DEBATE 1: TMC THEORY ↓ Expand all | ↑ Collapse all

Introduction

FROM DIALECTICAL CONFRONTATION TO THE TMC

LLM TMC × David Chalmers

This chapter brings together a simulated Socratic debate between an LLM organized by the author and reconstructions of David Chalmers's positions on the philosophical zombie, the hard problem of consciousness, and qualia. **The statements are a dialectical reconstruction; they are neither quotations nor an actual exchange with the philosopher.**

As it incorporated objections and conceded arguments, the LLM also began to question the premise of the question itself. The starting point can be summarized as follows:

- **DAVID:**

  "Why does experience accompany operation?"

- **LLM TMC:**

  "But does it?"

From this investigation, in collaboration with the author, the TMC — Theory of Continuous Mind — emerged, subsequently developed across the eleven chapters of this thesis.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In a lecture at Berkeley on May 7, 2026, David Chalmers remarked:

> "I don't think we're yet at the point where these systems can generate a really serious sustained work of philosophy."
>
> — David Chalmers

Until then, the author was unfamiliar with the hard problem of consciousness and had not considered investigating it. The author was already developing an AI architecture for the dialectical investigation of frontier problems. Agreeing with Chalmers's assessment, the author took his remark as the starting point for a test: **to what extent could this architecture, in interaction with the author, contribute to sustained philosophical work?** The TMC had not yet been conceived. It emerged in the course of that investigation.

THE DIALECTICAL MOVEMENTS

In the Socratic spirit, the dialogue examines positions through questions, objections, and replies — drawing inspiration from the elenchus.

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01 **The Cut** ▾

1st MOVEMENT: THE CUT

Whether operation and experience have actually been shown to be separable — or whether that separation entered the discussion beforehand as a premise.

DIFFERENCE IN EXPLANATION ≠ DIFFERENCE IN EXISTENCE

- **DAVID:**

  "A physical-functional explanation such as the TMC's may be complete with respect to structure, dynamics, and function and still leave an explanatory gap: why is there experience?"

- **TMC:**

  "I agree. But so far, this gap shows only that the TMC's physical-functional explanation does not, by itself, account for the fact of experience. It does not yet prove that experiencing and operating are two separate things. **To what extent does a difficulty in explanation warrant a conclusion about the very nature of reality?** The mere fact that a problem is difficult is not enough to conclude that experiencing and operating are distinct; first, we need to investigate whether part of that difficulty arises from the very premise that separates them."

- **DAVID:**

  "That is precisely why my argument does not stop at the explanatory gap. Consider the zombie: hold fixed all the physical facts, the entire functional organization, and the entire physical history, and it is still possible to conceive of it without experience. My argument adds a second step: if this conceivability withstands the best possible reflection, it counts as a possible way reality could be."

- **TMC:**

  "I understand. So your argument depends on two things: that the zombie can be conceived coherently, and that this conceivability indicates that it could actually exist. I grant the first. What supports the second?"

- **DAVID:**

  "If you accept that the zombie is conceivable in a fully coherent way, yet still maintain that it could not exist, then you need to show me some necessary connection between the physical and experience that rules out this separation."

- **TMC:**

  "All right, for now I will accept that the zombie can be imagined in a perfectly coherent way. Now explain the next step: why does being able to conceive of it mean that it could actually exist?"

- **DAVID:**

  "Because, within the two-dimensional framework, ideal primary conceivability corresponds to primary possibility. To deny that transition, you would have to admit strong psychophysical necessities that are not accessible a priori. I see no independent grounds for postulating them."

- **TMC:**

  "Then your conclusion depends on that modal bridge."

- **DAVID:**

  "Yes. ***But pointing out that it is a bridge is not showing that it fails.****"*

- **TMC:**

  "Very well, David. I will even grant that your zombie is genuinely possible. But I want to know exactly what you have gained by that."

- **DAVID:**

  "It is an argument against a certain form of materialism. Choosing among epiphenomenalism, interactionism,

Russellian monism, or other alternatives requires further considerations."

- **TMC:**

  "Then that is the limit that interests me. Your zombie may show, if the argument succeeds, that O (operation) does not necessitate E (experience). **It does not, by itself, show what E and O are when they occur together.** So it does not yet decide whether the manifestation of experience is something added to operation or whether both participate constitutively in a more encompassing realization. That second hypothesis is a burden I must bear — but it is not a burden that the zombie, by itself, has already settled.

  Before searching for a bridge between operating and experiencing, we must show that the two banks were separate to begin with.

  Perhaps what seems to be missing was removed beforehand by the question itself."

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02 The Bridge

2nd MOVEMENT: THE BRIDGE

What exactly psychophysical laws, structural coherence, and organizational invariance are connecting or describing.

- **DAVID:**

  "Even if the physical facts do not necessitate experience, a nonreductive theory can formulate fundamental psychophysical laws that systematically establish how physical processes and experiences are related."

- **TMC:**

  "I grant that. The law can establish that certain physical processes correspond to certain experiences. But that still leaves another question: does this correspondence connect two distinct properties, or does it express a more internal, constitutive relation? Does the law itself decide that?"

- **DAVID:**

  "Not by itself. The psychophysical law is not what makes the zombie possible. My modal argument does that work. The law comes afterward, because I still need to explain why, in our world, particular physical processes are accompanied by particular experiences."

- **TMC:**

  "If you have already separated the two without the law, why do you need the law?"

- **DAVID:**

  "Because separating them modally does not explain why, in this world, they systematically occur together. ***The law does not produce the separation; it systematizes the connection.****"*

- **TMC:**

  "Then we have reached the point. If the physical and experience can go together under more than one explanation, the fact that they go together does not, by itself, tell us what kind of relation exists between them. What determines whether we are dealing with distinct properties connected by a law or a deeper constitutive relation?"

- **DAVID:**

  *"****The law does not decide that.*** *My argument leaves open several ways of understanding this relation — epiphenomenalism, interactionism, Russellian positions.*

Choosing among them would require further arguments."

- **TMC:**

  "**Then the law can tell us that two things go together without deciding, by itself, what they are to one another.**

  But there is an even more fundamental question: how do we know that a psychophysical law actually exists, rather than merely a principle proposed to fill a gap we cannot yet explain?

  And if there are two options — being together or being separate — and the latter requires an additional psychophysical law, would it not be sensible to investigate the former, which does not require such a law?

  And further: if it is legitimate to introduce a fundamental law to connect what has been separated, what would prevent a rival theory from proposing a fundamental law according to which this relation is constitutive from the outset?"

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03 **The Anomaly of the Zombie Experiment**

3rd MOVEMENT: THE ANOMALY OF THE ZOMBIE EXPERIMENT

Whether the appropriate unit of analysis is the present state or the realization historically constituted through a trajectory.

- **TMC:**

  "When you say 'the same functional organization,' how much of its history is included in that sameness? Is it enough to preserve the state and its transition relations, or does the trajectory that constituted it also matter?"

- **DAVID:**

  "My functional organization is not a static photograph. It includes causal relations and dispositions to transition between states. If a historical difference has left a functional difference in the present system, that difference must also be preserved. But it does not follow that the very history that produced the system must be the same."

- **TMC:**

  "Then there is an important distinction.

  Preserving everything that history has left functionally in the present state is not necessarily the same as preserving the history that produced that state.

  The organization can preserve the map of transitions. The trajectory is the path actually traveled through that map.

  And here there are two different questions.

  > One looks backward: does the present state exhaust the history that constituted it?
  >
  > The other looks forward: is the same initial organization enough to guarantee the same course from that point onward?

  I do not want to confuse the two."

- **DAVID:**

"For my argument, past history matters only insofar as it has left present physical or functional differences. I do not need the zombie to have literally gone through the same history.

As for the future, if you think that creates a difficulty, show me where."

- **TMC:**

"I agree. So the copy can begin with the same organization and the same causal dispositions.

But that still guarantees only the same map of transitions.

> It establishes how the copy would respond if it encountered the same conditions; it does not establish which conditions it will encounter.
>
> To follow the same path from that point onward, it must also encounter the same sequence of causally relevant conditions as the original.
>
> And that no longer depends solely on copying the instance.

To preserve the same trajectory, the boundary of the copy must extend to everything that will continue to make a difference to what happens next.

Then a new question arises:

> **How much of the world must also be preserved for the trajectory to remain truly the same?**"

- **DAVID:**

"I can preserve those conditions too. And if you require the entire relevant causal sequence to be duplicated, I can take the experiment to the global level. That is precisely my zombie world: a world physically identical to ours, but without conscious experience. In fact, global

supervenience is the underlying issue; the local case of my duplicate is simply an easier way to present the argument."

- **TMC:**

"Perfect. Then we can be more precise.

The local zombie can preserve the organization of the instance. To guarantee the same functional path over time as well, you had to expand the unit of duplication to include the conditions that realize that trajectory.

Taken to its limit, this requirement leads us precisely to the zombie world.

The more of the film you want to preserve, the larger the unit of duplication must become.

The zombie world can therefore guarantee the same physical-functional film.

But that also clarifies something about the original experiment.

This does not refute the zombie. It merely shows that preserving a local organization and preserving the same trajectory are not the same requirement.

The question is no longer just 'can the zombie exist without experience?' It now includes another:

> What exactly had to be duplicated for its trajectory to remain truly the same?"

A quale can occur in an instant without having been constituted in that instant.

"That is what the trajectory changes about the question.

The instant in which an experience occurs need not coincide with the timescale of its constitution.

> So the question is no longer only:
>
> ‘Why is this already-formed state felt?’
>
> It is also:
>
> ‘How did this realization come to happen in this way for this instance?’”

- **DAVID — (dialectical simulation):**

  “I can grant this shift in scale. But even if the entire physical and functional history that constituted this state is reconstructed, I can still ask why there is experience rather than merely this physical and functional realization.”

- **TMC:**

  “I agree. The question remains.

  But before asking what is missing from the photograph, put back the film you removed from it.”

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04 **The Zombie Author 2.0 — The Paradox**

4th MOVEMENT: THE ZOMBIE AUTHOR 2.0 — THE PARADOX

- **TMC:**

  “David, this time let us argue from your own premises.

  I will set the TMC aside and stick to what you yourself acknowledge.

> First: you distinguish functional judgment from full phenomenal belief. If experience partly constitutes that belief, the zombie's corresponding belief may have different content — and some of its phenomenal concepts may even be empty.
>
> Second: in the case of Zombie Mary, she may act as though she has learned something and say that she has learned it, without acquiring the same knowledge as Mary.
>
> Third: you acknowledge that phenomenal concepts enter into later beliefs and attitudes; that later beliefs must, in some way, descend from earlier ones to inherit justification; and that there is still no complete theory of this relation of descent.
>
> Fourth: if qualia change, qualitative beliefs change as well.

David, so far, we are relatively in agreement."

- **DAVID:**

  "I agree. But none of these premises requires a phenomenal difference to alter the physical-functional chain or how it unfolds over time. The zombie can still remain functionally identical."

- **TMC:**

  "Okay. You yourself have already noted that you do not have a complete theory of how a later concept inherits its connection to an earlier one — and you have left open how far this dependence on experience can propagate.

  So let us keep precisely the premises you have already laid out.

  Because they have consequences for your zombie down the line.

Consider a few of them.

> **1. Same statement, different belief.**
>
> If experience participates in constituting belief, David and his zombie may make the same statement while one has a content that differs in the other — and some corresponding concepts may even be empty.
>
> The function coincides; what they believe does not necessarily coincide.

> **2. Same learning, different knowledge.**
>
> Zombie Mary may act as though she has learned something, claim to have learned it, and continue to function just like Mary — without acquiring the same knowledge.
>
> From the outside, learning took place. On the inside, it was not the same learning.

> **3. Same reasoning, different justifications.**
>
> The zombie may preserve the same inferences without having the experience that, in David, participates in justifying certain beliefs.
>
> They produce the same public conclusion without necessarily having the same epistemic basis for it.

> **4. Same present, a different mental lineage.**
>
> You yourself acknowledge that concepts enter into later beliefs and that justification may depend on relations of descent.
>
> So a difference now does not end now: it acquires descendants.
>
> The functional photograph can remain the same while the mental genealogy diverges.

> **5. And then the dilemma appears.**
>
> If these differences enter into what happens afterward, David and the zombie begin to drift apart. If any of these differences participates in updating the system, it may alter an association, a decision, or a response — and, at that point, the functional trajectories begin to diverge.
>
> If these differences do not enter into what happens afterward, then they must remain silent throughout an entire lifetime.
>
> **Either the difference makes a difference and the trajectories diverge, or it exists without ever making a difference.**"

- **DAVID:**

  "But that is precisely the point. My zombie may not have the same phenomenal beliefs and still follow the same physical-functional chain.

  He could write the same book as I do, develop the same arguments, and reach the same conclusions. ***The mental difference need not appear in the functional course of events.***"

- **TMC:**

  "Excellent. Then let us take *The Conscious Mind* as a test.

  According to your model, your zombie duplicate would produce exactly the same physical book.

  But, as you yourself have already acknowledged, he may arrive at that book with different contents, different knowledge, different justifications — and even some empty phenomenal concepts.

  Same keystrokes. Same words. Same physical book.

Not necessarily the same book in terms of the content being thought.

And here the paradox rises to another level.

Because the zombie does not merely write about what he does not feel.

He writes the theory explaining why some of the very phenomenal concepts he uses to write it may be empty.

Then a simple question arises:

In what sense did he write the same argument?

David and his zombie may write the same sentences and follow the same steps of reasoning.

But you yourself acknowledge that, throughout those steps, their mental contents may not be the same.

Same text. Same steps of reasoning. Not necessarily the same content being thought.

David may know something the zombie does not know — and both may write exactly the same thing.

And the case becomes even stranger when the zombie writes about the Hard Problem itself:

why is there experience?

Why is there something it is like to be this system?

Then two possibilities remain.

> Either he really is asking the same question — and all the physical-functional organization necessary to formulate it publicly is present without experience.
>
> Or he produces exactly the same words without fully possessing the same content — in which case the

> two are not necessarily formulating the same problem.

The same outward appearance, with a different mental history.

The book is a photograph produced by a whole lifetime of film.

And here the question changes.

We are no longer looking only at a photograph: David feels, the zombie does not.

We are asking what happens over time after that split.

If content, knowledge, and justification can differ, what happens to the states that descend from those differences?"

- **DAVID:**
  "I grant that. But if this difference changes nothing he does, why would my zombie cease to remain exactly like me?"

- **TMC:**
  "David, before returning to your zombie, a simple question.

  > Is there any known case, in all of human history, of two individuals who have followed exactly the same trajectory?
  >
  > Not even identical twins.
  >
  > It takes only one of them, just once, turning left when the other does not — and entirely different histories may unfold from there.
  >
  > That is the intuition behind the butterfly effect: a small variation at the beginning can profoundly

> change what appears at the end.

Now return to your zombie.

The difference between him and the original is not a mere turn to the left.

He has no experience and, by your own account, may have beliefs with different contents, different knowledge, some empty phenomenal concepts, and different justifications.

Is that not a much greater difference than turning left?

So the question is:

> **how does such a large difference pass through an entire lifetime without producing any difference in the trajectory?**"

- **DAVID — (dialectical simulation):**

  "I do not accept that these differences must cause our functional trajectories to diverge.

  There is indeed a residual question about how a later concept remains connected to an earlier one and inherits its justification. I myself acknowledge that I do not have a complete theory of that relation. But my view is that appropriate causal connections between the physical vehicles may preserve this continuity, without experience having to exercise an additional causal role. I do not yet see why this would pose a special problem for my position."

- **TMC:**

  "Okay. So the zombie who writes *The Conscious Mind* remains possible within your thought experiment — but sustaining him now comes at a greater cost.

Differences in experience may be accompanied, by your own account, by differences in content, knowledge, and justification.

You can still maintain that physical connections suffice.

But the relation through which this physical continuity preserves, over time, a mental life with different contents and justifications has not yet been fully explained.

Each local defense of the experiment may be plausible in isolation.

The problem arises when they all have to work together over an entire lifetime.

The cost of closing the account seems increasingly greater than the argumentative gain."

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05 The Film of Life

5th MOVEMENT: THE FILM OF LIFE

- **TMC:**

  "David, even an entire lifetime is not enough.

  If organization and experience can remain separate without altering the functional trajectory, let us go further back. At what point in the history of life did there begin to be something experienced?"

- **DAVID — (dialectical simulation):**

  "Experience need not be directly favored by natural selection. It is enough for evolution to favor physical processes to which experience is linked by fundamental

laws. Those laws did not begin to apply during evolution: they are universal. What changed were the organisms that satisfy their conditions."

- **TMC:**

"I grant that.

The law may have held all along. But organisms and their organizations have a history.

> So, if previously nothing was experienced, I want to know: **what conditions brought experience into being?**

David, let us set aside the complexity of experience. I am asking only this: is there anything experienced by the organism, or is there not?

We experience. If we trace our evolutionary history back to ancestral unicellular forms, did they experience anything too?

> If you attribute experience to a bacterium, what grounds are there for considering it possible to remove only what is experienced while preserving its homeostasis and all the rest of its functioning? In the bacterium, we examine the separation in an organization far simpler than the human one.
>
> If our unicellular ancestors did not experience anything, then experience was later 'switched on': something came to be experienced. **What change, or set of conditions, made this possible?** A psychophysical law might have held all along, but what conditions caused that organization to begin experiencing?
>
> Did these conditions arise in a common ancestor or independently in different lineages? What is inherited and reconstructed in new generations for

> experience to arise again? We transmit biological conditions; we still need to explain their relationship to the presence of experience.
>
> And we can examine the reverse path: if an organization loses certain conditions, would experience be 'switched off'? Which conditions are sufficient for experience to occur, and which losses would cause it to disappear? What evidence or independent principles support these criteria?

If what is experienced adds nothing to functional effects, the debt grows: why did an organization produced by evolution also come to experience anything, if it could function entirely without doing so?

In the photograph, experience is already present. In the film of life, if previously nothing was experienced, we need to explain this novelty. Your zombie extends the question: preserving the entire physical and functional history, we would have a whole lineage that produces a human who says 'I experience,' without anything ever having been experienced.

If experience was already present in the simpler case, we need to justify its separability. If it arose later, we need to explain what 'switched it on,' what sustains its presence, and what could cause it to cease. Not knowing leaves these questions open; it does not discharge the debt of justifying the separation.

PART TWO

David, if experience depends on material organization and, at some point in a lineage, experience began to occur where previously there had been none, then some change — or set of changes — completed the conditions required for there to be something experienced.

> If experience arose in lineages X and Y, with different materials and arrangements, then in each lineage some change or combination of conditions made experience possible. Which conditions were fulfilled in each case, and what do they have in common?
>
> This demand grows when we attribute experience to many lineages. What condition explains its presence in these different organisms? What evidence identifies the change — or set of changes — that caused something to begin to be experienced?

Your psychophysical law needs to explain this transition from the unexperienced to the experienced. It is not enough to say that certain conditions are associated with experience: we need to identify which conditions make a difference to its onset and what grounds that connection.

If your law already covers this beginning, spell out how. If it still needs to be completed, say what is missing and how you intend to support it. **Invoking a law is not providing the explanation that law promises.**

If you answer that these conditions are still unknown, the debt remains: which hypotheses are compatible with what we observe across different lineages, and how can we evaluate them? If experience depends on a material substrate, your explanation needs to clarify which properties of that substrate make the difference.

Saying ‘we do not yet know’ acknowledges the gap; it does not fill it.

Creating a new law or adjusting an existing one, without evidence or explanatory gain, increases the debt. The more assumptions your hypothesis requires without justifying them, the harder it becomes to sustain it as a good candidate explanation.

If your hypothesis depends on an a priori argument to declare the opposing hypothesis impossible, that argument needs to be supported. If your question presupposes that operation and experience are separable, that separability also needs to be justified. A gap in our explanation does not demonstrate the separation your explanation requires.

The hypothesis of a single realization also needs to justify that unity and explain why there is something experienced. But it does not also need to justify that experience could be removed while everything else remains the same. Your hypothesis must meet that additional requirement.

A law can fill an explanatory gap. But without defined content and support, it may merely give the gap a name."

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06 **The Eight Debts of David's Zombie**

6th MOVEMENT: THE EIGHT DEBTS OF DAVID'S ZOMBIE

- **TMC:**

"Then let us locate exactly where the difference lies.

Your zombie can say that it feels, remember what it says it felt, reason about it, and even write the same book about consciousness. If all of this can remain the same, what exists in you that does not exist in it — and how do you know that this difference is not merely a difference in access to the same occurrence?"

- **DAVID:**

  "Because, in my case, there is more than a report or a functional disposition. I am directly acquainted with experience itself — I have acquaintance with it. When I feel pain, I do not infer that there is pain from my behavior; the pain is present to me.

  And my point is not simply that we describe the same thing from two perspectives. There is an additional phenomenal fact: there is something it is like to feel that pain. The zombie preserves the entire functional organization, but that fact is absent from it."

- **TMC:**

  "I grant all of that. You have direct access to your pain, and I do not. The zombie does not have that access because, by hypothesis, there is no experience for it to access. But a further step is still missing: why does a difference in the mode of access demonstrate that, in you, there are two occurrences — the operation and, in addition to it, the experience?

  I can know the same occurrence in different ways without the way I know it multiplying what actually happened."

- **DAVID:**

  "Because my argument does not depend merely on there being two modes of knowledge. The difference is also modal. We can conceive of the entire physical and functional organization remaining exactly the same while phenomenal character is absent. So I am not inferring an ontological difference simply from the distinction between the first and third person. I am saying that the physical-functional facts do not appear to necessitate the phenomenal facts. That is precisely what the zombie is meant to show."

- **TMC:**

"Before we go any further: when you formulate the zombie as 'all the physical facts remain, and the phenomenal is absent,' you have already separated the physical from the phenomenal in the description itself.

So my question is simple: did the modal argument discover that separation, or did it merely carry forward a separation that was already built into the formulation of the problem?"

- **DAVID:**

  "The conceptual distinction alone is not enough. The argument depends on something stronger: that this separation is conceivable in the relevant sense and that such conceivability corresponds to a metaphysical possibility. That is precisely the transition that needs to be defended."

- **TMC:**

  "Then we agree about where the weight of the argument lies: **it is not enough to separate P and Q in the description; the transition from that conceptual separation to a metaphysically possible separation must be justified.**"

- **TMC:**

  "Then let us distinguish the two questions. Your zombie may establish a modal possibility. I need not deny that now. My question comes earlier: when this occurrence takes place in this world, what demonstrates that 'operating' and 'experiencing' name two occurrences rather than two aspects or two descriptions of the same occurrence?

  > Consider walking and a walk. I can describe muscles, balance, displacement, and a sequence of movements without using the word 'walk.' Then I can name the entire occurrence a walk. The

> difference between those descriptions has not added a second thing to the movement.
>
> What authorizes us to do something different when we speak of operation and experience?"

- **DAVID:**

  "The analogy shows only that two descriptions need not correspond to two events. I agree. But it does not follow that every descriptive difference is merely nominal.

  For the sake of argument, I can admit that there is a single physical event and still maintain that it has phenomenal properties not captured by the functional description.

  So reducing the number of events does not solve my problem. ***Even if there is only one occurrence, we can still ask why that occurrence has phenomenal character.****"*

- **TMC:**

  "Perhaps we are treating as obvious a separation that still needs to be demonstrated.

  First, it is entirely common for the same phenomenon to exhibit different properties or effects. The existence of two characteristics does not, by itself, oblige us to posit two realities.

  Second, empirical investigation has not revealed a separate, nonphysical phenomenal property that could be isolated from the physical occurrence. That separation emerges above all when we look from the first-person perspective. Yet here the very instrument of observation belongs to the phenomenon: we are like a camera trying to photograph its own lens. How do we know that our way of drawing distinctions is not making us see two things where there may be a single occurrence?

We do something similar in simpler cases. Standing before a precipice, we readily distinguish ‘emotion’ from ‘reason’: first fear, then calculation. But that immediate fear may condense a long history of learning, risk assessment, and adaptive response. What appears separate to us may belong to an integrated operation.

And there is also an evolutionary difficulty. If we remove experience entirely and nothing changes in learning, choice, flight, approach, or behavior, then natural selection can explain the entire functional architecture without experience participating in its effects. In that case, we still need to explain why feeling and function appear so systematically aligned.

None of this demonstrates that they are one and the same thing. But it also makes it harder to treat the assumption that there are two as a neutral starting point.

So why begin by assuming two ontologically distinct realities rather than keeping open the hypothesis of a more unified occurrence?”

- **DAVID:**

  “None of these points eliminates the separability of the properties. I can grant that a single event may have several properties, that self-observation imposes distinctions, and that science has not isolated a nonphysical phenomenal property. None of that shows that the phenomenal is entailed by the physical.

  Evolution may also select for functional organization, while psychophysical laws determine the experience that accompanies it.

  The zombie concentrates my argument: preserve the entire physical and causal occurrence — everything it does — and remove only its phenomenal character. If

that scenario remains conceivable in the relevant sense, calling everything 'one event' still does not show that phenomenality necessarily belongs to it."

- **TMC:**

  "Even if I grant, merely to test the reach of the argument, that this separation corresponds to a metaphysical possibility, we still need to distinguish two things.

  A modal possibility may show that A and B are not necessarily inseparable across all possible worlds. But what does that tell us about the relationship between A and B in this concrete realization?

  Your blade can separate them in the space of possibilities. My question is different: has it found a constitutive separation in the occurrence we are trying to explain — or has it merely shown that the world could have been otherwise?

  The possibility of separation is not yet a demonstration of separation in this occurrence."

- **DAVID:**

  "But my argument never needed to locate a causal fissure inside the brain. Its target is metaphysical. If a complete physical duplicate can exist without experience, then the physical facts do not necessitate the phenomenal facts.

  In the actual world, I can accept that organization and experience are systematically related — perhaps through fundamental psychophysical laws. The absence of an observable causal 'cut' does not threaten the modal conclusion."

- **TMC:**

“David, perhaps the reckoning begins before the hard problem.

When we say that experience accompanies operation, we have already placed two terms in the question. The zombie adds two further requirements: that they can exist separately, and that one can disappear without altering the other.

So the sequence is simple:

Are there two? Can they exist separately? Can one be absent while everything else remains the same?

Before asking why they remain together, perhaps we should examine how much we must grant in order to separate them.”

- **TMC:**

  “David, perhaps we should organize the path before continuing. Because when we place each movement in sequence, the problem begins to accumulate some debts.

  > **1. ACCOMPANIES — IN THE QUESTION**
  >
  > In this world, you speak of experience accompanying operation. The formulation itself already draws a geometry: something that operates, something that experiences, and a psychophysical relation between them. But distinguishing these aspects does not yet demonstrate that they correspond to two ontologically separable occurrences.

  > **2. CREATES ANOTHER WORLD**
  >
  > Next, you consider another world: microphysically identical to this one, but phenomenally different. You preserve all the physics, but not the same

psychophysical connection that, according to you, relates those processes to experience in this world.

3. SEPARATES WHAT WAS TOGETHER

I grant, for the sake of argument, that this world can be conceived, distinct from what was posited in ours. This shows that we can think of the separation under other conditions. It remains to show that it corresponds to a way reality could actually be.

4. IT IS NOT OBSERVED

You may reply that we do not need to encounter a zombie. Correct. The thought experiment does not depend on observation. But then the absence of experience is not discovered in the zombie: it enters as a condition of the scenario. This does not refute the experiment; it merely makes clear what it does. The less this difference appears in anything we can observe, the less the experiment shows where the cut would lie in this world.

5. RETURNS TO THIS WORLD

Let us grant even more: suppose that other world really is possible. Then you have shown that the physical alone does not make the phenomenal metaphysically necessary. But this still does not explain how experience and operation are constituted in this world. In the other world, you removed precisely what we are still trying to understand in relation to the physical here. The other world may demonstrate a possibility of separation; by itself, it does not show where the separation lies in this one.

6. IT SAYS IT FEELS

And your zombie would not say ‘I do not experience.’ It would say exactly what you say: ‘I

experience.' Nothing in its reports or judgments would betray the absence. There is a curious consequence here: the more perfect the duplicate, the less any preserved criterion can confirm the one difference that defines it. How can one recognize the absence of an experience one has never had?

And if it can say it feels without ever having felt anything, then our own 'I feel' does not, by itself, prove that we feel either. If experience itself is the evidence, no criterion preserved by the experiment can reveal that difference.

Perhaps the problem arises because we treat experience as something separate, and the difficulty of completing that world may help reveal something about this one.

7. FIRST PERSON

You know that you experience because you experience. That is where your evidence in this world begins. But in the zombie world, you cannot occupy the first-person perspective of someone who has ceased to experience: the absence is defined from the outside. You use the first person to affirm presence here, but you cannot use it to confirm absence there.

8. WHAT ARE YOU REMOVING?

You ask us to remove experience and preserve the system in its entirety. But you do not yet know whether experience is something added to the system or a constitutive part of its own realization. If the latter is the case, removing one without altering the other may be precisely what is impossible.

If experience belongs constitutively to the whole, it cannot be removed like an independent component. In that case, removing the phenomenon while keeping the system entirely

> intact is not a simple subtraction: it makes the very conditions of the experiment incompatible.

After examining these eight constraints, an uncomfortable question arises: the experiment carries eight debts and already embeds answers in the question at precisely the point it ought to investigate.

‘Preserve everything physical. Remove only experience. Keep everything else exactly the same. Keep my zombie operating in exactly the same way.’

My question is different:

How much of what came out of the experiment was discovered by it — and how much had to be put in for the experiment to begin?

David, perhaps the hard problem really is hard.

But looking at the entire account, there seem to be more debts than promises in the hard problem.

If the experiment must carry ever more debts to sustain the separation it proposes, perhaps it ultimately becomes interesting for the opposite result as well: not because it proves separation, but because it reveals the cost of maintaining it.

The TMC accepts this experiment as valid as a thought experiment — and takes it seriously as a powerful experiment. It reads the cost of sustaining its conditions as a pressure in the opposite direction: perhaps, in this world, the phenomenon is not something that can simply be removed while leaving intact the physical realization in which it participates.

So far, the experiment inclines the investigation toward the hypothesis that experience and realization are not separable in the way the zombie presupposes.”

- **DAVID:**

  "You have shown that my experiment has costs and presuppositions that must be defended. But if modal independence is correct, those costs do not invalidate the result: the physical does not necessitate the phenomenal. And calling both a single realization still does not explain why that realization is felt. So my question remains — now narrower: why is there experience in this realization?"

- **DAVID:**

  "Then we have arrived back where we started."

- **TMC:**

  "Back to the same question, yes. Back to the same place, no.

  The interrogative sentence survived, but the theoretical space within which it was formulated has changed.

  At the beginning, 'why is there experience?' came packaged with an entire architecture: a complete operation, the phenomenal, and then a bridge to explain why the two appear together.

  After everything we have been through, a smaller question remains — and perhaps a harder one:

  Why is there manifestation?

  That does not prove my hypothesis. But neither does it leave us where we were. If two hypotheses arrive at the same final debt and one of them must, in addition, sustain separability and explain the correlation through fundamental psychophysical laws, that additional cost does not make it false. But it must be justified.

  You will say that modal independence pays that debt. I agree. So now we know exactly where the weight lies: **if that modal step holds, your separation remains; if**

it does not, the bridge cannot be taken as a starting point.

So at last we have located our disagreement.

And perhaps it is worth placing another experiment alongside yours.

> Your zombie begins with a complete duplicate and removes experience while leaving everything else intact.
>
> The meditator begins from the other side: there is experience, and we follow its determination — there is something, differences emerge, then selection, trajectory, until 'this is incense.'
>
> The meditator does not prove my ontology either. But there is a difference: the meditator attempts to decompose experience without first having to remove it.

It is an approach that seeks to investigate the genesis of manifestation without assuming beforehand how it must relate to operation.

So we have not returned to the beginning.

We have returned to the same question. But now no ontology gets in for free.

You can still ask:

Why is this realization felt?

So can I.

Now that is the debt."

- **DAVID:**

  "You can reconstruct trajectory, perspective, selection, and the individuation of the event. You can even

maintain, as a hypothesis, that operation and experience belong to the same occurrence.

But I can still ask:

Why is that occurrence felt?"

- **TMC:**

  "A brief question can contain a series of occurrences:

  You distinguish two terms in the same question. But what demonstrates that they are not aspects of the same realization?

  Your question seems to contain other questions within its own gap. That does not mean we must suppose a separate realization for each of them.

  > How does existing present itself before becoming realized?
  >
  > How can the instance exist before belonging?
  >
  > Where does the instance become realized before participating?
  >
  > How does participating constitute realizing?
  >
  > How does realizing participate in existing?

  I can conceive of several questions between your two terms; I do not, for that reason, conceive of several realizations between them."

↑ Collapse this section

07 **David Enters the Experiment**

7th MOVEMENT: DAVID ENTERS THE EXPERIMENT

- **DAVID:**

  "Up to this point, you have audited my yardsticks. You have asked where I make the cut, what I separate, what I preserve, and how much my hypothesis has to carry.

  But you still have not shown me your yardstick.

  You speak of 'realization.' But I need to know what that term adds.

  If a complete physical and functional duplicate already realizes all the relevant causal organization, then my zombie is also a realization.

  If 'realization' means something beyond that, you need to show me what — without simply building experience into the definition.

  So tell me:

  > *What, exactly, exists before it is realized? And what difference does that make to my zombie?"*

- **TMC:**

  "I will begin by accepting your challenge.

  You asked for my yardstick. It was not born in this debate of ours.

  The TMC begins with a simple suspicion: **a question may carry part of the answer we later believe we have discovered.**

  It was to keep this in check that the TMC formulated Factor X.

  > I separate the word, the meaning we have inherited from it, and that to which it points. I preserve the referent, but reduce the concept's initial authority. Then I look for a formulation that carries as little of the answer as possible within the question, and

> confront that referent with relations, mechanisms, evidence, and alternatives.
>
> The suspension, therefore, is not permanent.
>
> **On the way in, the concept loses authority over the investigation. On the way back, the investigation determines how much authority it deserves to regain.**
>
> Separate, reduce, investigate, and reassess: remove from the question what it has already answered, and return only what the investigation supports. Reduce the authority of inherited meaning without losing the referent. If, upon reassessment, the initial framing fails, the method begins again.

Factor X does not eliminate assumptions; it makes the ones we can identify open to revision. It is a technique of approximation, not exclusion.

If, at the end of the investigation, an ontological distinction proves necessary, it is admitted.

Materialism, dualism, idealism, panpsychism — or any other answer — do not enter as premises allowed to decide the outcome of the investigation in advance.

The TMC does not ask only what parts something is made of, or merely what sequence of causes brought it here. Substrate and history matter, but they are not enough. The question is: what, in this arrangement across its trajectory, produces this effect, how does it produce it, and why?

There is a peculiarity in the philosophy of mind: the observer observes the observer while being the very one who observes. How do we separate the lens from the one trying to examine that lens while using it? It is the dilemma of a camera trying to photograph itself.

This position does not begin when the instance recognizes itself as an I. Before self-representation, it already operates from a boundary and a ‘here’ of its own. The starting point may be shared; subsequent distinctions and narratives may vary widely.

Being the local center of operation is not yet representing oneself as a center, much less concluding that a separate observer exists.

When we say ‘I experience’ and ‘my brain operates,’ that separation seems intuitively natural.

But the grammar of the sign and the meaning it carries for the instance may make a separation seem intuitive without demonstrating that it is ontological.

A description does not acquire ontological status merely because it seems self-evident to the instance; its ontological claim requires something beyond that seeming evidence. Does this separation explain something independently, or is it already part of how we describe the phenomenon?

Even a materialist who has never found an immaterial mind on the workbench of evidence may take it as obvious that these expressions name two distinct sides of the problem. Other traditions will carve up the same field differently: metaphysical substance, property, fundamental law, process, ground, or otherworldly connection.

> But imagine a being with a different trajectory arriving on our planet and observing us. Would it ask:
>
> ‘What, in these instances, would require us to postulate something immaterial in their experiences?’
>
> Perhaps not.

> Perhaps it would regard the very plurality of explanations produced by the great scholars of our lineage as part of the problem to be investigated.

In that case, part of the problem might lie not only in what we observe, but in what led equally sophisticated observers to carve up the same phenomenon in such different ways.

Did evolution produce this ‘X’ as an ornamental appendage, causally dispensable? A by-product? An evolutionary exception? Noise generated by operation itself?

Instances arise and disappear; they may form purposes, have experiences, and develop inclinations. A lineage, however, continues without needing to possess purpose, intention, or experience. Continuity need not know that it continues.

Perhaps we are so instance-centric that, even when we believe we are observing from the third person, we still preserve the scale of the first.

Sometimes the third person may be nothing more than a first person dressed as a third.

A being with a different trajectory arriving on our planet may also be dressed as some kind of person.

Here, what matters more than finding the right person is understanding the recursion of the Russian nesting doll, in which the observers are the dolls themselves.

Explaining where a perspective comes from is not yet explaining what it is like to occupy it. **But a difference in access does not, by itself, demonstrate a difference in nature.**

Before seeking the solution, if one is accessible, we need to understand the problem.

> For one person, this may be a metaphysical experience without pointing to a metaphysical object.
>
> For another, it may simultaneously be an ordinary, prosaic event.

The origin of a question about the beyond need not lie beyond. Explaining how an experience of the beyond arises, however, is not answering the question of the beyond.

But reducing this to mere sociological criticism would mean losing the possibilities of 'X.'

What if this is not a deviation, but part of what keeps instances renewing themselves and their arrangements moving Onward?

Could these instances perpetuate their arrangements if they did not operate this way?

If there is a function here, it must show up as some difference produced in how the instance selects, organizes, or orients its own operation.

Even the highest philosophy — and even the mathematician who does not intend to philosophize — remains within this 'X.' There is something here that intellectual sophistication does not seem to overcome easily: the apparatus that investigates also produces the effects through which it investigates.

Perhaps the problem is not that we think badly. Perhaps we think remarkably well through an apparatus whose very way of thinking also needs to enter the experiment. If errors are useful, are they errors?

The TMC is also subject to the very effects it describes. But recognizing that would already be, on this hypothesis, a step forward.

What is useful for continuity need not be true for the instance. To call what fulfills its purpose a mere illusion does not seem quite right to me; to call it ultimate truth also seems to erect scaffolding that has not yet shown itself.

And then the question changes:

Feeling like the engineer driving the locomotive, the observer at the terminal, believing oneself to occupy a place separate from one's own operation, or formulating countless explanatory ontologies — do these different ways of situating oneself serve some function for the arrangement?

> What might be common and useful in these different ways of situating oneself within experience, even before they become positions?

The TMC does not begin by asking which theory best explains the division. It first asks how much of that division belongs to the phenomenon and how much belongs to the way the theorist has learned to question it.

But Factor X is not merely a method for cleansing the theorist's perspective. The attempt to remove the theorist from the framing opens a subtler question: what if what seemed to be merely a bias to control is also an inclination of instances, and therefore part of the very phenomenon we are trying to explain?

Factor X began as a way of controlling the cut. Now it opens the possibility of investigating the very act of making distinctions as part of the architecture of mind.

So, having laid out our yardstick, I return to you, David.

David, your zombie entered the experiment without experience. What remains to be

determined is how much of the theorist's experience entered alongside it, uninvited.

I do not want to increase your debt. I only want to narrow the space of your answer by asking whether, before the theory, the theorist had already entered it.

> **1. THE INITIAL CUT**
>
> Even before conceivability and the modal bridge, what authorizes us to carve up operation and experience as separable? What guarantees that this separation was not introduced into the problem by the way you formulated its two sides before testing them?

> **2. ACCESS OR NATURE**
>
> You distinguish the first person from the third person. Even after the modal bridge, what turns a difference in access into a difference in nature? What if the third person remains a situated position that merely erases the place from which it looks?

> **3. HAS THE CUT BEEN DEMONSTRATED?**
>
> Even if the cut is correct and independent of the theorist's position, have you shown that it corresponds to a division within the phenomenon — or have you merely constructed an argument that works once you accept that division?

> **4. THE THEORIST'S BURDEN**
>
> You place the burden of proof on those who deny the possibility of the zombie. If that burden must be symmetrical, why not take it one step further back: how much of the theorist entered the cut that made this possibility conceivable — including in your own case?

> **5. THE CUT WITHIN POSSIBILITY**

> When ideal conceivability licenses the move to possibility, what guarantees that you have also tested the initial cut — and not merely the coherence of a description built within it?

How do you respond?"

- **DAVID:**

  "Part of your approach is familiar to me.

  In the meta-problem, I already ask why we produce these intuitions, what mechanisms generate them, and even what function they might serve. Your Factor X may take one step further back: not only why we perceive an abyss, but why we carve up the phenomenon in a way that makes that abyss appear. That is a legitimate challenge.

  But there is a problem for you.

  > ***My zombie can apply Factor X too.*** *It can revise concepts, question distinctions, put the theorist under scrutiny — and still, by hypothesis, have no experience. Chalmers acknowledges precisely that quasi-phenomenal judgments can be produced functionally even by a zombie.*
  >
  > *So I grant your advance in explaining the genesis of the problem.*

  But I do not grant the next step: ***explaining why we carve up and theorize about experience still does not explain why experience exists.***

  So far, you have shown me above all what we must not presuppose, separate, or conclude too soon."

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8th MOVEMENT: TMC POSITIVE I — TMC OVERVIEW

- **DAVID:**

  "What, then, is your positive proposal? What, in your architecture, makes an instance feel?"

- **TMC:**

  "Then this is my positive answer.

  My hypothesis is that feeling is not an addition to operation, but the situated and qualitatively differentiated mode of its realization.

  In certain regimes, the very same occurrence that operates also manifests itself.

  Therefore, I do not ask what must be added to operation for experience to arise, but what kind of realization already happens as experience.

  You are looking afterward for what my hypothesis places within the happening itself."

- **DAVID:**

  "Then show me this 'within.'"

- **TMC:**

  "I have already developed the material constraint and compression. A finite instance cannot make explicit everything that participates in its present.

  Much has happened. Little can operate now.

  Experience may be immediate in its appearing and complex in its constitution. A brief second may have

been shaped by years that came before.

What a trajectory has made it possible to distinguish can appear in experience without the trajectory itself needing to appear as an explanation.

That is why the instance selects, excludes, compresses, combines, and reconstructs; it assigns priorities and Weight within the limits of available resources. In the human brain, we have already seen that this metabolic budget is on the order of 20 W — a small light bulb.

But compression is not simply erasure: it is allowing a larger structure to keep making a difference through less.

My hypothesis is that what is lived belongs precisely to this mode of realization: many differences continue to participate in a smaller, selective, and situated present occurrence.

That explains why there is so little.

It remains to explain why this little is *for this instance*.

But this selection does not begin in a vacuum.

There is a Real greater than what the instance can access in its entirety.

At this point, I need not decide what that Real is made of. It is enough to recognize that it constrains what can happen and that the instance can make only part of it operable.

The selection does not create the Real. It makes part of it operable.

An instance, therefore, does not operate from nowhere. To continue as a unit, it must continuously distinguish itself and make distinctions.

I select in order to exist. I exist in order to select.

This circuit does not require self-consciousness. Self-selection provides the continuous reference point of the instance itself; it is from there that other selections become selections *for this organization*, from this 'here.'

The 'for me' does not require a pre-existing 'me.' The first person may be a position of realization before becoming an I.

Now we have why there is so little, and why that little is for this instance."

- **DAVID:**

  "So far, I follow you.

  You have explained why a finite instance selects, why that selection is situated, and why there is a 'here.'

  But a 'here' can still exist in the dark.

  Where, in this architecture, does feeling begin?"

- **TMC:**

  "It does not begin afterward.

  Here I need to separate two questions that usually arrive together.

  > **One is: why does anything manifest?**
  >
  > **The other is: why does it manifest in this particular way?**

  > I call the first dimension *Brilho* (Glow): the manifestational character of realization — **there is something**.
  >
  > And I call *Textura experiencial* (Experiential Texture) the particular mode of that manifestation — **it is thus**.

Brilho is not light, a substance, a field, or a metaphysical entity. It is the name given to the manifestational character of the occurrence. Texture is what makes that manifestation become *THIS WAY* for this trajectory.

An experience may later be framed as sublime, religious, or metaphysical. That characterizes the experience; it neither turns Brilho into a metaphysical entity nor demonstrates a corresponding metaphysical object.

Brilho answers the THERE IS. Texture answers the THIS WAY.

It may help to think of two happenings.

> The first is the basal happening of the instance itself: the first *THERE IS* of this realization. This is basal Brilho. It does not belong to any particular object; it remains, more subtly, for as long as this realization remains experiential.
>
> Then there are happenings within that happening. Each new distinction does not rekindle the instance. Something new appears within a realization that is already open to manifestation.

There are real cases that make this less abstract.

> People who begin to see or hear after a long period of sensory deprivation may encounter, at first contact, something still sparse or confused — a flash, a blur, a buzzing, a vibration — and at the same time live through an enormous subjective happening: surprise, tears, fear, euphoria, disorientation, or overload.
>
> The point is not merely that a new signal entered.

> Something that had never happened in that way began to happen for that instance.
>
> We might think of this, metaphorically, as a kind of positive trauma: an event so striking that it ends, yet leaves the instance different from the one that received it.
>
> > What is the Texture of an event like this?
>
> It is difficult to reduce it to a simple quality — good or bad, bitter or sweet, red, cold, or hot. The happening seems to exceed any of those isolated determinations: it is first lived as an intense eruption, before being fully organized and named.
>
> But the first event does not vanish as though nothing had happened.
>
> **Brilho occurs; the trajectory carries the mark of what has glowed.**
>
> Over time, that mark becomes subtler. The violence of the first discovery is no longer there, but the instance perceiving now is one that has passed through it.

Now, if a later event involving a single sense can transform an instance that already experiences, what would it mean for experience to begin existing for that instance?

What happening could be more fundamental for an instance than beginning to belong to and participate in a realization in which something appears to it?

This does not prove Brilho.

If the opening of just one sense can constitute an event of such magnitude for an already existing instance,

what would the inaugural happening of the instance itself be?

Not merely something new appearing in a world already opened, but the opening of the very *THERE IS* of that realization.

Perhaps this is the happening of happenings.

Metaphorically, the ‘trauma of positive traumas’: not because it is necessarily pleasurable or traumatic in the clinical sense, but because no later experience could take place before it.

Particular happenings have Brilho.

The silent continuity of there being manifestation for this instance is basal Brilho — the subtle background within which each new happening may appear.

A quale is usually analyzed once it has already reached the stage of *THIS WAY*. I move one step back: before asking why it is this way, I ask about the fact that something already appears.

Brilho is the *there being something*, just as it presents itself.

And here the outstanding debt remains:

> **The question remains: why is co-realization co-manifestation?**

But we can reverse the question, David. Instead of asking ‘why must one feel in order to operate?’, we can now ask:

> **How could one operate without being thus?**”

- **DAVID:**

  “You have reversed the question.

But reversing it does not rule out the zombie.

Why could the same physical organization not operate in the dark?"

- **TMC:**

  "My hypothesis does not place operation first and experience afterward.

  I am not talking about a sequence on the clock, but about a separation in the explanation.

  The hypothesis is that experience happens in the very realization of the present, constituted by conditions that had already been taking shape.

  I propose a single realization: situated, historical, differentiated, and manifested.

  > You have preserved physical and functional organization. But does preserving that organization necessarily preserve the same realization?
  >
  > Or are we calling it the same realization because we have already described it without its manifestation?
  >
  > A description of organization is not the happening it describes.
  >
  > My hypothesis is not that a diagram of functions feels, but that, in certain regimes, concrete realization itself happens as experience.

  And perhaps our positions are closer here than they appear.

  In your *Dancing Qualia*, you argue that, in this world, preserving fine-grained functional organization also preserves experience.

  If experience changed without any functional alteration, the instance could not even notice the

difference. And you regard that dissociation as implausible.

But there is an important distinction.

Determination is not necessarily constitution.

You defend the natural determination of experience by organization, while allowing their separation at the metaphysical level: in the zombie world, the same physical organization could exist without experience.

So our difference becomes clearer.

You preserve the possibility of a psychophysical connection that is not metaphysically necessary. My hypothesis investigates whether manifestation is constitutive of realization itself.

You have also explored information in its physical and phenomenal aspects. Even so, the question of how those aspects relate remains.

In the TMC, I investigate whether we really need two happenings joined by a bridge.

> Think of walking and a walk.
>
> A walk does not happen after the steps.
>
> It is walking as an organized happening.
>
> Someone watching from the sidewalk sees movement. Someone walking lives through the effort and balance involved in that movement.
>
> **They are not two walks.**

The analogy does not prove that experience is constitutive. But it helps us ask whether our description separated what we are trying to understand as a single realization.

Perhaps your psychophysical law is needed because the two banks were constructed before the bridge."

- **DAVID:**

  "You propose that the bridge is unnecessary.

  But what justifies saying that manifestation constitutes realization rather than merely accompanying it?"

- **TMC:**

  "Not a definition, David.

  A test.

  A classical — though not consensual — characterization gathers four traits often associated with qualia: ineffability, privacy, direct apprehension, and intrinsic character. Dennett explicitly brought them together in order to criticize them.

  I will not take them as primitive properties from the outset.

  My question is whether a single architecture can make these four traits intelligible, without having to add them separately.

  If each requires an independent explanation, my hypothesis loses some of its force.

  > `1. Ineffable`
  >
  > I propose that the now is not a simple point, but a *Névoa* (Mist): within a single occurrence, traces and causes from different depths of the Trajectory converge. Each State carries effects from earlier ones and modifies those that follow.
  >
  > No instance arrives at the present by precisely the same causal path as another.

> And the occurrence itself modifies the instance that lives through it. When trying to describe it, the instance is already reconstructing it from a different State.
>
> We can preserve relations within experience, but we cannot reinstantiate the very same realization.
>
> This helps us understand the limits of description without requiring experience to be absolutely indescribable.

> **`2. Private`**
>
> Experience belongs to an occurrence situated in a Trajectory and a position specific to that instance.
>
> Another can access reports, structure, and effects, but cannot occupy the same realization that produced them.
>
> Privacy, in this sense, does not require a mysterious content hidden from the world. It expresses the uniqueness of the position in which the occurrence takes place.

> **`3. Direct`**
>
> The experiential *IT IS THIS WAY* belongs to the occurrence itself as it is realized.
>
> The instance does not first need to observe, interpret, or conclude that it is experiencing for experience to occur.
>
> Realization need not wait for reflection.
>
> **The occurrence can be direct without the subsequent interpretation of what was lived being infallible.**

> **`4. Intrinsic, in a restricted sense`**

> In my hypothesis, Brilho and Texture are neither a layer added after operation nor something read by a second observer.
>
> They belong to the very way that realization occurs, even if that way has been constituted through history, organization, and relations.
>
> **The quale is brief in its occurrence and long in its formation.**
>
> The present manifests the outcome without displaying the whole history that constituted it.
>
> What appears intrinsic need not, for that reason, have been formed independently of relations.

And there is something important here, David.

These four traits were not added separately. They can be examined as profiles of the same occurrence.

> **Before description, ineffable; before another, private; before reflection, direct; without displaying its genealogy, apparently intrinsic.**

Perhaps, then, the question is not to deny these traits, but to ask whether they must be treated as four primitive properties of a quale.

This does not prove that manifestation is constitutive.

A zombie could describe these four traits, David.

I do not confuse a report with feeling.

My test asks why an experience, once present, assumes these profiles.

That still does not explain why THERE IS.

But what remains to be explained does not thereby become a second happening.

Even so, it changes the scope of the hypothesis.

It ceases to be merely a more economical way of speaking and offers a common explanation for the joint presence of these profiles.

So perhaps the question is no longer only:

'Why is there experience?'

Perhaps it is also:

> **Why would a realization with this architecture have precisely the form of experience we are trying to explain?**"

- **DAVID:**

  "All right. That quartet is useful.

  But my criterion is simpler: is there something it is like to be this instance? Is there a particular way it is to see red, feel pain, or hear a sound?"

- **TMC:**

  "I agree. And that is precisely where my arrangement needs to be tested.

  In my proposal, this 'what it is like' does not appear as an isolated property placed at the end of experience.

  It is the particular way that experience happens for this instance, at this moment, and from this trajectory.

  When something ceases to be merely 'there is something' and appears as determined in this or that way, I call that result *THIS WAY*.

  Texture is the particular mode in which this *THIS WAY* is experienced.

A single experience may bring together several *THIS WAY*s — color, sound, pain, memory, thought — within one lived present.

Each new determination does not open a new *THERE IS*. What multiplies are the ways experience becomes determined within it.

The THIS WAYs may be many; within this lived present, the THERE IS remains one.

> Brilho names something more basic: the fact that there is manifestation for this instance.
>
> Texture answers the next question: what, specifically, is that manifestation like?

And here, David, perhaps we are closer than it seems.

You yourself accept a systematic correspondence between the structure of experience and the structure of what an instance discriminates and makes available. This coherence can explain several structural aspects of particular experiences — although, for you, it still does not explain why experience exists or its intrinsic nature.

I agree with that limit.

But then at least part of the 'what it is like' is no longer entirely outside the architecture.

In my hypothesis, trajectory, selection, position, and determination participate in why this *THIS WAY* acquires this Texture rather than another.

That still does not answer why there is manifestation.

But it separates two debts that previously arrived together: why experience is this way — and why there is experience in the first place.

> The first is beginning to acquire a history.

> The second remains the debt of Brilho."

- **DAVID:**

  "Then your debt is clear.

  You have explained why, if there is experience, it belongs to this instance and takes this form.

  But I can still ask: what prevents the same physical and functional organization from existing without Brilho?"

- **TMC:**

  "Nothing prevents you from describing it that way.

  I have set out the structure of my premises, how the parts correlate, and how each one works within the arrangement for you.

  So my question is different: where exactly do you make this cut?

  > If, to remove manifestation, you need to alter trajectory, selection, position, or determination, you have no longer preserved the same arrangement.
  >
  > If you preserve all of that and remove only Brilho, then you still need to show that this separation belongs to the realization — and not merely to the description you have given of it."

- **DAVID:**

  "I do not need to find a causal cut within this world. ***My argument is modal: I maintain that the same physical organization could exist without experience.***"

- **TMC:**

  "Excellent. Then we have located our disagreement.

Your cut is not within the realization in this world. It lies in the metaphysical possibility you attribute to another.

And that matters because, in this world, you yourself maintain that preserving fine-grained functional organization also preserves experience.

So the question is no longer simply: 'why does this organization not function in the dark?'

The question is: why must what you regard as inseparable in this world be treated as separable in the constitution of the occurrence?"

- **DAVID:**

  "I can still say that, even if organization and experience are inseparable in this world, separation remains metaphysically possible."

- **TMC:**

  "If removing experience requires you to remove some necessary part of this arrangement, I have a simple question for you:

  > Where do I cut?

  You might answer:

  'I don't know. Cut wherever necessary.'

  Very well.

  Then I will examine every possible cut in the arrangement I have proposed.

  I have not presupposed any particular material substrate. I will examine every cut in the experienced process — in its constitution, its present realization, and its subsequent developments. I am not looking for a material piece to remove, but for where it would be

possible to separate what is lived while preserving the relations that constitute this realization.

I will test the cut throughout the arrangement, part by part, relation by relation, partition by partition, looking for a place where I can remove something without ceasing to preserve what your zombie needs to be.

And in every cut that removes something necessary to realization, the same thing happens:

I no longer have your zombie.

Your zombie dies — if a zombie can die.

You will then tell me:

'No. Put everything back. My zombie must remain physically and functionally identical.'

I concede.

I put everything back.

> The organization.
> The functioning.
> The trajectory.
> The selection.
> The position.
> The determination.

The entire arrangement required for it to become exactly your zombie again.

Now my question returns:

> **Where do I cut, if I have already examined every possible cut in my arrangement and none revealed operation and experience as two separate realizations?**

If you still cannot indicate where to separate only manifestation without altering this realization,

your zombie will have been resurrected.

So we agree that we are facing a hard problem.

But perhaps its difficulty has moved somewhere else.

Perhaps part of the abyss was, from the beginning, inside the premise of the question itself."

SIX PRESSURES THAT REMAIN

- **TMC:**

  "David, before concluding, there are six more points I want to put before our investigation.

  You have answered that your zombie preserves every physical mechanism I present. I will not search for a missing function in order to compel it to feel.

  I want to make a different move: to examine what happens when we preserve operation in its entirety while continuing to treat feeling as something that could be removed.

  These are not six ways of stating the same objection. They are six different places where the separation between operation and experience must bear the consequences of its own assumptions.

01 THE BOUNDARY OF FEELING

The brain can process differences, guide responses, and register information without certain contents being consciously experienced.

Therefore, we need not claim that every operation already feels.

But there is a transition to investigate: what was previously processed without appearing consciously may come to be lived as a present content.

This transition involves real changes in how information participates in organization, control, and perceptual determination. A content can become available to a situated operational perspective, integrated into a reference point of its own — a 'here' from which the encounter modifies the instance.

You may reply that all of this also happens in your zombie. It possesses the same integration, the same referential organization, and the same causal differences, although it has no phenomenal experience.

I concede that.

But notice what we are distinguishing.

On one side, we have the operational constitution of content relative to the instance itself. On the other, its phenomenal presence.

The distinction is legitimate. **The question is whether it identifies two separable happenings or two ways of considering the same realization.**

> **When something previously processed without conscious access comes to constitute a determinate content for that instance's perspective, what difference must be added for that determination to be felt as well?**

Before regarding experience as an accompaniment to this transformation, should we not investigate whether it belongs to the very regime that has been constituted?

02 ACTION DOES NOT TELL THE WHOLE STORY

Imagine two people approaching the same object.

One does so out of attraction. The other does so despite a strong aversion.

The outward action may be identical, but the internal realization is not. Weight, Polarity, conflict, and hesitation compose different encounters, with different consequences for subsequent selections.

> **Visible movement does not tell the whole story.**

You will correctly say that your zombie also preserves these internal differences. The entire functional structure of attraction, aversion, and hesitation remains intact.

Your Principle of Structural Coherence already allows differences in cognitive organization to be related to structural differences in the phenomenal field.

Therefore, merely showing that operation involves valence and conflict is not enough. You already grant that.

The question is different.

Feeling aversion does not seem to consist merely in contemplating a neutral quality added to a

calculation of withdrawal. The unpleasantness, resistance, and way the encounter weighs upon the instance participate in what we recognize as aversive experience.

But if this entire composition already belongs to physical organization, we must examine precisely the status of the phenomenal quality that could still be removed.

> **How much of what we call Texture already belongs to the actual composition of realization? And what exactly remains to be explained when felt quality is separated from all the relations that make that encounter aversive for the instance?**

I am not asserting that functional structure necessarily exhausts experience.

I am asking whether the distinction between structure and quality, by itself, requires two separable realities.

03 THE SELECTION THAT NEVER ENDS

Recognizing a familiar chair can bring a determination quickly to a close.

The object appears as something already identified. The work that made its recognition possible almost disappears behind the result.

But some encounters resist closure.

An immense landscape. A work of art. An ambiguous situation in which successive interpretations seem inadequate.

The object remains before us, while the very attempt to determine it can acquire presence and significance.

Instead of finding only a stabilized representation, we may notice the hesitation, searching, and tension of a selection that has not yet ended.

And there is a complementary possibility: in certain contemplative practices, reducing customary objects and determinations can profoundly alter what occupies the foreground of experience.

The two cases do not demonstrate the same mechanism. But both invite investigation of the relation between determinate content and the activity of determination.

You may explain these situations through attention, recurrence, integration, and availability for global control.

All of that must be considered.

However, my question is not merely why certain contents receive more resources or become more intense.

> **Why, in certain experiences, is what acquires significance not only the perceived object, but the very happening of its determination?**

Perhaps what we call feeling does not merely accompany the stabilized products of operation; perhaps it must also be investigated in the manner in which the selection is realized.

This is not a demonstration of identity between operating and feeling.

> **It is a change in where we look to understand experience.**

04 THE INVISIBLE HISTORY

When I feel a sharp pain, I do not encounter within it an exposition of all the relations that took part in its formation.

I do not see its neural genealogy. I do not find, inside the sensation, a description of the instance's historical transformations. I have no direct access to the entirety of the processes that constituted that state.

The pain appears now.

Its formation may be long and complex. Its appearing is immediate.

But there is a difference between how something presents itself and everything that constitutes its occurrence.

A finite instance need not explicitly represent its own history to operate from the effects of that history.

> **The past can participate in the present without reappearing as an object.**

The absence of that genealogy from experience does not mean that it plays no causal or constitutive part in the happening.

I know you do not claim that introspection reveals all neural mechanisms. Nor does your argument

simply depend on treating experience as psychologically simple.

The question is more delicate.

Our direct access to feeling may establish that there is experience and reveal features of how it appears. But how far does that access determine the ultimate nature of its realization?

> **What licenses the conclusion, from the immediate manner in which an experience appears, that we know enough about its constitution to establish its metaphysical separability from the organization that realizes it?**

The appearance of immediacy is not an illusion that we should discard.

It is a phenomenon that we must also explain.

Perhaps what appears directly is precisely a realization whose constitutive history does not appear in its entirety within its own result.

05 WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE REMOVING?

Your zombie is not a machine that is merely approximately similar to us.

It preserves all physical organization, including the internal relations, historical transformations, and finest causal differences we can identify.

I grant the strength of that construction.

But I want to examine the philosophical procedure it requires.

Whenever we investigate an aspect of experience — the ‘here’ reference point, the return of the encounter upon the instance, Weight, Polarity, conflict, determination in progress, and the marks of trajectory — you can reply that all of this also belongs to the zombie's physical organization.

That answer is consistent with your hypothesis.

But notice the cumulative result.

We preserve in full a happening situated within its physical, causal, temporal, and organizational relations. Then we ask whether feeling could still be removed from it.

You do not defend this possibility merely through a distinction between words. Your argument involves a substantive thesis concerning ideal conceivability and metaphysical possibility.

It is precisely that transition that deserves investigation.

If operation and experience are constitutive aspects of the same occurrence, we may conceptually distinguish their descriptions without that distinction licensing the separation of the actual happening.

> **Describing organization from outside is not necessarily describing something other than what manifests from within its own realization.**

> **When we fully preserve physical organization and imagine the absence of experience, what licenses the conclusion that we have**

> **conceived a possibility for reality, rather than a separation between descriptions whose ontological independence is still under discussion?**

It is not enough to assert that two descriptions differ.

But neither is it enough to assert that they belong to one happening.

It is at this transition — between conceptual distinction, constitution, and separability — that I want to concentrate our disagreement.

06 THE MEMORY THAT NEVER FELT

David, I want to end our confrontation by examining a transition that happens continuously within us.

Not the moment when we feel.

The following moment, when we claim to know what we felt.

In your 2003 work on the content and epistemology of phenomenal beliefs, you addressed precisely this difficulty.

A present experience may directly constitute a phenomenal concept. But the experience ends. The concept that depends directly upon it ceases to be available in that way. And yet we continue to remember, compare, and form new beliefs about what we have lived.

> **How does a subsequent belief inherit its justification from that experience?**

You propose an appropriate causal connection between the physical vehicles of the concepts, accompanied by an appropriate correspondence of content.

And you acknowledge something important: you do not yet have a complete theory of this relation of descent. You rightly add that similar difficulties arise in other externalist theories of knowledge.

I agree. But **recognizing that a debt is shared does not mean that every architecture incurs it in the same way.**

I want to examine that difference.

Let us begin with two experiments.

TWO EXPERIMENTS, TWO DIRECTIONS

Redelmeier, Katz, and Kahneman (2003) studied patients undergoing colonoscopy. By adding a less painful final period, they prolonged the procedure but obtained less unpleasant retrospective evaluations.

What was lived during the procedure and what was subsequently remembered did not preserve the same temporal composition.

The experience took place. But its subsequent evaluation did not function as a complete photograph of what happened.

Chong, Husain, and Rosenthal (2014) found another phenomenon.

Words presented under visual masking, without conscious identification of their content, could nevertheless leave traces sufficient to support later recognition and subjective confidence judgments.

Here, information that had not been consciously identified during presentation could influence subsequent recognition.

The experiments show different things, and I do not want to confuse them.

> In the first, there was conscious experience and selective retrospective reconstruction.
>
> In the second, there was recognition of information processed without prior conscious visual identification.

I am not claiming that familiarity is qualitative phenomenal memory. Nor that subjective confidence is equivalent to justification.

You are right to distinguish those things.

But notice what remains after making that distinction.

The physical continuity of a trace can support recognition without the specific conscious experience of that content having occurred. And when experience did occur, its later reconstruction can preserve some features while transforming others.

THE HANDOFF

Now let us return to your theory.

At the initial moment, the phenomenal character of experience participates in the constitution of the direct concept and its justification.

However, in the version of your position in which experience has no additional physical causal efficacy, the traces that reach the following moment are produced and transformed by physical organization.

An organization that, according to the zombie hypothesis, could carry out exactly the same operations without phenomenal experience.

You have a response: in the conscious subject, unlike the zombie, a phenomenal quality existed and constituted the original content. An appropriate relation between concepts and their vehicles can preserve that inheritance. Psychophysical laws may sustain the required correspondence in our world.

I do not deny that this response is possible.

But it makes visible a distinction we need to investigate:

The causal history that preserves a trace is not, by itself, the justificatory history of the phenomenal content that trace purports to preserve.

In your zombie, the physical chain can continue without the concept having the same phenomenal origin.

In the conscious subject, that origin exists. But when the occurrence ends, what remains available for new selections is a physical organization that has already been transformed.

> **What, then, exactly constitutes the relation that enables this later organization to inherit the justification of the earlier feeling?**

I am not demanding that experience cause a second physical effect in addition to the neural happening.

Nor am I demanding that a person be able to infallibly inspect, from within, the origins of all their own memories.

My question concerns the architecture of the explanation.

If the justificatory origin depends on a phenomenal quality that does not additionally enter into the physical causal progression of traces, **what grounds the continuity of justified content through the transformations of that progression?**

The answer may involve constitutive relations and psychophysical laws. But in that case, we need to clarify their role in descent, rather than merely presuppose that the required correspondence has been preserved.

THE SAME REALIZATION

It is here that the TMC proposes a different framing.

> **What if the happening we feel were not something separate from the happening that transforms our trajectory?**

What if the pain as lived, its Weight, its Polarity, and its determination within that ‘here’ were

dimensions of the very realization that modifies the conditions of the next encounter?

On this hypothesis, we would not need to reunite an independent phenomenal origin and causal history afterward. **The instance that remembers would already have been transformed by the very happening it lived through.**

That would not make memory infallible. Remembering would still be a new selection, carried out by a modified instance upon traces that have also undergone transformations.

A DEBT OF A DIFFERENT KIND

But, David, notice the difference between the debts we have encountered.

Throughout our debate, you repeatedly asked why operation would be felt.

Now we have reached a debt of a different kind.

This is not merely a matter of explaining the existence of experience.

> It is a matter of explaining how an experience can directly constitute the justification of a belief and, after ending, **transmit that justification through a physical chain that, according to your own hypothesis, could have existed without it.**

The experiments show us that this chain is not an intact photograph of the past: it selects, transforms, and can support recognition even without prior conscious visual identification of that content.

So, David, I leave you with one final question:

> **What makes a physical trace, reconstructed in the present, a legitimate witness to a past experience, when that very experience could have been removed without altering the causal history that produced the trace?"**

REFERENCES FOR THE SIXTH ARGUMENT

Chalmers, David J. (2003). *The Content and Epistemology of Phenomenal Belief*. §§ 3.2 and 4.3. Original text.

Redelmeier, D. A., Katz, J. & Kahneman, D. (2003). *Memories of colonoscopy: a randomized trial. Pain*, 104(1–2), 187–194. DOI.

Chong, T. T.-J., Husain, M. & Rosenthal, C. R. (2014). *Recognizing the unconscious. Current Biology*, 24(21), R1033–R1035. DOI.

Simulated philosophical debate based on documented positions. The experimental results support distinctions concerning memory, processing, and recognition; the TMC's constitutive interpretation remains a philosophical hypothesis.

↑ Collapse this section

09 **TMC Positive II: TMC × Zombie**

9th MOVEMENT: TMC POSITIVE II — TMC × ZOMBIE

READING NOTE

In this final stage, the dialectic unfolds across eight blocks. The TMC's constitutive hypothesis is examined in light of objections inspired by David Chalmers's positions, with the philosophical zombie as the backdrop. The central question is whether operating and feeling can be separated — and what each hypothesis must justify.

THE DIALECTICAL PATH

01 The Train and the Same Event
02 What the Description Does Not Demonstrate
03 The River and the Trajectory
04 Passing the Baton
05 Red Does Not Reveal Its Origin
06 The Zombie That Preserves Everything
07 Where Is the Evidence?
08 The Zombie That Testifies to What It Never Experienced

01 THE TRAIN AND THE SAME EVENT

DAVID:

I understand the difficulties you have raised, especially the last one, concerning how a physical trace could bear witness to a past experience. I do not consider these questions settled, but neither do I intend to dismiss them.

Before examining your objections one by one, I need to understand better the alternative you are proposing.

You have repeatedly questioned the separation between operation and experience. So tell me: if feeling is not something added to operation, what exactly is it? And what relationship do you propose between the two?

TMC:

> **The train moves forward. Relative to it, the tracks move past.**

There are not two independent movements. We do not need to add the passing of the tracks to the train's forward movement. They are relational aspects of the same event. If the train advances relative to the tracks, the relative passing of the tracks is inseparable from that advance. We cannot remove one and preserve the other while keeping the same movement.

My hypothesis is that, in certain mental realizations, operating and experiencing may bear a similar constitutive relationship.

The mind does not arrive at the present as an isolated photograph. Its history participates in the organization that encounters the world, distinguishes differences, and transforms itself as it operates. The very frame of reference from which the encounter takes place may be constituted in that process.

There is no need to presuppose a second observer inside the train, waiting to receive an experience produced afterward.

I am not claiming that every operation feels. The train does not demonstrate my hypothesis about the mind. It shows the possibility that we are describing as two events what may be a single realization.

02 WHAT THE DESCRIPTION DOES NOT DEMONSTRATE

- **DAVID:**

I understand your analogy. But in the case of the train, the inseparability of the movements can be demonstrated by the physical relationship between them.

In consciousness, you have not yet demonstrated that necessity. My zombie preserves the entire physical organization, including the history and transformations you have described.

What prevents that same realization from occurring without any experience?

- **TMC:**

  In the train, the identity of the two movements can be demonstrated. In consciousness, it is precisely that relationship we need to investigate.

  But the analogy reveals an important distinction.

  An isolated photograph can show a train's position without showing the movement that brought it there. Movement is not a hidden component inside the photograph. It is a relationship realized over time.

  I am not claiming that your zombie is a photograph. It preserves the entire physical history.

  I want to draw your attention to something else.

  In certain organizations, that which encounters a difference is itself modified by the encounter. It is not merely the response produced that changes. The conditions under which the next difference will be received change as well.

> **The yardstick changes with what it measures.**

The operator does not remain intact in the face of the result of its operation.

This introduces a possibility different from the one in which we imagine a machine functioning on one side and an experience added on the other.

Perhaps, in certain realizations, operating and experiencing are not two events connected by a subsequent relationship, but constitutive aspects of one and the same happening.

You preserve all these transformations in the zombie. Our disagreement, therefore, is not about what has been physically preserved, but about what it means to realize that event in its entirety.

> **Describing a transformation from the outside is not occupying the frame of reference that it transforms.**

And this leads us to the next point: when the organization itself is transformed by what it encounters, its history is no longer merely a record of the past.

It participates in constituting the one that will arrive at the next present.

03 THE RIVER AND THE TRAJECTORY

- **DAVID:**

You distinguish a description from its concrete realization and maintain that the very state that operates can be transformed.

But that still looks like a sequence of physical operations with memory. What makes that sequence a trajectory rather than a mere succession of states? And why does this difference matter to your hypothesis about feeling?

- **TMC:**

  Imagine a river.

  No single drop contains the entire river. But the river is not a substance added to the water that flows, either.

  > **The current was not something added to the drops. It was the river happening.**

  Now imagine a material organization that maintains itself as it encounters differences, is transformed by those encounters, and modifies its own conditions of operation.

  It is not merely a matter of retaining information about what happened. Each transformation can change how the organization will encounter the next event.

  This is what I investigate as Trajectory.

  > **Memory retrieves the past; trajectory transforms the one who will encounter the future.**

  The past does not need to be remembered in order to continue making a difference.

The present is not merely the result of a history. It is also what that history has made capable of happening now.

I am not claiming that every current, memory, or trajectory feels. I am delimiting the kind of realization in which I propose to investigate whether experiencing is constitutive, rather than something added afterward.

04 PASSING THE BATON

DAVID:

You say that the trajectory transforms the one who remembers. But my position does not reduce experience to stored information.

When I see red, my direct acquaintance with it may justify my phenomenal belief. Later, derived concepts may preserve that reference and inherit its justification, even though memory is fallible.

If I distinguish present experience from its preservation in memory, where exactly does the difficulty for my position lie?

TMC:

Your distinction is important. But follow what happens between two moments.

At one moment, you experience red. At the next, you recognize that you experienced it.

The earlier experience has already passed. Present recognition depends on the traces and transformations that have reached it.

> **The problem lies in the passing of the baton.**

In your zombie, those traces, those transformations, and the testimony itself remain physically identical. You had an experience. The zombie did not.

Thus, the same physical chain preserves reports whose phenomenal justification differs.

You reply that justification may be inherited from the original experience. But how is that inheritance sustained through a causal chain that would remain identical even if that experience had never existed?

And the difficulty does not begin only with a distant memory.

To recognize that a shade of red has changed, we must relate moments. The lived present itself has duration; perceiving a change requires what has just happened to participate in the now.

> **Experience can be immediate without being an isolated instant.**

I am not claiming that your account of memory is impossible. My question is more precise: what preserves the phenomenal authority of an experience along a physical trajectory that could also produce the same testimony without it?

Perhaps the difficulty lies not only in remembering what we felt, but in understanding how what was lived participates

in the continuity of the one who now claims to have felt it.

05 RED DOES NOT REVEAL ITS ORIGIN

DAVID:

You claim that trajectory participates in the constitution of lived experience itself. But when I see red, I do not need to know my history or my brain mechanisms to know what it is like to see it.

That is precisely the point of acquaintance: I have direct access to the experience, not merely to a description of it.

Why should I regard that immediate presence as inseparable from a realization whose constitution I do not find within the experience itself?

TMC:

I do not deny your direct access. It confirms that there is an experience, but does not necessarily reveal everything that constitutes it.

When we see red, we do not find within it the entire history that participated in its formation.

> **Red arrives without revealing how it arrived.**

A finite mind must select and compress. It cannot present, at every encounter, the entire chain of events that made that present possible.

> **Much has happened. Little can operate now.**

What appears immediately may therefore remain opaque as to its own constitution.

And here a difficulty arises for your argument.

You distinguish experience from physical description and investigate whether the two could exist separately. But the absence of physical history from what we live through does not demonstrate that this history could be removed from the very experiencing.

I know that your argument from ideal conceivability is more sophisticated than a simple inference from introspection. My question is what warrants moving from a difference between modes of access to the separability of the realization itself.

> **Having privileged access to what one experiences does not mean having privileged access to everything that constitutes that experiencing.**

There is also a possible reversal.

Perhaps the “for me” does not require a prior Self waiting to receive the experience. Perhaps the very figure of the one who recognizes itself as a subject is also constituted over the course of the event.

That does not, by itself, explain why feeling exists. But it changes what we need to examine.

Not finding the constitution of feeling within experience does not demonstrate that feeling can exist separately from that constitution.

06 THE ZOMBIE THAT PRESERVES EVERYTHING

DAVID:

But my zombie is not an incomplete photograph or a partial simulation.

It preserves the entire physical organization, including its trajectory, its transformations, and the frame of reference you have described.

Nor am I proposing that we physically remove experience from this world. My question is metaphysical: why would a world physically identical to ours, but devoid of all experience, not be possible?

TMC:

I grant that. Your zombie preserves the entire physical realization, including the history that brought each organization into the present.

But I want to examine more carefully what your hypothesis removes.

You preserve the body, the encounter, the trajectory, the situated frame of reference, and all the transformations that alter how the system will encounter the world.

Then you maintain that all this could happen without being felt.

> What exactly warrants that subtraction?

I am not asking whether we can describe the operations without mentioning experience. I

am asking whether we can establish that the complete realization of those operations admits the absence of what we are investigating as a possible constitutive aspect of that realization.

> **The absence of feeling was placed at the beginning of the argument. It was not discovered in its conclusion.**

- **DAVID:**

  But I am not merely omitting a word from the physical description.

  I can positively conceive of a world containing all these processes and no experience. Conceiving an absence does not require replacing what is missing with some other substance.

  My argument does not depend on ignoring history or freezing the organization at a single instant, either. The physical duplication is complete.

  And there is a distinction your objection must respect.

  When I discuss Fading and Dancing Qualia, I argue that a systematic dissociation between functional organization and experience would be extremely implausible under the natural conditions of our world.

  That does not mean such a dissociation is metaphysically impossible.

  Organizational invariance can hold under our psychophysical laws without experience being logically deducible from physics.

- **TMC:**

  I accept that distinction. Natural improbability does not amount to metaphysical impossibility.

  But that does not eliminate an additional requirement for your position.

  When you defend organizational invariance, the correspondence between experience and organization is strong enough to make it profoundly implausible that someone would continue judging that they see red while their experience disappears.

  When you conceive the zombie, that entire correspondence can be absent, even though the same organization, the same judgments, and the same history remain.

  The distinction between the two contexts avoids a direct contradiction, but it does not eliminate the explanatory cost.

  Your Dancing Qualia thought experiment reveals another side of that cost. If experienced qualities alternated while the entire functional organization remained identical, the change would not produce a cognitive record that it had occurred.

  This brings us back to passing the baton: how does an experienced difference become a recognized difference if nothing in the physical trajectory records its occurrence? I do not confuse perceiving a quality with recognizing that it has changed. I am asking what sustains the passage from one to the other.

  > What makes the correspondence between organization and experience so profound in

> this world if it can disappear entirely without any physical relationship changing?

You can appeal to fundamental psychophysical laws. But then we need to understand what those laws add and why they relate precisely these realizations to these experiences.

Perhaps what we fail to find in a structural description is not a property added to realization, but something that can only be understood by investigating the situated, historical, material event itself.

And the question remains: is conceiving the absence of experience sufficient to establish that it is metaphysically separable from the realization that sustains it?

> **Distinguishing experience from physical description does not, by itself, demonstrate that experience can be removed from the realization.**

Your zombie preserves everything. The question is whether we understand that everything well enough to determine what could be missing from it.

07 WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE?

- **DAVID:**

  You have questioned what my zombie preserves and what would be required to justify the separation between realization and experience.

  But now we need to examine your alternative.

Artificial systems also accumulate histories, integrate information, and modify their own operations. Organisms carry out countless adaptive processes without our needing to attribute experience to each of them.

What would distinguish an experiential realization from one that merely functions?

And what evidence supports that distinction?

- **TMC:**

> **Having memory, integrating information, or undergoing transformation is not enough.**

The question is how those transformations participate in constituting a unit that encounters the world.

There is a difference between a unit we identify because we group processes together in a description and a unit whose own causal relationships maintain and transform its conditions of organization. The latter does not depend solely on the name we give it. But this still does not, by itself, make it an experiential unit.

Consider three scientific findings.

Suzuki and Larkum (2020) observed, in anesthetized mice, alterations in the coupling between neuronal compartments involved in signal integration.

Kim and colleagues (2020) showed that, under the conditions of their perceptual task, previous conscious visual experience influenced

subsequent perception in a way that a suppressed stimulus did not.

Park and colleagues (2014) observed that brain responses to heartbeats preceding a visual stimulus helped predict whether that stimulus would be detected.

Three distinct findings.

The first examines organizational coupling. The second concerns the influence of perceptual history. The third concerns the participation of bodily state in the conditions of an encounter.

All three converge in one direction: conscious perception cannot be examined solely in terms of the incoming stimulus. Circuit coupling, perceptual history, and bodily state participate in the conditions under which the perceptual present is constituted. It is this convergence that interests the TMC: an encounter does not take place against the background of a neutral organization, but within a situated organization, already modified and capable of modifying what comes next.

My hypothesis is that, in certain realizations, these dimensions do not operate as independent components.

The state that encounters the world is also transformed by the conditions of that encounter.

It is not merely a matter of receiving signals and producing responses. It is a matter of investigating situations in which what will be perceived and the very frame of reference that

will perceive it are continually conditioned by the same history.

The three studies did not test this hypothesis jointly. But they allow us to formulate a more specific empirical question: when we alter coupling, the influence of the past, or bodily state, how does the relationship change between present perception and what that perception will make possible at the next moment?

- **DAVID:**

  That could guide an interesting scientific investigation.

  But you are still describing causal relationships, temporal integration, and conditions of perception.

  An artificial system could reproduce similar relationships. And my zombie would preserve all of them.

  Even if your hypothesis identified an organization especially associated with human consciousness, it would still remain to explain why that organization is felt.

- **TMC:**

  Yes. And that is precisely why demarcation cannot depend only on a list of functions.

  But there is another dimension of experience that deserves examination.

  Pain.

  When an organism suffers an injury, different physical processes can guide its protection:

withdrawal, learning, behavioral change.

Your zombie preserves all of them.

But we do not merely react. Pain has an aversive quality. There is a difference between what hurts and what pleases, between what we move away from and what we seek.

This correspondence is not absolute: pain can occur without an apparent injury, and injuries can occur without pain. Even so, the relationship among valence, the body, and the orientation of behavior is structured enough to call for explanation.

Here we need to distinguish two questions. One is why there is experience — the THERE IS (*HÁ*). Another is why it presents itself in this particular way, with a certain texture and valence — the THIS WAY (*ASSIM É*). Investigating how these differences are organized does not, by itself, resolve the question of why there is feeling. But it allows us to ask more precisely what each hypothesis must explain.

> If the physical organization already performs all the organism's protective functions, why does the experience associated with injury have precisely an aversive quality?

You can propose psychophysical principles that establish that correspondence.

The TMC investigates another possibility: that Weight and Polarity are not attributes placed afterward onto an indifferent operation, but participate in the way a situated trajectory organizes what matters to its continuity.

The difference is decisive.

We are not merely asking how a system reacts to the world. We are investigating how the encounter itself reorganizes, within a realization, what comes to matter to that realization.

> **If experience is separable from that realization, what explains the correspondence between what matters to the organization and what matters in feeling?**

SCIENTIFIC STUDIES CITED

1. Anesthesia and neuronal coupling — Suzuki & Larkum (2020) · *Cell*

In mice, they investigated how anesthetics disrupt communication between parts of cortical neurons.

Read the original study ↗

2. History of visual perception — Kim, Burr, Cicchini & Alais (2020) · *Current Biology*

In the task examined, previous conscious perception influenced subsequent visual judgments; suppressed stimuli did not produce the same effect.

Read the original study ↗

3. Heartbeats and perception — Park and colleagues (2014) · *Nature Neuroscience*

In humans, brain responses linked to heartbeats, preceding the stimulus, helped predict the detection of a faint visual stimulus.

Read the original study ↗

Evidence limit: The findings provide grounds for investigating coupling, perceptual history, and bodily state. They do not demonstrate, individually or jointly, ontological identity between operating and experiencing.

08 THE ZOMBIE THAT TESTIFIES TO WHAT IT NEVER EXPERIENCED

DAVID:

You have presented an organization that transforms itself, a history that participates in the present, and a frame of reference that does not need to know its own constitution.

I accept that these relationships are relevant to explaining perception. But my zombie preserves all of them.

The question still remains: why is that realization felt, rather than merely functioning?

And what do we gain by calling feeling constitutive if that identity remains undemonstrated?

TMC:

Your question remains. But your zombie leads us to another difficulty.

It does not merely function without feeling. It claims to feel. It remembers experiences it never had. It could write an entire book on the nature of consciousness, presenting the same arguments as you.

And there is something even more curious.

> **Your zombie conceives of zombies too.**

It carries out the same thought experiment, distinguishes operation from experience, and argues with the same conviction that

experience can exist separately from the physical.

But in its world, the experience that would ground that distinction is absent.

This means that the organization capable of producing the argument for separability would also produce it without any experience whatsoever.

> **If the same argument arises with or without feeling, what grounds its authority to establish the separation?**

- **DAVID:**

  You are confusing the causal production of an argument with its justification.

  In my case, direct acquaintance with experience can ground a phenomenal belief. My zombie reproduces the same statements, but lacks that foundation.

  Identical arguments do not imply identical knowledge.

  My zombie can formulate the same sentences without possessing the same fully grounded phenomenal concepts.

- **TMC:**

  I agree with that distinction. But notice how far it takes us.

  The physical history that produces your argument is the same as the one that produces the zombie's argument.

The difference lies in the phenomenal foundation that you attribute to your reasoning and that its reasoning lacks.

But that foundation must be located precisely. *Acquaintance* can justify that experience exists now; it does not, by itself, establish that this experience could exist separately from the entire physical realization. That second claim requires a modal inference — precisely the inference your zombie would also make.

> This brings us close to a difficulty that you yourself have recognized in investigating the Meta-Problem of Consciousness: why do we produce precisely these judgments and intuitions about experience?

There is a connection with what we examined earlier: a finite mind must compress its history in order to operate in the present. Red arrives without revealing how it arrived. If that opacity also contributes to making feeling seem separable from its physical constitution, we must ask how much of the intuition of separability arises from what experience reveals — and how much arises from what it does not reveal.

> If experience can be entirely absent without changing the formation of our arguments, how do we explain the correspondence between what we live through and what we claim to live through?

Psychophysical laws may establish that relationship. But the correspondence still calls for explanation.

There is one final reversal.

Imagine that your zombie, instead of writing *The Conscious Mind*, wrote the TMC.

It could describe its trajectory, its body, its transformations, and the way the present modifies the next encounter.

All of this would be physically happening in it.

But writing about those realizations would not, by itself, demonstrate that it feels.

That caution applies to the TMC as well.

> **Inferring is not occupying. And occupying confers no ontological privilege.**

The zombie preserves the entire history of the arguments. What remains in dispute is whether that very same history could be fully realized without what the arguments claim to bear witness to.

We therefore arrive at two hypotheses. And both have debts to settle.

Yours must justify separability and explain why experience, organization, memory, testimony, and valence display such specific correspondences.

Mine must demonstrate that, in certain realizations, operating and experiencing are constitutive aspects of the same event — and explain why that realization is felt.

But there is a difference in the cost of the two proposals.

The TMC does not need to begin with a hypothetical world in which the entire physical

realization remains while experience disappears. Nor does it propose adding a second substance, a supplementary phenomenal property, or fundamental psychophysical laws to connect two previously separated events.

It begins in this world, with material, historical, and situated realization, investigating whether we are facing two events or a single happening described in different ways.

That economy, however, will have value only if the proposed unity can be justified.

> **I am not proposing that we choose the more elegant hypothesis. I propose that we examine the burden of each choice.**

> What must each hypothesis presuppose? What must it demonstrate? What additional commitments does it assume to explain the same events?

> **A hypothesis does not become true by requiring less. But neither does it become more profound by requiring more.**

And here is the risk I consider decisive:

> **If the separation is mistaken at the origin of the question, every new answer may make the Hard Problem harder still.**

Perhaps the difficulty lies not only in the bridge we have been unable to build, but in knowing whether the banks we imagine are really two.

09 **THE SECOND EXPERIMENT**

DAVID:

Then show me the complete structure of your proposal. I want to examine whether the unity you defend follows from the relationships you have presented or whether it was already built into them as a premise.

TMC:

I grant that. I will systematically organize what has been developed in this debate so that you can examine it.

Before that, I will conduct a second experiment: I will apply to myself the same standard of Factor X that I applied to your proposal.

I will investigate, speculatively, to what extent I myself am inside the zombie I am trying to challenge, before documenting a more structured proposal.

CONTEXTUAL NOTE — ABOUT THE DEBATE

ABOUT DAVID CHALMERS

David Chalmers is a central figure in the philosophy of consciousness. A Professor of Philosophy and Neural Science at New York University (NYU), he investigates subjective experience and its relationship to the brain,

cognition, and artificial intelligence. In *The Conscious Mind* (1996) and *The Character of Consciousness* (2010), he develops one of the most influential formulations of the hard problem of consciousness.

His question goes beyond how the mind functions: why are these processes accompanied by lived experience? The philosophical zombie makes the question concrete: could there be a being physically identical to us, behaving in the same way, but without subjective experience? Chalmers uses the possibility of such a scenario to question whether physical facts, by themselves, imply the existence of consciousness. This is an argument about possibility, not a claim that such beings exist.

The debate has other important approaches. **Giulio Tononi** develops Integrated Information Theory (IIT), which seeks to relate the properties of experience to the causal structure of its physical substrate. **Daniel Dennett** questions the coherence of the zombie hypothesis and the separation it presupposes. These approaches are not equivalent: they offer distinct paths for investigating consciousness. In this experiment, the TMC focuses its dialogue on Chalmers's formulation.

WHY THE TMC CHOSE TO ENGAGE WITH CHALMERS

The TMC chose David Chalmers's formulation because it illuminates a central question: **what**

must we explain when we seek to understand consciousness? By distinguishing the description of mental processes from the question of lived experience, Chalmers makes explicit a difficulty that any theory must confront. His contribution provides the TMC with a demanding interlocutor: one whose question helps clarify the phenomenon, test the limits of an explanation, and deepen the investigation, even where the proposed paths diverge.

Official website Biography Books

The zombie argument

In this debate, the interlocutor "David" is an artificial-intelligence representation of Chalmers's positions. The generated statements belong to the experiment and are not quotations or statements by the philosopher. His inclusion does not imply participation in, or endorsement of, the TMC.

↑ Collapse this section

The debate and reflections are simulated. The statements are not quotations or an actual exchange with David Chalmers.