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Reading Reaction 2

**Prompt 2**

Object to one of Chalmers' arguments that Type C Materialism collapses into Type A or Type B Materialism.

According to Chalmers, type-c materialism is the view that there is an “epistemic gap between physical and phenomenal domains” but this gap can be closed (pg. 23). We just do not have the knowledge or reasoning required to close this gap yet. In other words, type-c materialism says that there is a theory that will solve the hard problem of consciousness in physical terms we just don't know what that theory is yet.

Chalmers argues that type-c materialism is “inherently unstable” and ends up collapsing into type-A materialism, type-B materialism, type-D dualism, or type-F monism (pg. 23). This is because either all phenomenal experience can be described in terms of physical functions (type-A materialism), physics could go beyond function (type-D dualism or type-F monism), or phenomenal domains are implied by physical functions (type-B materialism) (pg. 27). Chalmers makes this conclusion by offering three constraints (or claims) on the physical and phenomenal domains.

I will object to the third claim that “truths about consciousness are not truths about structure and dynamics” (pg. 24). One reason Chalmers gives in support of this claim is Frank Jackson's Mary's room argument. In this argument, Mary knows everything there is to know about color vision but lives in a black and white room and has never experienced the color red.

When Mary leaves the room and sees red, she then experiences what it is like to see red. Thus, knowing everything about red does not equate to experiencing red. And so, truths about consciousness cannot be truths about physical structure and dynamics.

I dislike this argument because, obviously, knowing everything about a physical process doesn't make that process happen. Just because I have all the physical knowledge about how a ball moves when I kick it does not mean that a ball will move. There needs to exist a ball and a person to kick it for it to move. Likewise, there is a difference between the actual physical process of brain activity that happens when a person sees red and having knowledge about the brain activity that happens when a person sees red. Knowing the neuroscience of seeing red is not the same as the pattern of neural activity that happens when one sees red. So, it is true that if I know everything about color vision, I will not experience color. Thus, Mary's room argument does not offer any insight into the question of whether explaining physical processes suffice to explain consciousness.

I think a better question is, if we knew the exact brain activity that occurs when I see red and a way to make that activity happen without me actually seeing the color red then would I still experience red? If I could experience red just from physical brain activity and without seeing red, then this would suggest that truths about consciousness are in fact truths about physical processes. But currently, we do not know the exact brain activity of seeing red and we also don't know how to reproduce this activity, so this question is not answerable at the given time. Thus, it could be the case that understanding physical process is enough to understand consciousness we just don't know yet.

I also think that Chalmers does not offer any room for other theories of consciousness to emerge if every future theory would just collapse into type-A materialism, type-B materialism,

type-D dualism, or type-F monism. There could very possibility be knowledge about the brain and conciseness that we do not know about yet that radically changes our views on the connection (or disconnection) between the physical and the phenomenal, while also not collapsing into other theories. When Chalmers rejects type-c materialism, he leaves no room for this possibility (which I believe to be a mistake).

### **Works Cited**

David J. Chamlers, *Consciousness and its Place in Nature*. Published in S. Stich & T. Warfield, eds, *Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Mind* (2003).