The Hard Problem of Consciousness

Benjamin Stucky
Consciousness = Qualia (phenomenal experience)

„there is something it is like to be“
- Thomas Nagel
Qualia Sensory

seeing

hearing

smell

touch

taste
Qualia Moods

disgust
surprise
fear
anticipation
joy
anger
sadness
Qualia Sensations

movement

tickling

vibration

heat

blanace

itching
Qualia Others

thoughts

memory

sense of self

...?
How is your qualia experienced right now: 

separate, 

one 

or 

inbetween 

?
Problem of Phenomenal Unity
e.g. synestesia
Ποταμοῖς τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐμβαίνομέν τε καὶ οὐκ ἐμβαίνομεν, εἶμέν τε καὶ οὐκ εἰμεν.

"We both step and do not step in the same rivers. We are and are not."

- Heraclitus
Where are the borders to your experience?
What is/has no qualia?
if we define consciousness as qualia, the felt experience, can an “observer”, without being in that state, even infer if something has no consciousness?
Inference about experiential character of other organisms may be impossible

- Nagel Thomas: „What is it like to be a bat?“
Plant Behaviour

Elhakeem N. et al. Aboveground mechanical stimuli affect belowground plant-plant communication, 2018

Trewavas A. What is plant behaviour? Plant Cell and Environment, 2009
Paramecium Learning

Are we too brain-centric in search of consciousness?
„We might not be able to communicate a conscious state to ourselves and others.“

- Kastrup Bernardo
“explanation of cognitive abilities and [neurophysiological] functions”

- David Chalmers
“Why should physical processing give rise to a rich inner life at all?”
- David Chalmers
“The hard question could have been formulated quite easily in a neutral way as ‘how experience co-varies with physical features of the world’”
- Matthijs Cornelissen

“Why should physical processing give rise to a rich inner life at all?”
- David Chalmers
Each one of us is potentially Mind at Large. But [...] our business is at all costs to survive. To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funneled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system.

- Aldous Huxley (The Doors of Perception)
Is the problem of experience hard? If so, what makes it hard?
Philosophical Zombie
- Kripke 1972, Chalmers 1996

From a world made of matter and governed by laws, a copy of you is conceivable without having any qualia.
Similarly, a copy of you is conceivable with inverted qualia.

Inverted Qualia
- Locke 1690
Knowledge Argument
- Jackson 1982

Mary is enclosed in a white room, has never seen color but learns every detail about the visual system. Then she is set free and sees color for the first time. Will she learn more?
Problem of Mechanism
- Feigl 1958 Autocerebroscope

Even if we would live stream the brain, thus placing the subjective and objective in close proximity, we wouldn’t know why a neuron, network, property, workspace, or information configuration is accompanied with qualia.