Lecture notes on Ned Block, "Concepts of Consciousness," in Chalmers 2002, p 206- 218. Partially drawing on BRENT SILBY "On A Distinction Between Access and Phenomenal Consciousness" www.def-logic.com/articles

INTRO

1. Concept of cness is "mongrel": Connotes different concepts and denotes different phenomena.
2. Problems when we analyze aspects of consciousness using concepts from other aspects.
3. Also (p 214R): just because the overall concept is mongrel (or maybe even incoherent) that doesn't mean that individual aspect concepts (e.g., P-cness) are incoherent. See also 215-16 for ambiguity / cluster / mongrel concepts.
4. Distinctions:
    a. One chief distinction: *access consciousness* and *phenomenal consciousness.*
    b. Other cness concepts: self-cness and monitoring cness.

PHENOMENAL CONSCIOUSNESS

P-cness is experiential; it is qualia, "what it is like"-ness, etc. Paradigm = sensations.

1. Intentional content
    a. Differences in intentional content make a P-cness difference
    b. Differences in P-cness often make an intentional content difference
    c. BUT, P-cness properties are not reducible to properties that are
        i. Cognitive (essentially involving thought)
        ii. Intentional (representation or aboutness)
        iii. Functional (can be defined in terms of computer program)
2. Explanatory gap = Chalmers and "hard problem".
    a. P-cness hard problem
    b. Versus progress with A-cness, which has two research programs
        i. LOT (computationalist)
        ii. Connectionist
3. Other controversies Block notes that he will skip over
    a. Inverted or absent qualia (absent = zombies)
    b. Jackson's Mary ("knowledge problem" for Chalmers)
    c. Nagel, "what it is like"

ACCESS CONSCIOUSNESS

A-cness is cognitive, intentional or functional; tasks involved in cognition, representation and the control of behavior. Paradigm = propositional attitudes.

1. A-cness is "information processing image" of P-cness.
2. A-cness is representations that are "broadcast for free use in reasoning and for direct 'rational' control of action, including reporting."
3. Distinction of A-cness vs P-cness arises from biological vs computational versions of mind
    a. Computational:

     i. Captured in informational / functional terms.

     ii. Allows for multiple realizability (Putnam's critique of identity theory).

     iii. P = A (for functionalist, P and A are high quality access)

   b. Biological:

     i. Realization base is where the action is (Searle).

     ii. P can diverge from A (see below)

4. Three big differences between P and A cness

   a. P cness is phenomenal while A cness is representational

     i. But many P contents are also representational

     ii. P conscious content is totality of experiential properties

     iii. Intentionality:

       1. A cness is always transitive / about / intentional

       2. P cness are not always transitive / intentional

   b. A cness is functional / system relative; P cness is not functional

   c. P-cness has types (e.g., pain is a type) but A-cness tokens can fail to be accessible at other times.

A-CNESS without P-CNESS

5. Blindsight: blind region in visual field, so no objects, but can "guess" location, motion and direction of stimuli.

   a. So this is absent P-cness AND absent A-cness as content of blind region is not available for the *rational control of action*.

   b. Blindsight patients must be prompted by an experimenter before they will `take a guess'.

   c. But imagine a *super-blindsighter* who can guess *when* to guess (= limited, partial zombie).

     i. Even w/o visual objects, she can spontaneously guess. Information about her blind field just springs into her thoughts.

     ii. A super-blindsighter would be A-conscious but not P-conscious.

   d. A super-duper-blindsighter = fully functioning zombie

6. Three kinds of access

   a. high quality access: super-duper-blindsighter and usually us normal

   b. medium quality access: super-blindsighter and sometimes us (e.g. peripheral vision)

   c. poor access: actual blindsighters

P-CNESS without A-CNESS

7. Dual-stream visual system:

   a. Ventral (P-cness: object recognition and classification)

   b. Dorsal (A-cness: location and motion).

8. In blindsight: damage to ventral,

   a. so this is possibility of A-cness w/o P-cness.

   b. If you had damage to dorsal system, this would be P-cness w/o A-cness, but it would be hard to tell, since lack of A-cness means content is not poised for control of behavior such as verbal report "I see something red."

9. Example with hearing. You can suddenly notice something that had been there all along; e.g. ticking clock, humming computer, etc.

   a. You were aware but not consciously aware.

   b. You had P-cness, but not A-cness, as info about clock was not poised for direct rational control of action until you notice it (and decide to check what time it was).

c. You become A-conscious when you notice it / pay attention to it / when it is "broadcast for use in rational control of action and speech." (lots of discussion of this in the literature; Prinz, *Conscious Brain*, is a recent addition.)

d. Note that this is not necessarily HOT (higher order thought, when you represent to yourself that [have the belief that] you are now and always were hearing the noise).

e. Now if you think back, you could say you were aware all along, but you need A-cness to shift attention to clock sound and allow you to report your retrospective awareness of its sound. [WE WILL DEAL WITH THIS AS PRE-REFLECTIVE AWARENESS IN PHENOMENOLOGY TRADITION.]

OTHER REMARKS

10. A-cness and P-cness usually occur together but not always. When they diverge you can talk of unconscious states.
    a. P w/o A = Freudian uncness
    b. A w/o P = zombie is unconscious
11. Prosopagnosia (inability to distinguish faces): disorder of A, not P-cness

Chalmers on Block's Distinction (from Silby's paper)

12. The A vs P distinction allows cognitivist explanations for behavior w/o P-cness.
13. But what purpose does P-cness actually serve if you can have A-cness w/o P-cness?
    a. Chalmers believes A- and P-cness *always* occur together.
    b. Chalmers defines A-cness as content available for use in directing behaviors (doesn't have to be "poised for direct rational control" as with Block).
    c. So info (ticking clock) was *available* but not *accessed*. So there is both P- and A-cness.
14. But then problem of superfluous P-cness, since only A-cness is needed to control behavior. This opens the conceptual door for zombies.
    a. Chalmers doesn't mind this though, as he's an non-physicalist.
    b. Hard Problem: can't functionally / physically account for (i.e., "reduce") P-cness.
    c. But then of course we have the *epiphenomenalist* issue w/r/t mental causation.

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

15. Possession of concept of self and ability to use it in thinking about yourself.
    a. Recognition of self in mirror.
    b. But even w/o passing mirror test, no reason to think there is no P-cness in dogs and monkeys.
16. P-cns states often have a "me" quality to them: "I'm the one with this quality experience." AGAIN, THIS WILL BE BIG ISSUE FOR PHENOMENOLOGISTS.

MONITORING CONSCIOUSNESS

17. Three types of monitoring:
    a. Internal perception
    b. Information processing / internal scanning
    c. Meta-cognitive / HOT: cns states are accompanied by thought that you are in that state
18. Block does not want to say P-cness is just a form of monitoring cness, because that prepares way to eliminate P-cness.

19. HOT (Higher Order Thought): according to Rosenthal 1997, S is reflexively conscious state when it is accompanied by non-inferentially and non-observationally derived thought "that I am in S."
    a. Block objects to R's seeing HOT as a theory of P-cness.
        i. Conceptually possible counter-examples.
            1. P-cness pains w/o HOT in infants, dogs, etc.
            2. I could know I have Freudian uncns states w/o P-cness of them.
        ii. R has ad hoc features in his theory.
    b. Block's revision: S is MC state = S is phenomenally presented in thought about S