

ข้อปกป้องแนวทางการกำจัดลักษณะทางการตระหนักรู้ของสภาวะจิตในทัศนะของแดเนียล เด็นเน็ตต์ ต่อข้อแย้งเรื่องข้อมูลจำเป็นที่ทฤษฎีจิตต้องอธิบาย

A Defense of Daniel Dennett's Eliminativist Approach on Consciousness against the Datum Objection¹

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อปกป้องแนวทางการกำจัดลักษณะทางการตระหนักรู้ของสภาวะจิตในทัศนะของแดเนียล เด็นเน็ตต์จากข้อแย้งเรื่องข้อมูลจำเป็นที่ทฤษฎีจิตต้องอธิบาย ข้อแย้งดังกล่าวเสนอโดยนักปรัชญาร่วมสมัย เช่น เดวิด ชาลส์เมอร์ และจอห์น เซิร์ล กล่าวว่า การที่เด็นเน็ตต์ปฏิเสธการมีอยู่ทางภววิทยาของ 'ควอลเลีย' ที่เป็นคุณสมบัติเชิงปรากฏการณ์ทางอัตวิสัยนั้น ส่งผลให้ทัศนะของเขาปฏิเสธข้อมูลสำคัญที่ทฤษฎีในปรัชญาจิตจำเป็นต้องอธิบายไปด้วย อย่างไรก็ตามจากการศึกษาพบว่า แนวคิดของเด็นเน็ตต์ที่เรียกว่า 'อีลูชันนิส' นั้น ยังคงให้ความสำคัญกับปรากฏการณ์ของประสบการณ์ทางการตระหนักรู้ และอธิบาย 'ควอลเลีย' ในฐานะวัตถุทางเจตภาวะของความเชื่อที่เกิดจากการสังเกตประสบการณ์ทางอัตวิสัยว่าเป็นเพียงภาพลวงตา บทความนี้จึงสรุปว่า เด็นเน็ตต์ไม่ได้ปฏิเสธข้อมูลสำคัญตามที่ถูกแย้ง นอกจากนี้การที่เขาปฏิเสธการมีอยู่ทางภววิทยาของข้อมูลจำเป็นที่ต้องถูกอธิบาย ยังเป็นการเปิดมุมมองใหม่ต่อปัญหาเกี่ยวกับลักษณะทางการตระหนักรู้ ซึ่งส่งผลให้เด็นเน็ตต์สามารถอธิบาย 'ควอลเลีย' ในเชิงวิทยาศาสตร์ได้ว่ามันเป็นเพียงภาพลวงตา

Abstract

The article is aimed to defend Daniel Dennett's eliminativist approach on consciousness against what I call 'the datum objection'. The datum objection, proposed by contemporary philosophers e.g. David Chalmers and John Searle, criticizes that by rejecting the ontology

¹ This article is a part of master's degree thesis 'Consciousness Eliminated in Daniel Dennett', Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

of qualia as phenomenal properties, Dennett denies the crucial data that theory of mind is supposed to explain. Nonetheless, my analysis on Dennett's so-called illusionist thesis shows that his view still emphasizes the phenomenon of conscious experience and explains qualia as 'illusory' intentional objects of our introspective beliefs. The article draws a conclusion that Dennett does not deny the crucial data as being opposed. Moreover, his rejection of the ontology of the datum introduces a new perspective that enables him to explain qualia scientifically as illusions.

1. Introduction

In philosophy of mind, most philosophers agree that one particular aspect of human's mind is more resistant to scientific explanation than the others, namely, the *subjectivity of consciousness*. This subjective aspect can simply be understood as *conscious experience*. Conscious experience is mental phenomenon that manifests or appears to perceiver in the first-person perspective. It is, according to Thomas Nagel, the experience of *what it is like to be* in each particular mental state². This includes, for example, the phenomena of perception such as color, odor, and sound; the phenomena of sensation such as pain, cold, and itchiness; the phenomena of emotion such as anger, fear, and happiness; and the phenomena of thoughts such as understanding, imagination, and dream.

According to the debate, the unique aspect of conscious experience is that it is usually considered as having *qualia*. Qualia have been seen as *phenomenal properties* of our mind³; ones that can be perceived, according to René Descartes, 'clearly' and 'distinctly' without 'any doubt'⁴. Redness, for instance, is phenomenal properties which emerges in our conscious experience when we see any red object. These phenomenal properties are what differentiate the experiences of what it is like to see red from seeing other colors. Nevertheless, qualia as phenomenal properties pose a

² Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (1974): 437, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2183914>.

³ In the context of this article, I will use the term 'phenomenal properties' to specifically emphasize qualia in ontological sense; while preserving the notion 'conscious experience' to refer to the phenomenon of qualia without ontological entailment.

⁴ René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David J. Chalmers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 16.

major problem when they need to be described in contemporary scientific explanation. This is because their ontology and characteristics are anomalous from other genuine physical properties. They are subjective and characterized as simple, ineffable, intrinsic, private, and immediately accessible, while physical properties are, in contrast, objective and characterized as complex, effable, extrinsic, public, and indirectly accessible⁵.

This resistance of conscious experience against current scientific explanation is famously demonstrated by David Chalmers as *the hard problem of consciousness*⁶. In this case, Chalmers divides the problems of consciousness into two levels of difficulties, namely, *the easy problem* and *the hard problem*.

The easy problem of consciousness, on the one hand, is to explain physical structures, abilities, and functions that contribute to conscious states. This explanation includes, for example, the ability to react to environmental stimuli, the reportability of mental states, the deliberate control of behavior, and the difference between wakefulness and sleep. According to Chalmers, explaining these physical structures, abilities, and functions is relatively easy because it can be conducted by studying computational or neural mechanisms of brain processes. The standard methods of cognitive science will give answers to these questions; thus, the easy problem does not resist to current scientific explanation.

The hard problem of consciousness, on the other hand, is to explain conscious experience. This explanation includes, for example, the rise of qualia from brain processes, the description of phenomenal properties in physical terms, and the identification of qualia with physical functions. According to Chalmers, explaining conscious experience is definitely hard because even though scientists can explain every computational or neural mechanism of brain processes, they are still

⁵ Keith Frankish, "Illusionism as a Theory of Consciousness," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 23, no. 11-12 (2016): 2.

https://nbviewer.jupyter.org/github/k0711/kf_articles/blob/master/Frankish_Illusionism%20as%20a%20theory%20of%20consciousness_eprint.pdf.

⁶ David J. Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness," in *The Character of Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3-6; David J. Chalmers, "Consciousness and Its Place in Nature," in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David J. Chalmers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 247-48.

unable to explain anything at all about these subjective phenomena. There are, as Joseph Levine points out, *an explanatory gap* between explaining physical structures, abilities, and functions; and understanding conscious experience⁷. As a result, the standard methods of cognitive science are unable to give answers to these questions; thus, the hard problem does remarkably resist to contemporary scientific explanation⁸.

To summarize, the argument on the complication of conscious experience can be formulated as follows.

- (1) Conscious experience has qualia as phenomenal properties.
- (2) Qualia as phenomenal properties are anomalous from physical properties and cannot be explained by physical structures, abilities, and functions.
- (3) Contemporary scientific explanation can only describe physical structures, abilities, and functions.
- (4) Therefore, contemporary scientific explanation is insufficient for explaining conscious experience.

Eliminativist approach on consciousness, in general, responds to this complication by rejecting premise (1) that conscious experience has qualia as phenomenal properties. In order to preserve contemporary scientific explanation, the supporters of eliminativist approach flatly refuse the hard problem of consciousness in the first place and insist that only the easy problem exists⁹.

⁷ Joseph Levine, "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap," in *Philosophy of Mind: Contemporary Readings*, ed. Timothy O'Connor and David Robb, Routledge Contemporary Readings in Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2003), 427.

⁸ Some well-known thought experiments for this argument include *What is It Like to be a Bat?* by Thomas Nagel, *What Mary Didn't Know* by Frank Jackson, and the possibility of philosophical zombie by David Chalmers. See Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," 435-50; Frank Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know," in *Philosophy of Mind: Contemporary Readings*, ed. Timothy O'Connor and David Robb, Routledge Contemporary Readings in Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2003), 458-63; David J. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind : In Search of a Fundamental Theory*, Philosophy of Mind Series, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁹ Reductionist approach, on the other hand, will accept premise (1) but reject premise (2). The supporters of reductionist approach will admit that there is the hard problem of consciousness but insist that it can be reduced to the easy problem. See David Papineau, "The Problem of Consciousness," ed. U Kriegel, *The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Consciousness* (forthcoming), <http://www.davidpapineau.co.uk/uploads/>

Daniel Dennett has always been the key supporter of eliminativist approach on consciousness. His materialist view can be seen as a combination of behaviorism (influenced by Gilbert Ryle), teleofunctionalism (influenced by Charles Darwin), and verificationism (influenced by a Wittgensteinian verificationist idea). He is well-known for openly denying qualia as phenomenal properties in *Quining Qualia*¹⁰; refusing the hard problem of consciousness in *Explaining the "Magic" of Consciousness*¹¹; and expressing his true appreciation towards contemporary scientific explanation in *Consciousness Explained*¹².

Nonetheless, Dennett's view has been considered as one of the most counterintuitive responses to the complication of conscious experience. By rejecting premise (1), Dennett has been strongly criticized by contemporary philosophers e.g. David Chalmers and John Searle that he denies the datum and avoids the hard problem of consciousness rather than solves it¹³. This criticism, which I henceforth refer to as 'the datum objection', argues that qualia are the crucial data that theory of mind is supposed to explain in order to understand consciousness.

In this article, I defend Dennett's eliminativist approach from the datum objection. From my analysis, Dennett's *illusionism*, unlike eliminativism e.g. Paul and Patricia Churchland¹⁴, only rejects the ontology of qualia as phenomenal properties, while still regards *the phenomenon* of

1/8/5/5/18551740/the_problem_of_consciousness_posted.docx. Non-reductionist approach, in contrast, will willingly accept both premises (1) and (2), then propose to loosen up contemporary scientific explanation instead. The supporters of non-reductionist approach will endorse that there is the hard problem of consciousness and insist that it *cannot be reduced* to the easy problem. See Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness," 3-28.

¹⁰ Daniel C. Dennett, "Quining Qualia," in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David J. Chalmers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 226-46.

¹¹ Daniel C. Dennett, "Explaining the "Magic" of Consciousness," *Journal of Cultural and Evolutionary Psychology* 1, no. 1 (2003): 7-19, <https://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/dennett/papers/explainingmagic.pdf>.

¹² Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1991).

¹³ Chalmers, "Consciousness and Its Place in Nature," 251-53; John R. Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 1997), 97-131.

¹⁴ Paul M. Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes," *The Journal of Philosophy* 78, no. 2 (1981): 67-90, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2025900>; Patricia S. Churchland, "Can Neurobiology Teach Us Anything about Consciousness?," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 67, no. 4 (1994): 23-40, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3130741>.

conscious experience as the crucial datum that needs to be explained. In contrast to Chalmers' and Searle's criticisms, I further propose that *Dennett denies the existence of the data [the ontology] in order to explain the data [the phenomenon]*. His ontological denial introduces a new perspective to answer the old unsolved question, *the hard problem*, by replacing it with the more positive question, *the illusion problem*. This replacement has further advantages because it can keep intact both the fascinating phenomena of conscious experience as we perceive and the convention of contemporary scientific explanation as we know.

This article is structured as follows. In section 2, I analyze Dennett's response to the complication of conscious experience including his eliminativist approach and his proposed idea of *user-illusion*. In section 3, I investigate two main arguments for *the datum objection*, including Chalmers' and Searle's, against Dennett's eliminativist approach. And in section 4, I provide my answer to the datum objection in order to defend Dennett's *illusionist thesis*.

2. Eliminativist Approach on Consciousness in Daniel Dennett

From my analysis, Dennett's arguments on consciousness can be separated into two parts. The first part is his eliminativist approach to the complication of conscious experience; and the second part is his proposed idea on consciousness as user-illusion.

Dennett's main idea is that *qualia only seem to exist but actually do not*. His analogy for this is conscious experience is like *a stage magic*¹⁵. A 'real' magic, on the one hand, is a group of phenomena that cannot be explained on physical ground. A 'stage' magic, on the other hand, is a group of phenomena that *seems* unable to be explained at first but can actually be explained away when we discover the mechanisms behind how it is done. As we commonly maintain, there is no place for the ontology of 'real' magic in contemporary scientific explanation; there are only the manifestations or the phenomena of the 'stage' magic from equipment and mechanisms behind them. Similarly, for Dennett, there is no place for the ontology of 'real' qualia in current

¹⁵ Dennett, "Explaining the "Magic" of Consciousness," 7-19; Daniel C. Dennett, "Illusionism as the Obvious Default Theory of Consciousness," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 23, no. 11-12 (2016): 66-67, <http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/dennett/papers/illusionism.pdf>.

scientific explanation; there are only the manifestations or the phenomena of 'stage' qualia in the first-person perspective from brain processes and mechanisms behind them.

2.1 Eliminativist Approach to the Complication of Conscious Experience

In the first part, Dennett argues that it is only our common-sense intuition, or as Paul and Patricia Churchland call *folk psychology*¹⁶, to believe that conscious experience has qualia as phenomenal properties¹⁷. There is no substantial supportive argument for this belief other than the claim on *acquaintance* and *familiarity* that we have them¹⁸. For Dennett, the acceptance of this intuition is a crucial mistake and a result of bad theorizing¹⁹. It is only by intuitively accepting the ontology of qualia and positing them as genuine properties in contemporary scientific explanation that the complication of conscious experience arises. If we reject this folk psychology, there will be no complication at all. Therefore, Dennett's eliminativist approach responds to the complication of conscious experience by refuting premise (1); and as a result, making premise (2) become irrelevant. Then although it is widely accepted that premise (3) is true, it does not necessarily lead to conclusion (4).

The first part of Dennett's eliminativist approach concerning his response to the complication of conscious experience can be formulated as follows.

- (5) It is only common-sense intuition or folk psychology to posit that conscious experience has qualia as phenomenal properties [eliminativist approach].
- (6) If there are no qualia as phenomenal properties, conscious experience can be explained by physical structures, abilities, and functions [rejecting the hard problem].
- (7) Therefore, contemporary scientific explanation is sufficient for explaining conscious experience.

¹⁶ Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes," 69; Churchland, "Can Neurobiology Teach Us Anything about Consciousness?," 26.

¹⁷ Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 369-411.

¹⁸ David J. Chalmers, "The Content and Epistemology of Phenomenal Belief," in *Consciousness: New Philosophical Perspective*, ed. Q. Smith and A. Jokic (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 250.

¹⁹ Daniel C. Dennett, "A History of Qualia," *Topoi* (2017): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-017-9508-2>, <http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/dennett/papers/AHistoryOfQualia.pdf>.

To disprove premise (1) and support premise (5) that phenomenal properties do not exist, Dennett's eliminativist approach reconceptualizes qualia as, what Keith Frankish calls, *quasi-phenomenal properties*; not genuine phenomenal properties but physical properties that have been introspectively (*mis*)*represented* to be phenomenal²⁰. The crucial idea here is that it is our *intuitive epistemic mistake* to posit these quasi-phenomenal properties as genuine phenomenal properties in the first place.

According to Dennett, we have quite a strong reason to doubt the ontology of 'things' in our first-person perspective, e.g. hallucination, afterimage, and dream²¹. This intuitive epistemic mistake can date back to John Locke's notion of *secondary qualities*. For Locke, secondary qualities are emergent phenomena that are not really 'out there' objectively but emerge subjectively from the relationship between observer and physical objects²². Physical objects, in Locke's words, have *powers* to produce *ideas* or *sensations* in our mind. These ideas or sensations are then the result of the way we - humans - perceive physical objects. They, in contrast to primary qualities, do not tell us anything about the nature of physical properties in the world; instead, they tell us more about how we interpret the world.

In Dennett's view, we are, nevertheless, always mistaken about these secondary qualities. As Locke points out, they are not the properties of physical objects as they manifest to us; however, they do not have to be the properties of our mind either. It is then our intuitive epistemic mistake to believe that if secondary qualities are not the properties 'outside', they must be the properties 'inside'²³. Locke's proposal only entails that some phenomena are the result of our mind; it does not entail that our mind has phenomenal properties. Therefore, what we can conclude from our introspection is only that our conscious experience *seems* to have qualia as phenomenal

²⁰ Frankish, "Illusionism as a Theory of Consciousness," 4.

²¹ Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 3-18.

²² John Locke, *The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes*, 12 ed., vol. 1 (London, 1824), Chapter VIII. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/761>.

²³ Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 369-75; Dennett, "Illusionism as the Obvious Default Theory of Consciousness," 71-72.

properties. Dennett suggests us to stop here at this conclusion without further assuming that these phenomenal properties necessarily exist²⁴.

2.2 Consciousness as User-Illusion

In the second part, Dennett proposes that consciousness is *user-illusion*²⁵. In the first part as he argues that qualia do not exist but only *seem* to, his eliminativist approach still needs to explain this intuitive epistemic mistake. In this respect, the idea of user-illusion, as Frankish points out, aims to explain conscious experience by replacing *the hard problem of consciousness*: the ontological problem of how and why qualia as phenomenal properties can emerge from brain processes, with *the illusion problem*: the epistemic problem of how and why conscious experience manifests to us as having qualia as phenomenal properties²⁶.

By refuting premise (1) and shifting from ontological problem to epistemic problem, Dennett proposes to solve the complication of conscious experience in the same way as contemporary scientific explanation gives answers to other illusions. As the analogy of 'a stage magic' suggests, even if qualia as 'genuine' phenomenal properties cannot be explained by physical structures, abilities, and functions [premise (2)]; qualia as 'illusory' quasi-phenomenal properties do not necessarily suffer the same treatment. This is because, as illusions, the only aspect that needs explanation is the mechanisms behind *the (mis)representation*. According to Dennett, physical structures, abilities, and functions have no difficulty explaining these mechanisms. As a result, the phenomenon of conscious experience with qualia as illusions does not resist contemporary scientific explanation.

²⁴ Dennett describes the folk psychology view of conscious experience which requires qualia as phenomenal properties through the idea called *the Cartesian Theater*. He points out that the Cartesian Theater leads to many philosophical and empirical problems; and proposes his alternative scientific-based view, which does not require these phenomenal properties, called *the Multiple Drafts*. See Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 101-38.

²⁵ Daniel C. Dennett, *From Bacteria to Bach and Back: The Evolution of Minds* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), 335-70; Daniel C. Dennett, "Why and How Does Consciousness Seem the Way it Seems?," in *Open MIND*, ed. Thomas K. Metzinger and Jennifer M. Windt (Frankfurt am Main: MIND Group, 2015), 8.

²⁶ Frankish, "Illusionism as a Theory of Consciousness," 20.

The second part of Dennett's eliminativist approach concerning his idea on conscious experience as user-illusion can be formulated as follows.

- (8) Conscious experience *seems* to have qualia, but qualia as phenomenal properties do not exist; thus, they have to be regarded as illusions [user-illusion proposal].
- (9) Qualia as illusions can be explained by physical structures, abilities, and functions [the illusion problem].
- (10) Therefore, contemporary scientific explanation is sufficient to explain conscious experience.

To elaborate the possibility of premise (8) that qualia are illusions, Dennett proposes that qualia are only *intentional objects* of our introspective beliefs²⁷. This proposal can be considered as reducing the complication on consciousness side to intentionality side²⁸. As Chalmers formulates, and I quote, "One way...is to argue that there is some intermediate X such that (i) explaining function suffices to explain X, and (ii) explaining X suffices to explain consciousness."²⁹ For Dennett, this intermediate X is *our beliefs about consciousness* with the emphasis that they are *misled* and *unreliable*. These beliefs are the reason why we (mis)represent qualia as phenomenal properties.

Accordingly, qualia are intentional objects of our introspective beliefs which are *illusory* because they are made out of nothing. For example, when we see or imagine a red apple, our brain does not have to render 'redness' as genuine phenomenal properties existing anywhere; neither as physical pigments nor mental figments. We only have a belief about an apple with red-properties, then (mis)represent this redness as properties of our mind. Therefore, qualia are not phenomenal properties of mental states, but phenomenal properties (*mis*)represented by mental states. We usually think that these phenomenal properties are the basis of our beliefs about qualia; however, Dennett suggests that we should turn our thought the other way around. Our beliefs, or specifically

²⁷ Dennett, "A History of Qualia," 3-4.

²⁸ Dennett's arguments on intentionality are out of the scope of this article. His main idea on the emergence of intentionality is called *intentional stance*. See his book: Daniel C. Dennett, *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987).

²⁹ Chalmers, "Consciousness and Its Place in Nature," 252.

our intuitive expectations, instead are the basis of these illusions of qualia³⁰. Believing in phenomenal properties is then like believing in properties of *fictional* characters. They are meaningful and have truth value but do not necessarily exist³¹.

Furthermore, to support premise (9) that physical mechanism can give rise to illusions of qualia, Dennett uses computational model and evolutionary theory³². He suggests that the relationship between brain and consciousness should be comprehended in the form of the interaction between hardware and software. Human brain evolved by natural selection is the suitable hardware; while consciousness evolved by meme selection is the effective software³³. With this picture in mind, Dennett then proposes that our conscious experience is like *user interface (UI)*³⁴. Similar to app icons on our smartphone's screen which help us recognize, navigate, and unleash the power of our phone, qualia in our conscious experience do help us perceive, control, and bring out the potential of our brain.

Nonetheless, the significant aspect of user interface is that it is also *user-illusion*. Qualia are illusory not only because they are abstract representations that do not really exist like app icons; but because they also *blind* and *trick* us - their users - from the actual behind-the-scenes mechanisms from which they manifest. In smartphone, for instance, when we explore the user

³⁰ Dennett explains this point with the idea of *Bayesian's expectations*. See Dennett, "Why and How Does Consciousness Seem the Way it Seems?," 5-8.

³¹ Dennett recommends a method to study conscious experience through the verbal report on our beliefs about qualia. He calls this method, heterophenomenology; and claims that it is the only scientific way to study consciousness as seriously as possible. See Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 66-98; Daniel C. Dennett, "Who's On First? Heterophenomenology Explained," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 10, no. 9-10 (2003): 1-12, <http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/dennett/papers/JCSarticle.pdf>.

³² Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 171-226; Dennett, *From Bacteria to Bach and Back: The Evolution of Minds*, 105-331.

³³ Meme is essentially the idea that can be copied and transmitted within culture through behaviors and languages. See Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 199-208; Dennett, *From Bacteria to Bach and Back: The Evolution of Minds*, 205-47.

³⁴ Dennett, *From Bacteria to Bach and Back: The Evolution of Minds*, 202, 346-47; Dennett, "Why and How Does Consciousness Seem the Way it Seems?," 8.

interface, what really happens is algorithms in software level and electrical currents in hardware level; however, we never literally see how these background processes actually work.

In the same way, when we explore our conscious experience, what really happens is the beliefs in our mind (software level) and electrical signals and chemicals in our brain (hardware level); still we never ever realize in the first-person perspective how these background processes actually work. Therefore, studying consciousness introspectively never yields any information about the actual mechanisms of our mind and brain as digging in the user interface will never yield any information about the actual mechanisms of software and hardware. For Dennett, consciousness is, thus, “the brain’s effective user-illusion”³⁵. Qualia as illusions have been evolved to make the operation of our body easier and increase our species’ survival rate; yet, paradoxically they blind and trick us - their users - from what they really are³⁶.

In conclusion, Dennett’s eliminativist approach responds to the complication of conscious experience by viewing consciousness as user-illusion in two senses.

In the first sense, conscious experience *seems* to have qualia but actually does not. There are no genuine phenomenal properties in our mind but only our common-sense intuition or folk psychology to regard them that way. Therefore, qualia are *illusions epistemically mistaken by the user*. Without qualia as phenomenal properties, there is no complication of conscious experience which resists contemporary scientific explanation.

In the second sense, conscious experience also conceals the actual mechanisms from which it manifests. Qualia are only intentional objects of our introspective beliefs which our mental processes [software level] and brain processes [hardware level] (mis)represented. This (mis)representation is useful like user interface, but it also blinds and tricks us from what qualia really are. Therefore, qualia are also *the first-person perspective’s illusions of the user*. As ‘illusory’

³⁵ Dennett, "Why and How Does Consciousness Seem the Way it Seems?," 8.

³⁶ Although the analogy of user interface requires ‘the screen’ for the benefit of ‘the user’, Dennett stresses that there is no need for ‘the screen’ or any further ‘conscious user’ (homunculus) in the brain. The illusion of conscious experience is a product of multiple unconscious processes which only manifests in the first-person perspective for the benefit of that person. See Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 101-138.

intentional objects, however, they can be explained by physical structures, abilities, and functions behind the (mis)representation.

3. The Datum Objection

One of the major criticisms to Dennett's eliminativist approach on consciousness is that he *denies the datum*. This so-called *datum objection* argues that qualia are the crucial data that needs to be explained in order to understand consciousness. In this section, I will investigate two main arguments for the datum objection. The first one, proposed by David Chalmers, emphasizes the importance of *the phenomenon* which generally criticizes eliminativist approach as a whole; whereas the second one, proposed by John Searle, emphasizes the importance of *the ontology* in order to attack Dennett's idea of user-illusion in particular.

3.1 Chalmers' Argument

The datum objection in Chalmers' version emphasizes the importance of *the phenomenon*. It argues that by rejecting premise (1) that conscious experience has qualia as phenomenal properties, eliminativist approach denies the phenomena which all theories in philosophy of mind are supposed to explain. This objection poses a challenge to what Chalmers generalizes as *type-A materialism*. According to Chalmers, type-A materialism rejects the hard problem of consciousness rather than solves it³⁷. This materialist view suggests that once we have explained all physical structures, abilities, and functions [the easy problem], there is no more phenomenon left to be explained [the hard problem].

For Chalmers, type-A materialism, thus, flatly denies '*the experience*' which is the heart of this complication. The hard problem of consciousness, he affirms, is well-established due to the fact that human's conscious experience obviously has these subjective phenomena which cannot be simply explained by physical structures, abilities, and functions. Therefore, qualia are a *basis* and an *uncontested truth*. They are not, as premise (5) suggests, an *explanatory posit* from common-sense intuition or folk psychology that can be eliminated. In contrast, they are an *explanandum* or the phenomenon that needs explanation in its own right³⁸.

³⁷ Chalmers, "Consciousness and Its Place in Nature," 251-253.

³⁸ Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness," 16.

By counterintuitively rejecting qualia, type-A materialism then begs the question by answering only the easy problem while leaving the hard problem unanswered. Dennett, who has been categorized as a type-A materialist, only presupposes that phenomena which are not verifiable cannot be real. For Chalmers, how Dennett equates qualia with the ability to discriminate and report about qualia is wrong³⁹. He consequently denies the most obvious phenomenon and leaves the most important datum unexplained.

In order to solve the complication of conscious experience, Chalmers, on the contrary, endorses non-reductionist approach. He calls his position *naturalistic dualism* and proposes to loosen up contemporary scientific explanation to include phenomenal properties as fundamental properties alongside electromagnetic forces, mass, and space-time.

Chalmers' argument for the datum objection can be formulated as follows.

- (11) Qualia are not the explanatory posit, but themselves the phenomena that need explanation [rejecting premise (5) and supporting premise (1)].
- (12) Eliminativist approach (type-A materialism) rejects that conscious experience has qualia.
- (13) Therefore, eliminativist approach denies the phenomenon and leaves the crucial datum unexplained.

3.2 Searle's Argument

The datum objection in Searle's version emphasizes the importance of *the ontology*. It argues that by rejecting premise (1) that conscious experience has qualia as phenomenal properties, Dennett's eliminativist approach denies *the existence of the data* which all theories in philosophy of mind are supposed to explain. This objection poses a challenge directly to Dennett's idea of user-illusion. It refutes premise (8) that conscious experience can only *seem* to have qualia without actually *having* them. According to Searle, "where consciousness is concerned the existence of the appearance is the reality"⁴⁰. Qualia as they appear cannot be questioned or denied. If we perceive our conscious experience as having phenomenal properties, it must have

³⁹ Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness," 12.

⁴⁰ Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness*, 112.

phenomenal properties. This is not, as premise (5) suggests, a matter of common-sense intuition or folk psychology as we believe them to be that way.

Searle supports his claim by arguing that, in other illusory cases, there is always a difference between appearance and reality; yet in case of qualia, there is none⁴¹. As an example, we can posit sunset as illusion because there seems to be sunset even though in reality the sun does not really set anywhere. In contrast, when our qualia of sunset *seem* red, they *are* actually red; there is no other reality to compare that they are not. The ontology of redness is then the most important aspect of human's conscious experience. This is the crucial datum that theory of mind needs to explain. Therefore, by rejecting the ontology of qualia as phenomenal properties, Dennett's eliminativist approach is self-refuting. It flatly denies even the existence of the most obvious data which makes us - humans - different from machine⁴²; and instead of solving the complication of conscious experience, it refutes the problem in the first place.

In order to explain conscious experience, Searle, on the contrary, proposes to add *ontological subjectivity* in contemporary scientific explanation alongside established *ontological objectivity*. He calls his position *biological naturalism* which can be seen as an interlude between non-reductionist and reductionist approaches.

Searle's argument for the datum objection can be formulated as follows.

- (14) Qualia are the most important data that need explanation [the datum proposal].
- (15) There is no difference between appearance and reality in our conscious experience, thus if qualia seem to exist, they do exist [Searle's objection].
- (16) Dennett's eliminativist approach sees consciousness as user-illusion and denies the existence of qualia [premise (8)].
- (17) Therefore, Dennett denies the existence of the data that theory of mind is supposed to explain.

⁴¹ Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness*, 111-112.

⁴² Searle criticizes Dennett's theory on consciousness that it is only a version of Strong A.I. and subject to *Chinese Room* thought-experiment. See Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness*, 106-110.

4. Defense of Dennett's Eliminativist Approach

Does Dennett's eliminativist approach on consciousness deny the datum? From my analysis, the short answer is 'no'. In contrast, I even think Dennett's idea, in a sense, agrees with the key thesis of the datum objection. It stresses that qualia are the crucial data that need explanation by suggesting that they are mere user-illusion and not actually existing. I will elaborate my defense by answering Chalmers' and Searle's arguments, respectively.

4.1 Answer to Chalmers' Argument

In my view, I do not think that by rejecting premise (1) that conscious experience has qualia as phenomenal properties, Dennett's eliminativist approach denies *the phenomenon*. The datum objection in Chalmers' notion seems to focus only on the first part of Dennett's argument and overlooks the second part. In this respect, I accept that Chalmers correctly categorizes Dennett as a type-A materialist since his view really refutes the hard problem of consciousness. However, with the proposed user-illusion idea, I think Dennett's eliminativist approach can preserve *the phenomenon* of conscious experience as the datum.

To clarify this point, I would like to differentiate between two types of eliminativist approach, namely, *eliminativism* and *illusionism*. Dennett's view has been seen as eliminativism until Keith Frankish helps soften this view down and points out its remarkable appeal. Frankish coins the word 'illusionism' and categorizes Dennett as one of the main supporters of this position⁴³. Dennett willingly accepts this new label in his recent work and announces that illusionism should be taken seriously as a default approach to the complication of conscious experience⁴⁴.

Eliminativism, on the one hand, tackles the hard problem of consciousness by not only *rejecting* the ontology of qualia but also *ignoring* the phenomenon of conscious experience altogether. Paul Churchland's and Patricia Churchland's *eliminative materialism* is a good example to the point. Although the Churchlands' argument mainly focuses on intentionality side with the complication of propositional attitudes; it can also be inferred to consciousness side with the complication of conscious experience. The Churchlands argue that the folk-based theory explaining both the

⁴³ Frankish, "Illusionism as a Theory of Consciousness," 1.

⁴⁴ Dennett, "Illusionism as the Obvious Default Theory of Consciousness," 65.

world and our mind will be eventually replaced by scientific theory⁴⁵. Since the ontology of qualia is *an explanatory posit* from folk psychology, it will be *eliminated* along with its outdated folk-based theory and *replaced* by new scientific ones.

For example, the phlogiston theory once posits ‘flammable element’ as a fundamental substance which is essential to explain combustion. This explanatory posit, nonetheless, has been completely replaced by ‘chemical elements’, e.g. hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen, in modern chemistry with no notion of ‘flammable element’ left. In this case, we can see that the old explanatory posit needs to be eliminated because it becomes unnecessary or even contradicts the new one.

As for consciousness, qualia which resist physical explanation can be considered in the same way as the explanatory posit from our folk psychology. Now that the proper scientific theory about consciousness such as neuroscience is in progress, according to the Churchlands, we can just *reject* the ontology of qualia as phenomenal properties and *ignore* all phenomena of conscious experience as they will eventually be *eliminated* along with its old folk-based theory. For eliminativism, the emphasis on *the phenomenon* of qualia will only slow down scientific progress. What scientists should do is to ignore the phenomenon and focus on studying physical structures, abilities, and functions of brain processes further and deeper until consciousness is finally explained away.

Illusionism, on the other hand, tackles the hard problem of consciousness by *rejecting* the ontology of qualia but still *keeping* the phenomenon of conscious experience. As being emphasized in the second part of Dennett’s argument, the illusions of qualia are still the crucial data that need scientific explanation. In this respect, Dennett’s eliminativist approach only refutes qualia as phenomenal properties by suggesting that their ontology is the explanatory posit from our common-sense intuition or folk psychology. His key argument here is that our intuitive epistemic mistake tricks us to believe that our conscious experience has qualia as phenomenal properties while in fact what we can conclude from our introspection is only that it *seems* to be that way.

⁴⁵ Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes," 72-76.

For Dennett, by refusing the ontology of qualia, we are able to explain conscious experience by means of current scientific explanation. As user-illusion, consciousness can be explained like other illusions by discovering the mechanisms behind the (mis)representation. For illusionism, the emphasis on *the ontology* of qualia then only poses the wrong questions which distract scientific progress from the right questions. What scientists should do is to deny the existence of qualia and specifically focus on studying physical structures, abilities, and functions of brain processes to uncover the mechanisms behind the (mis)representation, so that consciousness can be explained away.

Accordingly, the fact that Dennett's eliminativist approach denies phenomenal properties as the datum is correct. Illusionism shifts the datum from *qualia as phenomenal properties* to the phenomena of *qualia as illusions*. This can be recognized as the replacement of the hard problem of consciousness with the illusion problem. There is no need to explain how and why qualia as phenomenal properties can emerge from brain processes; only how and why qualia as illusions manifesting in our conscious experience needs to be explained.

Nevertheless, the obvious point here is that *illusionist thesis does not deny the phenomenon*. Although it rejects qualia as phenomenal properties, it does not in any way ignore the phenomenon of conscious experience. On the contrary, illusionism even stresses the significance of the phenomenon by proposing that qualia are illusions. Dennett still explains qualia though from the different perspective by suggesting that they are '*illusory*' *intentional objects* of our introspective beliefs; qualia moreover are effective yet deceptive *user interface*. Hence, the conclusion (13) that eliminativist approach (or type-A materialism) necessarily leaves the datum unexplained is not true. In accordance to premise (11), it seems that qualia can be both *the explanatory posit* and *the explanandum*. It is our intuitive epistemic mistake to posit qualia as phenomenal properties, however, this (mis)represented phenomenon is the crucial datum that needs to be explained.

Therefore, Chalmers' argument for the datum objection does not pose any problem to Dennett's eliminativist approach. His objection only successfully shoots down eliminativism but not illusionism. By viewing qualia as the old explanatory posit from folk psychology, eliminativist thesis really denies the datum because it ignores the phenomenon of conscious experience. In contrast,

illusionist thesis does not ignore the phenomenon because it still emphasizes the illusions of qualia as the crucial datum. In other words, eliminativism eliminates all *the talk* about qualia along with their ontology, while illusionism does not. They both deny the ontology of qualia as phenomenal properties, but only illusionist thesis maintains the talk about qualia as ‘illusory’ intentional objects of our introspective beliefs. Thus, Dennett’s eliminativist approach does not deny the phenomenon and leaves the datum unexplained as Chalmers criticized.

The answer to Chalmers’ argument can be formulated as follows.

- (18) To deny the datum is to ignore the phenomenon that needs to be explained [the explanandum].
- (19) Dennett’s illusionist thesis, unlike eliminativist thesis, still explains the phenomenon of conscious experience by regarding qualia as illusions.
- (20) Therefore, eliminativist approach on consciousness in Daniel Dennett does not deny the datum.

4.2 Answer to Searle’s Argument

From my study, I accept that by rejecting premise (1) that conscious experience has qualia as phenomenal properties, Dennett’s eliminativist approach does deny the existence of the data. Nevertheless, the notion of ‘existence’ that Dennett chooses to reject seems to be different from what Searle opposes.

To response to Searle’s objection, I think Dennett can simply agree with Searle that there is no difference between appearance and reality *in the first-person perspective*. The redness of sunset is introspectively red, so premise (15) is true if these phenomenal properties *exist in the phenomenon* of our conscious experience. In this respect, there is no reason why Dennett needs to reject this notion since his eliminativist approach accepts that qualia introspectively *appear as they are*. However, when Dennett claims that consciousness is user-illusion, he does not deny the ontology of qualia in the same sense as Searle advocates.

As Frankish points out, what illusionism proposes is that we can *represent* reddish experience without actually *having* reddish experience⁴⁶. The fact that qualia represented by our conscious mind are red does not necessarily mean that there needs to be ‘redness’ as genuine phenomenal property in our mind. The disparity between appearance and reality, according to the illusionist thesis, is then the disparity between the qualia as they appear *in the first-person perspective* and the representation mechanisms of mental processes and brain processes as they actually operate *in the third-person perspective*. Qualia are illusions because they *subjectively* appear as phenomenal properties, but these phenomenal properties do not *objectively* exist.

Therefore, Searle’s argument on appearance and reality [premise (15)] does not add up any more problem to Dennett’s eliminativist approach. It only reflects the dissimilar assumptions between these two views: whereas, for Searle, the appearance in the first-person perspective must also be regarded as ‘existing’ and ‘real’, for Dennett, the only phenomenon that can be regarded as ‘existing’ and ‘real’ is the one that can be objectively verified.

Accordingly, Searle’s notion of ‘the existence of the data’ can be interpreted in two senses. In the first sense, it means ‘the phenomenon’. Since, for Searle, the appearance in the first-person perspective must be regarded as ‘existing’ and ‘real’, denying the ontology of qualia is then *equal to* denying the phenomenon of conscious experience. For example, when he says that *the existence* of pain is the crucial data, what he means is that *the phenomenon* of pain needs explanation. Dennett’s eliminativist approach which rejects premise (1) that conscious experience has qualia as phenomenal properties is, hence, misunderstood as denying even the most obvious phenomenon, or in Searle’s words, *the existence of the data*.

Nonetheless, as the answer for Chalmers’ argument above, Dennett’s view is far from denying the phenomenon. Illusionism, unlike eliminativism, rejects qualia ontologically but *does not ignore* the phenomenon of conscious experience. It only insists that qualia *do not objectively exist*, thus their *subjective existence should be considered as illusions*. As a result, illusionist thesis can separate the phenomenon of conscious experience from the ontology of phenomenal properties.

⁴⁶ Frankish, "Illusionism as a Theory of Consciousness," 16-17.

Denying the ontology of qualia is then *not equal to* denying the phenomenon. Therefore, Dennett's eliminativist approach does not deny the existence of the data in the first sense.

In the second sense, Searle's notion of 'the existence of the data' claims beyond 'the phenomenon'. It proposes that the ontology of qualia is a *necessary condition* for explaining conscious experience. In this respect, qualia must be regarded *as and only as phenomenal properties*. Although these properties do not exist objectively, *they must be posited as existing subjectively*; not as mere phenomena that can be regarded as illusions, but as the properties of our mind.

Searle's view endorses this interpretation when he suggests that we cannot question the first-person appearance and see qualia as illusions⁴⁷. If our conscious experience *seems* to have phenomenal properties, it must *have* phenomenal properties. To support the existence of these properties, Searle even proposes to add *ontological subjectivity* in scientific explanation. Moreover, Chalmers' insistence on qualia as the datum can also be interpreted in this second sense. Qualia, he elaborates, are important not only because of their phenomenon, but also because of their ontology. Chalmers' reason is that 'whenever a subject has a phenomenal property, the subject is acquainted with that phenomenal property'⁴⁸. We acknowledge that these phenomenal properties exist as we are *directly acquainted* with them.

Therefore, according to Searle and Chalmers, the notion of 'the existence of the data' can be interpreted as not only equal to 'the phenomenon', but also directly refers to 'phenomenal properties' themselves. Consequently, qualia as and only as phenomenal properties are the fundamental data; their ontology as they appear cannot be questioned or denied.

From my analysis, this second sense is where Dennett's eliminativist approach flatly denies the existence of the data. He rejects that qualia as phenomenal properties are the datum and only accepts the phenomenon of conscious experience without ontological entailment. His main argument here is that our common-sense intuition or folk psychology makes us believe in the ontology of qualia, whereas what we can merely conclude from our introspection is it only seems

⁴⁷ Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness*, 111-112.

⁴⁸ Chalmers, "The Content and Epistemology of Phenomenal Belief," 250.

to be that way. As opposed to Searle and Chalmers, I consider that this ontological denial is beneficial. If some phenomenon resists contemporary scientific explanation, rejecting their ontology is not denying them but initiating new possible way to explain them. Accordingly, I propose that *Dennett denies the existence of the data (the ontology) in order to explain the data (the phenomenon)*. He rejects the ontology of qualia but does not leave the phenomenon of qualia unexplained.

In this respect, viewing qualia as phenomenal properties is not a necessary condition for explaining conscious experience but, on the contrary, *an obstacle*. As Frankish points out, insisting on phenomenal properties as the datum comes with many metaphysical assumptions⁴⁹. For instance, in order to confirm the existence of phenomenal properties, we must also posit a special kind of *immune-to-error epistemic access* which makes us *directly acquainted* with them. This infallible epistemic access is the only way for us to make sure that we do not introspectively misrepresent the ontology of qualia in our conscious experience in any way. Nevertheless, Frankish argues that our normal mental representation is proven fallible to this ontological detection, e.g. hallucination, afterimage, and dream. It then can neither be identical to this immune-to-error epistemic access nor be used to claim the existence of phenomenal properties. In addition, even if we have this special direct epistemic access over and above normal mental representation, it has no psychological significance. This is because when we need to think and talk about qualia, we still have to form our beliefs and desires in order to indirectly access them. Therefore, maintaining qualia as phenomenal properties usually presupposes an anti-materialist view from the beginning. There is no way that human as a physical being can have this infallible epistemic access to non-physical properties, unless human has non-physical mind to directly acquaint with qualia in the first place.

By refuting phenomenal properties as the datum, Dennett then removes *an obstacle* from the complication of conscious experience. Without this ontological denial, the replacement of the old unsolved question, *the hard problem*, by the more positive question, *the illusion problem*, would not be possible. In this regard, the ontology of qualia is not a necessary condition to explain

⁴⁹ Frankish, "Illusionism as a Theory of Consciousness," 15-16.

conscious experience as Searle and Chalmers suggest. Instead, the denial of their existence is *a necessary condition* to explain consciousness in contemporary scientific explanation.

To support my claim, I want to point out that the tendency to reject the existence of the data and posit phenomenon as illusion is *a typical choice* that can bring out two key advantages. Although we - humans - were not born with this view as a default, we naturally *learn* to become *familiar* with this tendency and embrace its benefits. To elaborate this point, let us consider a thought experiment on *the phenomenon of face-detecting*.

As everyone knows, we - humans - have a remarkable ability to spot faces, especially humans' faces. It is highly effectual that we tend to see faces everywhere such as an elder's face on a tree's trunk, a lover's face on a cloud, or even Jesus's face on a toast. These faces are undeniably 'real' in a sense that some naïve people, especially children, will intuitively insist that there are actually 'real' faces there. As we grow up, however, we start to *learn* to become *familiar* with the idea that most faces, which are not connected with necks, should be considered as *illusions*. When we see a face on a tree trunk, for example, we normally do not ask ourselves how and why this tree can have a face. Instead, what we wonder is how and why these illusions of faces appear to us. In other words, we learn to replace *the hard problem of faces* with *the illusion problem of faces*. There is no 'real' face on a tree; there is only our *epistemic mistake* to *(mis)represent* a certain pattern on a tree as a face.

In this regard, it is true that sometimes these 'illusory' faces are so real that we have to look at them twice. Sometimes even when we stare hard at them, we are still not so sure whether they are actually 'real' faces or not. However, the act of rejecting the ontology of some faces and positing their phenomena as illusion is *a typical choice*. This is because there are two substantial advantages from seeing them this way.

The first advantage is that *the perceiver can keep insisting on the phenomenon* as it appears. If you see a face on a tree trunk, the fact that you see 'the face' is undeniable. What can be denied is the fact that the tree actually *has* a face. You can show this illusory face to your friend and even appreciate how funny it is together. However, this does not necessarily mean that you both accept that 'this funny face' actually exists.

The second advantage is that *the perceiver can keep intact contemporary scientific explanation as he knows*. Only through rejecting the ontology of face, current scientific explanation can successfully explain this illusory phenomenon. This face-detecting ability provides a survival advantage for our species by helping us spot either our friends or enemies especially in hostile environment. This ability is evolved by natural selection, inherited from generation-to-generation through our genes, and programmed in our brain from the moment we were born. We are then predetermined to *expect* to see faces. This instinctive expectation makes us (mis)represent that there are faces everywhere. In contrast, if we still insist that the tree actually has a face, we cannot reach this logical explanation. We need to explain how the tree can develop a face, and it may lead to some mysterious posit such as tree spirit which results in significant change in contemporary scientific explanation.

Back to the complication of conscious experience, regarding qualia as illusions is *not a typical choice yet*. On the contrary, it is even counterintuitive to look at them that way. Nevertheless, in my opinion, Frankish is correct in stating that, "The question is not whether illusionism is intuitively possible, but whether it is rationally compelling"⁵⁰. In this regard, illusionist thesis is *rationally compelling* because it opens up a new perspective for the once considered impossible problem. Accordingly, we should consider *the phenomenon of qualia-detecting* in the same way as the phenomenon of face-detecting. By *learning* to become *familiar* with the idea that some qualia are illusions, we can benefit from these two advantages as well.

First, *the perceiver can keep insisting on the phenomenon of conscious experience as they appear*. If you see redness of roses, for example, the fact that you see that qualia are undeniable. What can be denied is that conscious experience actually *has* qualia as genuine phenomenal properties. You can appreciate how beautiful these 'red' roses are; however, this does not necessarily mean that this 'redness' actually exists. Consequently, by positing qualia as illusions, we do not have to deflate the wonder of these phenomenal properties. We can just embrace them as they appear and choose to explain how and why our brain (mis)represents them to be that way.

⁵⁰ Frankish, "Illusionism as a Theory of Consciousness," 20.

Second, *the perceiver can keep intact contemporary scientific explanation as he knows*. In this respect, I take for granted that Chalmers and Searle mutually agree that we should maintain contemporary scientific explanation as a *default*. The standard methodology is to try using *conservative explanation* first before proposing *radical explanation*. Chalmers confirms this, and I quote, "It would be wonderful if reductive methods [with conservative explanation] could explain experience, too; I hoped for a long time that they might"⁵¹. The reason why Chalmers and Searle favor non-reductionist approach is because to them qualia cannot be properly and satisfyingly explained by conservative explanation yet. That is why some radical explanation is required.

Nonetheless, by viewing qualia as illusions, contemporary scientific explanation can more-than-ever possibly, if not successfully, explain the phenomenon of conscious experience. As Dennett suggests, consciousness as user-illusion can be evolved by natural selection to help us perceive, control, and bring out the potential of our brain. In the same way as the phenomenon of face detecting, we are predetermined to expect to see qualia. This instinctive expectation makes us (mis)represent qualia in our conscious experience. Consequently, by positing qualia as illusions, we do not have to jump to the conclusion that there is a hole in our current scientific explanation. We then can focus on studying the physical mechanism behind how and why our brain (mis)represents qualia to be that way.

Therefore, Searle's argument for the datum objection does not pose any problem to Dennett's eliminativist approach. He correctly criticizes Dennett for denying the existence of the data; however, this ontological denial does not necessarily leave the datum unexplained. In contrast, Dennett denies the existence of the data in order to explain the data. Only through rejecting phenomenal properties as the datum, Dennett's eliminativist approach can open up a new perspective that enables him to explain qualia as illusions. This viewpoint is even more advantageous because it can keep intact both the wonder of conscious experience as they appear and the convention of contemporary scientific explanation as we know.

The answer to Searle's argument can be formulated as follows.

⁵¹ Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness," 15.

- (21) For Searle, there is no difference between appearance and reality; thus, the ontology of qualia as phenomenal properties is a necessary condition for explaining conscious experience.
- (22) For Dennett, the difference between appearance and reality is what qualia seem to appear in the first-person perspective and their mechanisms which are what actually happen behind-the-scenes in the third-person perspective; thus, the ontology of qualia as phenomenal properties is not a necessary condition, but an obstacle, for explaining conscious experience.
- (23) Therefore, consciousness eliminated in Daniel Dennett indeed denies the ontology of the datum, but it does not deny the datum.

5. Conclusion

Eliminativist approach on consciousness in Daniel Dennett is one of the most counterintuitive response to the complication of conscious experience; however, in my opinion, it is the best possible scientific solution as well. To support Dennett's view, this article defends his position against two main arguments for *the datum objection*.

The first argument, proposed by David Chalmers, criticizes that by rejecting qualia as phenomenal properties, eliminativist approach denies *the phenomenon*. Nonetheless, from my analysis, Dennett's illusionist thesis does not *ignore* the phenomenon like eliminativist thesis. He denies that our conscious experience ontologically has qualia as phenomenal properties, but still explains how and why we (mis)represent them to be that way. Therefore, Dennett does not deny the phenomenon as Chalmers criticized. Qualia are still the crucial datum in his eliminativist approach, not as phenomenal properties, but as 'illusory' intentional objects of our introspective beliefs.

The second argument, proposed by John Searles, criticizes that by rejecting qualia as phenomenal properties, Dennett denies *the existence of the data*. To my understanding, Dennett's illusionist thesis indeed rejects the ontology of qualia; yet, I propose that *he denies the existence of the data [the ontology] in order to explain the data [the phenomenon]*. This ontological denial enables him to answer the complication of conscious experience from a new perspective by explaining qualia as illusions. This viewpoint is even more advantageous because it can preserve both the fascinating phenomena of conscious experience as well as the convention of

contemporary scientific explanation. Therefore, although Dennett denies the existence of the data as Searle criticized, he does not deny the data. Qualia as illusions are now the crucial datum; and contemporary scientific explanation has more chance to explain them than ever before.

This is not to say that Dennett's eliminativist approach on consciousness has solved all difficulties about mental states. With illusionist thesis, Dennett just reduces the complication on consciousness side to intentionality side. There are still some intentionality-related questions left behind, for example, how can human's brain (mis)represent phenomenality? or whether qualia as illusions have mental content or not? According to Dennett, these are *the hard question*, but not the hard problem, that still need proper scientific explanation; thus, further studies are required⁵².

Dennett writes all his work with a sense of humor and since, for him, consciousness is like a magic, I would like to salute him by ending this article with a quote from the most famous wizard of all time, Albus Dumbledore. He says, 'Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?'⁵³ According to Dennett, conscious experience is real, though there is nothing more than a brain inside our head. We should appreciate qualia in the same way as we appreciate the 'stage' magic; magical make-believe as it appears on stage, and even more so fascinating as we discover the mechanisms behind them.

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⁵² Dennett, "Illusionism as the Obvious Default Theory of Consciousness," 69.

⁵³ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007), 723.

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