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Chistopher Hill, *Consciousness.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009. 264 pgs.

Not surprisingly, Christopher Hill’s main goal in *Consciousness* is to present a theory of consciousness. Though not exclusively concerned with phenomenal consciousness, Hill spends most of the book defending a representational theory of consciousness that can do justice to phenomenal states within a strictly physicalist framework. *Consciousness* covers a variety of issues and responds with mixed success to many of the classical problems that arise in relation to phenomenal consciousness.

The first half of *Consciousness* will be extremely useful to anyone looking for a thorough and thoughtful overview of the different types of consciousness, the mind-body problem, and the nature of awareness. Hill provides a careful account of the major theories of mind and their problems as part of an effort to refute dualism. Especially interesting to anyone teaching a course in the philosophy of mind, will be the fact that Hill presents several classical arguments, such as the explanatory gap and the knowledge argument, in standard form. His presentation is admirably clear and allows for lucid discussions of the problems and assumptions that are often smuggled into arguments about the nature of phenomenal consciousness.

Hills’ responses and objections are not always on the money, but the fact that he has organized and outlined so many fundamental positions and problems in the philosophy of mind deserves high praise notwithstanding. The more unsatisfying chapters of *Consciousness* come as Hill reveals his positive project. Much of the problem with his theory, I think, has to do with his approach. Because Hill is committed to the problem of consciousness as it is conceived from the perspective of classical philosophy of mind, his proposed solutions begin with a tacit acceptance of many of the premises that inevitably lead to dualism. That is, as all classical attempts to resolve the mind-body problem do, Hill’s argument begins and ends with a mind that exists for the purpose of reasoning and thinking; and the argument leaves out the body and the world except as that thinking thing represents them to itself.

This assumption about mind is especially striking in Hill’s purportedly pre-theoretical description of agent consciousness. “Surely what we have in mind, when we say that the agent is regaining consciousness, is that he is starting to think and feel again, to perceive the world, and to experience bodily sensations” (3). Surely, however, what Hill has left out is that what we mean when we say that an agent has regained consciousness, in addition to being the subject of experiences, is that the agent is acting and responding in appropriate ways. Many of our pre-theoretical notions about consciousness concern not only a mind experiencing inputs but also an embodied agent acting and responding to those inputs.

Hill’s commitment to descriptive orthodoxy also prevents him from developing a satisfactory theory of experiential consciousness. Because he subscribes to the dichotomy of qualia being either in the head or in the world, *and* he is thoroughly opposed to the “in the head option,” then the only choice left for him is to identify qualia with “in the world” properties. To be fair, the “in the world” properties that Hill has in mind are relational properties instead of the standard inherent properties of objects, and so Hill displays a welcome recognition of the different ways in which a thing can be objective. Hill calls qualia “appearance properties” and goes on to say that consciousness of qualia is subject to an appearance-reality distinction. Appearance properties may appear, he says, or may be represented, in ways that they actually are not.

The problem is that Hill’s appearance-reality distinction for qualia does nothing to undermine the very powerful intuition that phenomenal experience is *not* subject to an appearance-reality distinction. Identifying qualia with relational properties simply has the effect of categorizing qualia as external, mind-independent properties. And if they are indeed such properties, the classical appearance-reality distinction will apply to them at is always does apply, separating things as they are from things as they appear. Just because the contents being represented are external relational properties rather than external inherent properties, does not release those properties from the same metaphysical distinctions that inherent properties are subject to.

  So Hill has not in fact introduced an appearance-reality distinction at the level of phenomenal consciousness, but merely reformulated the familiar distinction between how things are and how they appear.  After all, the appearance of appearance properties is not subject to the appearance-reality distinction.  And this has always been the place where material theories of mind get into trouble.  Just calling external, relational properties of objects appearance properties does not thereby transform appearances into events subject to the appearance-reality distinction. This is because “appearance” in the sense that it matters to dualists refers to what Hill would call “the appearance of appearance properties” or the “appearance of relational properties.” Hill needs to show that appearances have a reality that is not simply the reality of how they appear; but he has only shown that *appearance properties* have a reality distinct from the reality of how they appear. From this however, he has not established that he can reduce appearances to non-subjective, non-mental properties Simply identifying qualia with the external, perspective-dependent features of objects doesn’t solve any of the substantive metaphysical issues about the status of their representations. The ontological status of the representation of perspective-dependent, physical properties has not been shown to be physical even though what is represented by such a representation is indeed a physical property or object. To be sure, this is more a problem with a representational theory of mind than with Hill’s particular version of it. And Hill himself admits that he has largely piggybacked on scientific success, which is based on a presupposition that the mind is representational, in order to establish the truth of that presupposition.

One of the nicest arguments that Hill offers in *Consciousness* is against the priority of introspective evidence. Hill first forwards this objection in relation to the Cartesian conceivability argument but it is an ongoing theme throughout many chapters. Hill contends that for Descartes’ conceivability argument to work – in order for the ability to clearly and distinctly conceive of mind and body as separate substances to entail the possibility of their ontological distinctness – introspection must offer not only a clear and distinct picture of the mental, but a *complete* picture of it as well*.*  It is this completeness that Hill sees as unlikely, and he concludes that introspection should hardly have the final say about the nature of and relationship between mind and body.

This displacement of introspection’s stronghold is quite elegant, and undermines many ordinary Cartesian intuitions. However, and this is another indicator of the power of orthodoxy, Hill himself in his chapter on emotions appeals to introspection in order to forward a rather unintuitive theory of affect. Hill appeals to introspection in order to announce that pleasantness and unpleasantness are not feelings, but simply functional dispositions to either avoid or pursue. This type of theorizing is disappointing for two reasons: first, it seems wrong and second, the justification for the theory has already been undermined by Hill himself in previous chapters.

Overall, *Consciousness* is instructive in where it goes right but also in where it goes wrong. Hill’s masterful exposition of the positions and problems of the major camps of philosophy of mind is really quite extraordinary. In contrast, Hill’s own formulation would have stood to gain by taking into consideration various non-dominant philosophical perspectives on “appearance properties” such as the one that J.J. Gibson offers in his ecological theory of perception. Hill’s theory would also be more convincing if he took the time to develop a substantive defence of a representational theory of mind and seriously weigh its virtues against, e.g., a relational theory of mind. Still, Hill’s contribution is substantial. *Consciousness,* though not perfect, is informative and notable for its breadth, depth and seriousness.

# Ellen Fridland

Humboldt University of Berlin

Berlin School of Mind and Brain

Luisenstrasse 56, Haus 1

10099 Berlin