

Revisiting the Concepts of Subjectivity and Reality in Many-Worlds View of Consciousness and Super-Consciousness

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We read with interest the theory of consciousness propounded by Mensky (2011), based on the many-worlds view by Everett. The work done by the author to mathematically frame the many-worlds theory in the field of consciousness is commendable.

However, in the quest of providing a mathematical picture of the many worlds view of consciousness, the authors have over-seen some of the important concepts which form the core of psychological understanding of consciousness. There are two important concepts mentioned in the mathematical model of consciousness which seem to be incongruent with the psychological models of the same. Here we would like to provide the psychological perspectives to these concepts so that future mathematical models can take these basic facts into account in formulating a theory of consciousness:

The concept of subjectivity

Perhaps the most important of these concepts is the very idea of subjectivity. Undoubtedly,

subjectivity forms the most essential base of psychology, which at present cannot be denoted by any variable of mathematics. In the article by Mensky (2011), some important dimensions of this concept of subjectivity seem to have been overlooked. For example, while describing subjectivity at the level of consciousness, the author proposes that the function of consciousness is to select a favorable alternative among several others and to subjectively realize this “favorable picture”. He backs this mathematically with a post-correction with the help of an operator L . However, here the entity of consciousness has been dissected down to a single entity/event. In fact there are several dimensions of consciousness which are quite distinct from each other. The simplest of these categorizations has been that by Ned Block (1997) which categorizes conscious experiences into Access and phenomenal consciousness. Whereas the function of subjective experience is of phenomenal consciousness, the property of control of thoughts is of Access consciousness (Block, 1997; Shea, 2012). And even though access consciousness has property of control, this control can be exercised on the behavior and

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reactions rather than that on reality which the author claims mathematically.

The same lack of clarity is evident in the author's descriptions of super-consciousness. Here there are two problems. In addition to the integral problem in description of consciousness in author's model, there seems to be a generalization of the meaning of the word- "Super-consciousness". Author mentions that super-consciousness, where the element of consciousness is lost, for example in sleep, trance or meditation, the number of choices are increased. At the outset of such a claim, it becomes clear that the word super-consciousness has been used as an umbrella-term, to denote a range of highly variable states. In-fact, out of these, super-consciousness word can only be used in the expanded-state of meditation. In-fact, in the qualitative study conducted by one of the authors, all the meditators described that they were aware of the surroundings, but they were also aware of their own internal states of emotions, thoughts, and of consciousness itself Prakash *et al.*, 2009a). So, it is highly unlikely that the state of awareness of meditation should be clustered with the states of sleep and unconsciousness. Infact, in an extension of this qualitative study, the meditators themselves distinguished clearly between the states of meditative awareness and dreams in the form of sense of expansion of subjective awareness in former but constriction of the same subjective awareness in the later (Prakash *et al.*, 2009 b).

The concept of reality

In the article, there is also a constant use of phrases like 'illusion' and 'alternate reality'. In essence, the author tries to prove that the function of consciousness is to select one among several alternative realities (thus creating the 'illusion' of single reality) and this property is consequently absent in super-consciousness states where the subjectivity can have access to several realities from different points of time and instances. We suggest that this claim of reality should be seen as an overarching one especially in context of macroscopic entities like dreams and day to

day experiences. Author has actually done an excellent job here to mathematically frame reality in the context of consciousness. But these propositions are mostly theoretical and psychological researches have just begun to comprehend these reality-related issues. For example, recently dream has been conceptualized as a time-space bound entity (Totlis, 2011). But still, Totlis has mentioned that this reality is only subjective. Similarly, there has always been a distinction between subjective and objective realities in consciousness discussions (Meissner, 2001). Thus the author should take into account that the reality that he mentions can be applicable at microscopic level (where quantum theories claim to work). But it is very difficult to apply them in microscopic states like dreams and other states of consciousness.

We do understand that what author describes in details is the mathematical out-flow of quantum theories of consciousness but we propose that psychological constraints should be kept in mind while carrying out these interpretations.

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