methodological assumption must confront. He argues it is a problem which also must be confronted by the assumption of methodological naturalism.

In response to Dennett’s (1992) “metaphysical minimalism”, what Dan Zahavi (2007) calls a form of “eliminativism”, Zahavi claims that

Dennett’s heterophenomenology must be criticized not only for simply presupposing the availability of the third-person perspective without reflecting on and articulating its conditions of possibility, but also for failing to realize to what extent its own endeavour tacitly presupposes an intact first-person perspective. (p. 11)

Zahavi argues that it is a prior fact that a theoretical posit derived from the third-person perspective assumed by the scientific method must be performed by “embodied and embedded subjects” (ibid.). To support his claim he cites Merleau-Ponty (1945), who considers it both “naïve and dishonest” to ignore the primacy of the first-person perspective in a scientific endeavour since the endeavour must first presuppose the scientist’s “first-personal and pre-scientific experience of the world” (p. iii). Zahavi then quotes Nagel’s (1989) famous dictum that there can be no intrinsically third-person perspective since there can be no “*View from Nowhere*” (title). That is, there must be in every case a first-person perspective assumed in any purportedly objective endeavour.

Next, directly in response to a charge made by Quine (1968) that the phenomenalist stance is just a form of “creative reconstruction . . . [and, therefore,] make-believe” (p. 75), Cerbone (2012), a second phenomenalist, proposes a kind of *tu quoque* argument. Cerbone argues first, like the other broadly phenomenalist arguments I introduce, that the naturalist’s stance errs in the assumption that a third-person, objective methodology is correct. Cerbone then continues, addressing what Quine call the phenomenalist’s “transcendental” charge.

The transcendental charge which Quine (1968) addresses, in Quine’s view, maintains that if “science ‘[is to take] for granted’ an objectively determinate world,” it must first provide an account of its “own possibility scientifically” (p. 21). This is the view that Quine discards as unachievable, citing Carnap’s (1928) failure, and his own (1951) argument. Quine (1960) argues that the transcendental charge implies what he calls a kind of “first-philosophy,” which cannot be independently justified, and thus has no independently verifiable sense, or meaning (p. 4). He argues, that, without further recourse to some independent form of justification, the alternative is inevitable: “we all must start in the middle” (*ibid.*). In this way, Cerbone proposes that the phenomenalist’s transcendental charge against the naturalist’s stance is, in short, “something which the Quinean more or less happily accepts as unavoidable” (p. 21).

Cerbone continues, arguing that while phenomenism may indeed require a demonstration that its methods amount to more than just what Quine calls “make-believe”, it remains the case that the phenomenalist is equally entitled to present their own charge against the methodological naturalist upon similar grounds. Cerbone argues that, insofar as Quine (1969) claims that epistemology is a mere chapter contained within natural science, it is unclear by what means Quine’s argument can make meaningful use of physical terms, such as “sensory stimulations”, in support of his claims (p. 83). Cerbone argues that if sensory stimulation is the basis upon which physical postulates are “constructed” or “projected” (*ibid.*) by hypothesis, what is in need of explanation –the explanandum— is in this case conflated with what is responsible for the explanation –the explanans. This, however, Cerbone claims, results in a circular form of explanation. Therefore, Cerbone argues, there is no independently justified basis in the assumption of either methodological naturalism or methodological phenomenism, as what constitutes what Quine states amounts to “what I have to go on,” which is not by the other’s account simply a form of “make-believe” (*ibid.*).

Cerbone, in this way issues the following claim: the methodological naturalist has no prior claim to methodological adequacy in the confrontation of philosophical problems,

except by the means available to a phenomenistic methodology. Thus, without independent justification, the adoption of one over the other is an arbitrary or circular form of methodological assumption.

Chapter Conclusion

I have shown that the opposing sets of arguments I have introduced reach what appears to be a dialectical stalemate with regards to the methodological problem surrounding qualia: how may the adoption of one methodological assumption be justified over the other in addressing whether qualia exist, or whether the term “qualia” has meaning? Where Dennett argues, with Quine, that a theory must be naturalistically verifiable in order to have meaning, the phenomenalist claims that in every case, as Chalmers (1996) writes, “there is something [more] to be explained –some phenomenon associated with first-person experience that presents a problem not presented by observation of cognition from the third-person point of view” (p. 110). In each case, a methodological framework is first assumed whose consequence has ramifications on the ontological status of qualia, and the meaning of the term “qualia”, which is then employed in support of their argument.

That is, I argue that these two sets of arguments propose contradicting methodological solutions to address whether qualia exist. I further argue that, without independent justification for the adoption of one methodology over the other, the justification for either must be arbitrary or circular. With regards to Dennett’s naturalistic methodological approach, in which qualia are behaviourally described as logical constructs out of a subject’s qualia-judgements, his stance is incompatible with the postulate of irreducible, epistemically primitive posits. Conversely, for the phenomenalist, the existence of qualia cannot be coherently denied without contradiction. Thus, I have argued, the existence of qualia is a concern which is resolved, in each case, solely in virtue of the methodological approach assumed.

Without an independent means to adjudicate between competing methodological assumptions, the adoption of one over the other, I argue, requires further justification. I propose that, with no further form of methodological justification forthcoming, as evidenced by the dialectical stalemate I have described, whether qualia exist is methodologically underdetermined. On this basis, in contrast to the methodological justification proposed by

both the methodologically naturalistic and phenomenalist arguments I have presented, I propose a methodologically agnostic resolution.

Chapter 4: The Resolution to the Methodological Problem of Qualia

Chapter Introduction

For the purpose of my argument, I propose a distinction between two characterizations of qualia. These are between the characterization of qualia as what Dennett (1988) refers to as “logical constructs out of a subject’s qualia-judgments” (p. 7), and the characterization of qualia as epistemically primitive posits. The first is a characterization of qualia which is described by means of “reports” or “judgements” regarding experience issued from the third-person perspective. Because they are described in terms of behaviour, they are, as such, observational data which is corrigible and fallible. Conversely, the characterization of qualia as epistemically primitive posits assumes that qualia are properties which are directly accessible in experience, and therefore whose existence cannot be denied even in principle. They are, for this reason, incorrigible or infallible posits. I will refer to the first characterization of qualia as a behaviouristically described reference to an object which may not exist. I will refer to the second characterization of qualia as an epistemically necessary object of reference.

Next, I will seek to show that the first characterization of qualia is not, as the methodological naturalist would claim, meaningless. Instead, I will argue, it is a meaningful reference to a naturalistically unverifiable object of reference. I will also propose, in keeping with Wittgenstein, a quietist solution with regards to the second characterization of qualia as infallible, epistemically originating properties. That is, I will argue, the first characterization of qualia may be understood as a naturalistically verifiable reference to the second characterization of qualia, a naturalistically unverifiable object of reference. I will argue that, in this way, the first characterization of qualia may play a functional role in natural language, and thus has the ability to have an informative impact on natural language. As such, I will argue, the first characterization of qualia is a term which has meaning according to methodologically naturalistic standards. I will argue that this is possible under a

methodologically agnostic framework, which makes no prior assumption of methodological naturalism or phenomenalism, as I have defended in the previous chapter.

Specifically, I will claim that the first characterization of qualia plays a functional role in natural language by allowing a distinction between the positive methodological assumption of methodological naturalism over phenomenology, or vice versa. That is, I will argue, this characterization of qualia provides the methodologically naturalistic verification conditions by which to determine if a methodological argument is naturalistic or phenomenistic, and whether the second characterization of qualia consequently exists or has meaning according to the methodological framework adopted. Thus, I will argue, the first characterization of qualia has methodologically naturalistic verification conditions according to which it may be determined whether the postulate of qualia is true or false: if an argument which is being utilized is methodologically naturalistic, it is not the case that for that argument qualia have a meaningful referent; and if an argument being utilized is phenomenistic, then it is the case that for that argument qualia have a meaningful referent. Thus, I will argue that a methodological agnosticism with regards to the methodological problem of qualia supports the conclusion that the first characterization of qualia has naturalistic methodological verification conditions according to which qualia are postulates which either meaningfully refer to unverifiable objects of reference or do not. This characterization of qualia, under an agnostic methodological framework, I will argue thus has a meaning in natural language.

Header 1: A New Terminological Proposal

To begin, I will propose that the second, infallible characterization of qualia refers to what Hugh Alcock (2009) calls “unindividuable . . . epistemologically originating properties” (pp. 208-209). I will argue that they are, for this reason, not subject to empirical confirmation or disconfirmation. That is, they are “non-naturalistic” (p. 32). I will argue this on the basis of a proposal by Alcock (2009) for a characterization of qualia as the properties “realised by conscious creatures in virtue of which they apprehend some aspect of the world” (p. 202). He argues that, characterized as such, the existence of qualia is a “precondition for the possibility of science, i.e., knowledge about the natural world” (p. 186).

Alcock defends this characterization, arguing it does not amount to a merely circular claim. He argues that it is not the case that a subject “apprehends some aspect of the world . . . because [the subject] realises an epistemically originating property, and [the subject]

realises an epistemically originating property because [the subject apprehends] some aspect of the world” (p. 203). Rather, he claims, qualia are properties in part constitutive of the subject. He claims qualia are in this way a necessary condition on the basis of which the subject is characterized in “contradistinction to the world the subject apprehends and thereby comes to know about” (p. 204). Without this condition, he argues, we could “apprehend nothing in the world, i.e., no world would exist for us” (p. 211).

In addition, I propose a characterization of the second characterization of qualia which is in keeping with the terminological proposals of both Crane (2000) and Alcock (2009). According to this characterization, there exists no objectively determinate basis from which to discern if two qualia, thus characterized, are identical or distinct from one another. They are, as such, unindividuable. Because qualia, under this characterization, are in part constitutive of a subject, it is not possible for a subject to apprehend them as distinct and objectively determinate empirical objects for the same reason that, as Alcock states, an “eye cannot gaze upon itself” (p. 114). I will argue on the basis of this account of the second characterization of qualia for the remainder of my argument.

Header 2: A Positive Resolution to the Methodological Problem of Qualia

The resolution to the methodological problem of qualia for which I advocate involves consideration of the methodological underdetermination which I describe in *Chapter 3*. I have argued that the adoption of either methodological naturalism or phenomenology to address whether qualia exist or not, or whether “qualia” has meaning or not, requires independent justification. With no independent justification forthcoming, I have proposed a methodological agnosticism with regards to qualia.

Upon the basis of this methodological agnosticism, I propose that there exists a naturalistic methodological verification condition according to which it is possible to verify whether the term “qualia” has a meaningful referent or not. If my proposal is true, then I argue that the term “qualia”, therefore, has a naturalistically verifiable meaning. The naturalistic verification conditions I propose to determine whether “qualia” has a meaningful referent or not are precisely those which distinguish the adoption of a methodological naturalism, as opposed to a phenomenalist methodology, or vice versa, under a methodologically agnostic framework. I propose that, under the condition that a methodological naturalistic framework is adopted, it becomes the case that there then exists a

naturalistic verification condition by which it is possible to verify whether “qualia” is a term which has naturalistic verification conditions, and thus meaning. That is, the explicitly conditional adoption of a methodologically naturalistic framework provides the conditions by which it may be naturalistically verified whether qualia exist.

I propose, then, that it is the case that, under a methodologically agnostic framework, there is a naturalistically verifiable sense in which the postulate of qualia may be false, as opposed to true—that is, upon the conditional assumption of methodological naturalism. I argue that, if this is the case, then “qualia” meets the criteria stipulated by Wittgenstein for a term in language which has a sense, as opposed to no sense. I therefore argue that, by Wittgenstein’s account, “qualia” has a meaning under a methodologically agnostic framework—as a reference to a naturalistically verifiable property, regardless of whether the second characterization of qualia can be naturalistically verified. I argue that, on this basis, the second characterization of qualia has meaning, under a methodologically naturalistic framework, as the referent which is denied according to such a framework. In this way, I propose a resolution to the methodological problem of qualia—a methodological agnosticism, whose consequence is a meaningful, naturalistic account of the term “qualia”, characterized as a naturalistically verifiable reference to a naturalistically unverifiable property.

Objections and Responses

Objection 1:

It is arguable that a naturalistic “heterophenomenological” methodology, such as the one advanced by Dennett, could succeed by regarding “qualia” as a hypothetical posit, which, under further examination, is best rejected on the basis of an inference to the best explanation. Dennett (1992) would appear to have gone to great length to attempt to establish this conclusion. How do you respond to this argument, specifically?

Response 1:

To this objection, I would respond by asking, upon what justification can such an inference to the best explanation be founded? Quine and Dennett are explicit with regards to

the justification they offer, which is the claim there can be no further recourse to justify theorizing apart from what Quine (1960) refers to as “starting in the middle” (p. 4) and using what he (1969) says “I have to go on” (p. 83).

However, I argue, it is incoherent to propose an eliminativist account of qualia on the basis of a methodologically naturalistic framework without making a circular argument. Whereas Wittgenstein (1953) proposes a quietist account of intrinsically private referents, and thus avoids this problem, Dennett (1988; 1992) proposes an eliminativist account. I have argued that Dennett, unlike Wittgenstein, errs in his proposal.

Objection 2:

You appear to argue that Dennett’s characterization of qualia fails precisely because it is a fallible characterization, and thus fails to refer to the characterization of qualia that his argument seeks to address, by hypothesis. On what basis can your argument support a fallibilistic characterization of qualia which is meaningful, where it denies that a fallibilistic characterization is defensible in Dennett’s (1988; 1992) arguments? That is, on what basis do you argue there is a distinction between what Dennett (1988) characterizes as fallibilistic “logical constructs” (p. 7) and the fallibilistic characterization you propose, such that the argument you propose succeeds, where Dennett’s fails?

Response 2:

In response to this objection, I must provide the following distinction: the characterization which I propose of qualia, as a fallibilistic reference, is distinguished from the characterization proposed by Dennett on the basis that I deny that a fallibilistic, as opposed to an infallibilistic, characterization of the term qualia may be assumed methodologically without circularity. That is, I argue in favour of a fallibilistic characterization of the term “qualia” without, at the same time, arguing against an infallibilistic characterization of qualia on the basis of a methodological assumption.

Thus, the fallible characterization of qualia I propose is distinguished from the characterization proposed by Dennett on the basis that the characterization I propose, unlike Dennett’s, is compatible with a methodologically agnostic resolution to the methodological

problem of qualia. This characterization of qualia I propose, in turn, has naturalistic verification conditions according to which it is true or false, under a methodological agnostic framework, and therefore has meaning. *Contra* Dennett, I have argued that a fallible characterization of qualia, as a subject's behaviourally described report or judgement about their private experience, however, may or may not have an infallible referent. I have argued that whether the fallibilistic characterization of qualia refers to the infallibilistic characterization of qualia, or to nothing at all, is the consequence of the conditional assumption of one methodological framework over the other.

Thesis Conclusion

On the basis that there exists no independent justification for the assumption of a naturalistic, as opposed to a phenomenistic, methodological standard to determine whether qualia exist, or whether the term "qualia" has meaning, I have proposed a form of methodological agnosticism as the resolution to this methodological problem. In this way, I have argued for the characterization of qualia as a meaningful, naturalistically verifiable postulate, whose methodological verification conditions lie in the explicitly conditional assumption of one methodological framework over another.

To reach this conclusion, I have argued against an eliminativist account of qualia, as proposed by Dennett, and in favour of the explicitly conditional adoption of methodology in addressing the existence of qualia. This is to say the elimination of an eliminativist account, and a methodological adoption of methodology, is the key to resolving the methodological problem of qualia. Where Wittgenstein (1921) proposes the elimination of a body of philosophical theory as doctrine, and ultimately recommends the elimination of even the eliminatory framework in favour of silence, I too propose a similar resolution to the methodological problem of qualia in the form of methodological agnosticism. I argue in contrast to Wittgenstein, however, that there is a characterization of qualia which has meaning by his methodologically verificationist standards. This is the characterization of qualia as the boundary between methodological naturalism and phenomenology, under a methodological agnosticism, which provides the methodological verification conditions under which private experiences have a sense in which they are false, as opposed to true.

Thus, I conclude, a resolution to the methodological problem of qualia can be found in methodological agnosticism, and the explicitly conditional assumption of naturalism, as opposed to phenomenology, or vice versa.

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