

Transcendent Reality and the Consciousness Problem

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Abstract

James Tartaglia makes original use of the idea of transcendence in order to answer various philosophical questions of contemporary and historical importance. I tackle the attempt to use his transcendent hypothesis to solve the problem of consciousness. Tartaglia describes the problem of consciousness as arising because we conceive of the objective world as composed of “centreless” objects and that any view that attempts to identify consciousness as a part of the world as presented to objective thought will fail since consciousness is inherently centred. His proposed solution is to suggest that a transcendent reality must be able to account for consciousness, but I argue that his characterisation of this reality entails that it too must be composed of centreless parts and thus the transcendent hypothesis fails to solve the consciousness problem.

Positing that we can best describe reality as something about which our knowledge is unavoidably impaired has been a recurring theme in philosophy since its inception. Given that another of the paradigmatic issues defining the field of philosophy is what kind of meaning, if any, life is imbued with, it is also not historically uncommon for these two *prima facie* unconnected themes to find common ground in philosophical works.

What is unique in Tartaglia’s book *Philosophy in a Meaningless Life* (hereafter referred to as “PML”) is how Tartaglia threads these concepts together. He posits that questions surrounding the meaning of life, although resolving themselves in our ultimate realisation that nihilism is true within the context of the physical universe, have enabled us to discover the concept of transcendence in attempting to figure out if there is some further context within which it makes sense to attribute meaning to our lives. We could only demonstrate nihilism to be false using the concept of transcendence, he then argues. This, Tartaglia argues, is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the benefits that can be gleaned from considering the possibility of transcendence, as it is also able to provide answers to major philosophical questions that have persisted over centuries of thought, namely those pertaining to issues of consciousness, universals and time.

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Although Tartaglia's approach to each of these issues needs to be addressed, I will be objecting in this essay specifically to his claim that positing a transcendent reality can be used to solve the problem of consciousness given how prevalent discussion of this issue is in contemporary metaphysical inquiry. In particular, I will be arguing that even if the idea of transcendence does present itself as an option when we consider difficulties in interpreting how consciousness fits into the world, accepting the existence of a transcendent reality does nothing to reduce these difficulties and in fact can only serve to increase them. As such, Tartaglia has failed to demonstrate that the concept of transcendence functions as a useful philosophical tool in finding a resolution to the problem of consciousness.

Nihilism and Transcendence

Tartaglia frames philosophical enquiry as stemming from two kinds of question about reality. These questions are about "ontology and enframement" or "what exists and why it exists" (Tartaglia 2016: 71). Philosophy as a discipline arose once these two kinds of question could be answered together using the concept of transcendence.

Transcendence is a rare sort of concept that seems viable as a candidate for providing answers to both "what" and "why" questions by positing that the kinds of things we familiarly describe as making up the world around us exist within a wider context. This means that we are able to suggest that the things around us have the nature they do *because of* this wider context, and thus that we can better understand both what the world is and what sort of purpose the constituents of the world as we know it are capable of having.

In asking what purpose life has, which is the initial major question addressed in PML, we are asking about the context of meaning within which life itself exists. This question is very different to asking what function something used *within* life serves. If I ask what the reason is for you moving a particular piece on a chessboard, what I wish to know is how making that move could get you closer to your overall goal of checkmating your opponent. Since I assume that your action of making that particular move exists within the wider context of your intention to checkmate your opponent, my question can be understood as addressing the purpose of the single move you just made within that wider context. Where the question of the meaning of life differs from the question of the meaning of a particular chess move is that humans often do things, such as move

chess pieces, because they want to achieve a certain result, whereas it is not clear that there is anything outside our various wishes and preferences that is able to provide a context within which life as a whole has meaning. The physical universe, which science informs us is responsible for our existence, does not seem to be the sort of thing capable of having a certain goal in mind. The answer to questions about the meaning of life also cannot be provided with essential reference to other living beings because we can simply ask the same question about them; if we suppose that the purpose of your life is to be useful to other people, then this presupposes that the lives of these other people already have meaning, which is precisely the question we are trying to answer. Thus, nihilism seems to be a logical conclusion to draw from our understanding of how our lives fit into the wider context of a physical universe.

Positing that there may be a further transcendent context that is able to account for the physical universe and, ultimately, our lives “provides us with an idea of what would be required for nihilism to be false” (ibid.: 52-53). That is, although the physical universe is unable to account for life having meaning, the only way this could fail to demonstrate that life indeed does not have a meaning is if it were the case that the physical universe itself existed within some wider context and within *that* context life serves a particular purpose. While it is ultimately a mystery what this purpose would be, this follows from the fact that our understanding of transcendent reality necessarily lies outside of our understanding in the same way that within the context of a dream we often have no knowledge of the physical world (ibid.: 51). Questioning whether or not life has meaning, then, ultimately leads us to the concept of transcendence, although it is interesting to note that transcendence is equally compatible with either the truth or falsehood of nihilism (ibid.: 77).

This provides a general understanding of how transcendence operates with regard to philosophical questions. By framing the physical universe and, more importantly, our lives within a wider context, it is possible for those lives to serve a purpose. What is important for a critical evaluation of Tartaglia’s position though is the manner in which transcendence provides such a context.

There seems, on the face of it, to be an obvious objection to Tartaglia’s claim that transcendent reality could provide a context of meaning within which life exists, which is that, in the same sense that the physical universe alone cannot provide a context of meaning because the physical universe, if it is all that exists, does not itself exist for a purpose, surely it is the case that transcendent reality

will necessarily run into the same problem. It is, in fact, difficult to envision *anything* that would be able to provide a context of meaning whilst at the same time being immune to questions about the purpose of *that*.

Tartaglia's response to this is to state that this response "betrays a lack of imagination" (ibid.: 52). Since we have no awareness of a transcendent context, we have nothing to base our assumption that "an account of the purpose of things would not culminate in the brute fact of meaningless existence, but rather in the fact of purposeful existence" (ibid.: 52). He then states that, "although we cannot rule out the possibility, we have no good reason to believe in it either" (ibid.: 52).

This is an important point when it comes to evaluating Tartaglia's position because it demonstrates how the transcendent hypothesis works as a response to philosophical questions. It has the potential to be able to account for meaning in life precisely because we have no knowledge of this reality. Even if, as Tartaglia suggests may be the case, transcendent reality is also meaningless, the transcendent hypothesis still stands as being capable of explaining how life can have meaning because our limited conception of that reality prevents us from knowing whether it is meaningless or meaningful. The epistemic limitation of the transcendent hypothesis is thus precisely what lends its strength to the idea of transcendent reality; this reality may be capable of performing a wide variety of roles which we struggle to find another viable candidate for in our philosophical theories as a result of the fact that our ontology seems not to include the sort of things that can account in any clear way for certain phenomena, such as meaning and consciousness.

The trade-off is that by accepting transcendence we open the door to the possibility that life has meaning but we also sacrifice any hope of being able to provide either a positive or negative answer to that question. We simply must accept that we cannot know.

Accepting a limitation on the knowledge of reality it is possible for us to attain is not a problem in and of itself, but when it comes to arguing that the transcendent hypothesis constitutes a solution to specific metaphysical problems such as the problem of consciousness the issue is different. Because the truth of the transcendent hypothesis is equally compatible with nihilism being true or false, it does not matter whether or not transcendent reality really is capable of providing the metaphysical basis of meaning. There are two possible states of transcendent reality in this sense, as being meaningful or meaningless, and we are unable to tell which one it is. On the contrary, if the transcendent hypothesis is able to solve the

problem of consciousness as Tartaglia states (ibid.: 120), it must only be compatible with *one* possibility, which is that transcendent reality *is* capable of providing the metaphysical basis of experience. Thus the conditions for the truth of the transcendent hypothesis are more stringent when it comes to determining whether or not it can account for consciousness, and it seems to me clearly demonstrable that it does not meet these conditions.

There are three key arguments that provide the foundation for Tartaglia's transcendent hypothesis, which I will now outline in turn.

1) Consciousness cannot be accounted for by objective thought

Tartaglia defines "objective thought" as our "everyday way of thinking about the nature of the world" (ibid.: 83), such as thinking of a cinema room as being essentially composed of "objects in space made up of various different types of material" (ibid.: 83). This view "readily extends to take in the whole universe: the cinema is located on planet Earth, which is itself simply a very large object within a vast space containing astronomical objects composed of various materials" (ibid.: 83). The way we ordinarily conceive of consciousness as fitting into the world as described by objective thought is that a person sitting in a cinema and watching the screen has a particular perspective on the objective world that would differ from the perspective of any person sitting in a different part of the cinema.

The trouble arises when we try to explain which aspect of the world as described by objective thought is supposed to be able to account for consciousness.

there is nothing there to indicate that the organic objects should be centres of conscious experience; there is nothing in the scene to indicate that there should be any experiential centres at all (ibid.: 84).

Although we "superimpose experiential centres onto the objective world" (ibid.: 84), there is nothing within objective thought that is able to give us an account of why it is the case that any objects should be centres of experience. Objective thought seems to be able to readily provide an account of reality that is centreless where all objects simply exist in certain places and are made of certain materials, but for which there is no perspective. As such, we cannot account for consciousness by reference to the world as described by objective thought. This

also means that scientific understanding, which is a form of objective thought, will be unable to provide us with an explanation of how consciousness fits into the world.

2) A transcendent hypothesis solves the problem of consciousness

Tartaglia dismisses the possibility of describing consciousness as an illusion produced by brain activity (a view that Tartaglia calls “revisionism”), a view he attributes most closely to Dennett (*ibid.*: 90) since, as he argues, the idea of a perceptual illusion relies implicitly on the idea that the individual is having an experience that may mismatch reality or otherwise must simply be “nothing more than a dumb reflex, rather than a rational if ultimately misguided response to the evidence” (*ibid.*: 93). Using the example of an individual who judges that they are having the experience of feeling dizzy, Tartaglia argues that our inclination to make such judgements “necessarily lacks any rational explanation on the revisionist model, because that model denies that there are any dizzy experiences - or anything similar that might be mistaken for one - to provide the evidential basis of my false judgement” (*ibid.*: 93).

He also dismisses consciousness as being identical to brain activity as he believes it to simply lead us back to revisionism. Tartaglia argues that those who try to argue that conscious states are simply brain states have not managed to properly deal with the basic criticism that conscious properties seem to be completely different to properties of the brain (*ibid.*: 95). Using the example of staring into a green light and then seeing an afterimage when you close your eyes, he argues that identity theorists such as Smart have attempted to avoid mentioning the properties of the afterimage at all by stating that when we perceive an afterimage there is simply something going on that is similar to that which happens when we are seeing a green light. This attempted evasion, however, under-describes the situation since the “something” that is going on when we are seeing an afterimage is experiential and thus still requires explanation (*ibid.*: 96).

He also dismisses functionalism on the grounds that this attempts to avoid the problems of the identity theory by stating that conscious properties are realised by physical states rather than being identical to them but, Tartaglia argues, this does not avoid the difficulty because the problem is in imagining a physical state being sufficient to ‘realize’ an experiential state (*ibid.*: 96-97).

Tartaglia also then argues against the position that conscious properties can be

identified with properties of the brain by stating that the properties of an afterimage would have to be a misconception of the properties of brain states. He uses the example of an experience of an after-image that is a green oblong with fuzzy edges and states, “If we are actually conceptualizing a brain state, then, we must have formed a radically false conception of it, given that it is not green and oblong with fuzzy edges” (ibid.: 97). The point being driven toward is that, if we have such a radically false conception of our experiences, we have simply ended up with revisionism once more.

Finally, he dismisses dualism as an example of metaphysics finding itself “forced to tamper with objective thought’s conception of the world” (ibid.: 102) by positing that there is some special attribute of the brain that it is capable of interacting with the non-physical, which contradicts what we know from objective thought that “the brain is not radically unlike everything else in the world” (ibid.: 101).

In place of these problematic perspectives, Tartaglia refers to his metaphilosophical considerations earlier in the book and suggests that we are plausibly interested in the problem of consciousness because “it raises the possibility that reality transcends the objective world” (ibid.: 102). To give a feel for how this could explain the nature of consciousness, Tartaglia invites us to imagine that transcendent reality stands “to the objective world as the objective world stands to a dream” (ibid.: 103).

In that case not only are the dream-trees I see transcended by the wider context in which I am asleep; my dream-thoughts must be as well. For any reality there is to the thoughts and feelings we have in a dream must be found in the real world, not the world of the dream. (ibid.: 103)

The way this is supposed to account for consciousness is by positing that consciousness is not ontologically dependent upon the “centreless” constituents of the world as described by objective thought, but is rather ontologically dependent upon transcendent reality. There are difficulties inherent in understanding the nature of the ontological dependency of consciousness upon transcendent reality; since “The transcendent context of existence being hypothesized is one of which our knowledge is seriously curtailed” (ibid.: 106) we have no reason to suppose that we will awaken from our lives into transcendent reality. Indeed, this could not be so because if we did awaken into this context of

existence “it would not be the final context, since consciousness, according to the hypothesis, is always transcendent” (ibid.: 106). As such, although they must have some sort of ontological dependence upon transcendent reality in virtue of the fact that our entire conception of reality must be ontologically dependent upon the final context of existence, experiences cannot be *identified with* any aspects of transcendent reality, “since the transcendent reality of the final context – in which independent being is to be found – is not something we could consciously experience in such a way as to allow us to distinguish one part of it from another” (ibid.: 106).

Although individual experiences are not aspects of transcendent reality, consciousness as a whole is. That is, although experiences are not identical with parts of transcendent reality, the awareness we have of those experiences simply in virtue of having them is a self-awareness of transcendent reality. Just as in a dream our awareness that we are having dream experiences can only be an awareness of a world transcending the dream (i.e. that we are lying in bed having certain experiences) even while the content of those experiences need not be of anything within the world transcending the dream, our awareness that we are having everyday experiences must be an awareness of a world transcending objective reality even while those experiences are not of transcendent reality (ibid.: 106).

In short, Tartaglia states that the problem of consciousness can be solved by the transcendent hypothesis because it does not attempt to describe how a centre of experience can fit into the world as described through objective thought, which is centreless. Although this does not tell us what would constitute an accurate description of the ontological basis of experience, this gap in our understanding is attributable to the nature of transcendent reality being unknowable as it is in itself, rather than as arising from inconsistencies between our conceptions of the objective world and experience.

3) We misconceive experience

Where Tartaglia’s viewpoint distinguishes itself from any form of idealism is in its denial that we have a clear and accurate conception of experience. The transcendent hypothesis “denies that we have any legitimate conception of experience except that it is transcendent” (ibid.: 118). His argument for this position is that our conception of experience relies upon concepts borrowed from

objective thought; we conceive our experience of a tree as being of “an array of colour suitably arranged into the shape of a tree” (ibid.: 110), but this cannot be a correct conception of experience because spatial arrangement is something that belongs to the objective world and it does not make sense to say that ideas and physical objects can both share the same shape. Since when we attend to our experience of a tree all we find is “something shaped like a tree” and experience cannot have shape, this must be a misconception. This problem applies equally to secondary qualities; if our experiences cannot have shapes, then there is nothing for phenomenal colours to fill.

The reason for the misconception is that we are attempting to interpret experiences “as if they were things in the objective world, when in actual fact – as we realize on further reflection – they have no place there” (ibid.: 111). As such it is objective thought that provides us with our dominant description of reality, with our conception of experience being parasitic upon this main picture. It is also an extremely useful part of our overall picture of the objective world because it allows us to explain how it is that somebody can misjudge some aspect of the world, such as thinking that a tree has darker leaves than it actually does.

This leads us to believe that experiences are causally dependent upon the brain, which functions “to facilitate our interpretation of reality as an indirect awareness of an objective world” (ibid.: 112). Yet, this view must ultimately be false because it relies upon a misconception of experience and in actual fact “experience does not causally interact with the objective world, and neither is it a part of that world; since experience and the objective world are both parts of an interpretation of transcendent reality” (ibid.: 112).

As such, the only thing our conception of experience gets right about the true nature of experience is that it exists (ibid.: 117). Furthermore, we should not expect to understand the nature of the independent reality underlying experience, “since as conscious beings we can only know reality as it appears within consciousness; and consciousness is always transcendent” (ibid.: 118).

So, by virtue of having experience, we know that there exists some reality beyond the objective world but experience is unable to tell us any specific details about the nature of transcendent reality because of the fact that we misconceive experience.

How the problem of consciousness persists

Tartaglia attributes the persistence of the problem of consciousness to competing schools of thought seeking either to argue that there exist things beyond the objective world or seeking to affirm objective thought by denying transcendence. By arguing for a hypothesis that puts our conception of objective reality before our conception of experience, while still maintaining that consciousness does transcend objective reality, the transcendent hypothesis “promises to resolve this impasse” (ibid.: 121).

The supposed advantage of the transcendent hypothesis with relation to the problem of consciousness is that it does not try to place centres of experience in a world that is posited as being centreless. Even if we do believe it to be inexplicable that consciousness should be a part of objective reality, it could be stated that the transcendent hypothesis does not provide us with an answer to the problem of consciousness on the grounds that believing that consciousness relies on an unknowable transcendent reality necessarily leaves the ontological basis of consciousness just as far outside the realm of our understanding. Yet there is a significant difference between the problem of consciousness that arises in relation to objective thought and the problem that arises from considering the epistemic limits of the presented conception of a transcendent reality. The claim is that our conception of reality as presented by objective thought is of a world precisely in which there are no centred parts, such as centres of experience, and thus consciousness necessarily lies outside any coherent conception of objective reality, whereas we can only ever have a very limited conception of transcendent reality and this does not self-evidently demonstrate that consciousness *cannot* fit into transcendent reality. Indeed, the obscure nature of transcendent reality is arguably a strength when it comes to avoiding such a problem; it is seemingly because we cannot comprehend transcendent reality that we cannot conceive of some aspect of transcendent reality that is *incapable* of forming the ontological basis for consciousness.

Such attributes can be conceived of, however, due to the fact that there are certain negative claims we can make about the nature of transcendent reality, given that we know that it cannot have the attributes we associate with objective reality or experience, since both of these conceptions are what apparently produce the problem of consciousness to begin with. To demonstrate, let us take the third claim outlined above, that we misconceive experience. Whatever transcendent

reality is, under Tartaglia's account of consciousness, it must be able to account for us misconceiving experience. We cannot give an account of this misconception fully with reference to objective reality because this would entail revisionism, which Tartaglia rejects. However, giving an account of this misconception that makes essential reference to some aspect of transcendent reality does not seem like a particularly tall order; given that we know so little about transcendent reality it does not seem too problematic to state that it is in virtue of *some* aspect of this reality that we end up misconceiving experience even if we are unable to state which aspect we are talking about. All we know, then, is that when we misconceive experience, or any particular experience, we are actually misconceiving some aspect of transcendent reality.

So, while we cannot know much about transcendent reality, we can know that it or some aspects of it are capable of giving rise to various misconceptions of experiences. There is a further inference we can make though and that is that, whatever it is that forms the ontological basis for our misconceived experiences, it cannot be experience itself. Since consciousness is always transcendent, the "final context" can never be within consciousness and as such the independent reality that forms the ontological basis of experience cannot be experience itself.

What this means is that experience is ontologically dependent upon something non-experiential. If we misconceive experience as being a certain perspective within objective reality, given that experience equally cannot inhabit transcendent reality, we must ultimately be misconceiving consciousness as being a centre of experience.

If this is so, the misconception of consciousness as a centre of experience must have as its ontological basis some feature of transcendent reality, which I will refer to as transcendent X.

What is transcendent X?

Perhaps the better way to phrase this question would be not to ask what transcendent X *is*, since we seem to be guaranteed not to have a clear answer to this due to the unknowable nature of transcendent reality, but it would be better to ask what transcendent X *is not*. We can know some things that transcendent X isn't.

For instance, transcendent X cannot be an object or a collection of objects because, if it were, it would be just as incapable of forming the ontological basis

for consciousness as the world as revealed through objective thought. There would be no use in positing a transcendent reality that suffered the exact same problems as that of objective reality since this would simply be to retain the same philosophical problems but to add a great deal of obscurity to our metaphysical picture of reality on top. We can conclude straight away then that transcendent X does not fit our conception of any aspect of the world as presented within objective thought.

Transcendent X also cannot be experience because our conceptions of experience are *misconceptions*. Thus, in order for transcendent X to be experience, it would have to also be a misconception.

There is no option here to bite the bullet and simply accept that transcendent X is a misconception. It may sound like a logical possibility; after all, we necessarily know so little about transcendent reality that stating that we misconceive it seems to be almost blatantly obvious. However, this bridge was already burned when revisionism was rejected.

To recap, as Tartaglia stated, we cannot rationally make sense of the idea that experience is an illusion produced by objective reality because without experience we cannot make sense of the idea of an illusion at all. We need the concept of experience to make sense of the idea that you can be aware of something other than the way the world actually is. As such, there has to be some ontological basis for illusions that, Tartaglia argues, objective thought simply cannot provide. Similarly, transcendent X cannot be a misconception in and of itself because transcendent X is supposed to be the way the world actually is; transcendent reality is conceived as having independent existence. For something to be misconceived, it has to be mistakenly supposed to be something other than what actually exists and the one thing that has existence beyond how we conceive it, according to Tartaglia, is transcendent reality. You can have neither illusions nor misconceptions without there being a distinction between appearance and reality, whether that's a difference between what we experience and what is actually present in the world or a difference between what we conceive of and what actually exists.

The only available option, then, is for transcendent X to form the ontological basis for experience without being experience itself. The trouble here is that, as in the case of objective thought providing an explanation of consciousness, experience must be accounted for by something non-experiential, which could be problematic.

There is still plenty of room to muster up a defence of the transcendent hypothesis though. After all, the problem with our conception of consciousness and objective thought wasn't that these two things combined cannot describe how experience can exist in a world of non-experience, but rather that they cannot describe how a centre can exist in a world of centreless parts. As such, in order for Tartaglia's model to not run into the same problem, all that we need to be able to say about transcendent X is that it is centred.

Is transcendent X centred?

It is the nature of consciousness as a centre that supposedly forces us to be confronted with the problem of consciousness and inspires us to the view of transcendence. If consciousness is a centre of some sort, perhaps a centre of misconceived experiences, then our only two options are to accept that consciousness must either have transcendent X as its ontological basis or it must *be* transcendent X. Although Tartaglia chooses the latter option, neither is satisfactory as they both leave us with something remarkably similar to the problem of consciousness that they were posited in order to avoid. Let us regard these two possibilities in turn.

If consciousness were dependent upon transcendent X, this would mean that a centre of experience were ontologically dependent upon something that was not itself a centre of experience. This does not immediately present itself as a problem since we have only said that a centre of experience needs to be ontologically dependent upon something that can account for centres, not that it necessarily has to be ontologically dependent upon a centre of experience in and of itself. Yet, if we know about transcendent reality that it is composed of things that are not centres of experience, then the situation seems to be remarkably similar to that of the original problem that was supposed to lead us to explore the possibility of transcendence in the first place. If all we can say about transcendent X is that it is not a centre of experience, then once again we are trying to fit centres of experience into a world made of things that, even if they are centres of some sort, are not centres of experience.

The trouble is that we make sense of the idea of a centre purely in terms of its relation to experience. Consciousness exists as a centre for me because when some things happen in my visual field, certain kinds of vibrations in the air reach my ears, or my body is affected in particular ways, I experience these things from a

particular perspective. Yet, if experience is misconceived, then it cannot be the case that my perspective is anything other than a misconception. This would entail that our very idea of there being centres of perspective or experience is itself a misconception.

This situation is not helped by simply disregarding the requirement to provide an ontological basis for experiences, given that they are misconceived and as such do not have an ontological basis. Even if they are misconceptions, these misconceptions must be accounted for in the same sense that an illusion must be accounted for in a revisionist model of consciousness. We still have to make sense of the idea that a centre of experience, whatever that actually is, has as its ontological basis something that is not itself a centre of experience. As such, we are still left with the conclusion that consciousness must be a misconception.

If consciousness is a misconception, then this entails that transcendent X must be something that is not a centre of experience, which means that consciousness still exists in a world that consists of nothing that is so centred. This seems so similar to the problem of consciousness that it seems as though we have paid the price of assuming that we cannot understand the nature of independent reality in order to simply end up with the same problem we started out with.

If, as Tartaglia concludes, consciousness *is* transcendent X this may seem to resolve the issue. In this case, consciousness has independent existence and does not have anything that is not centred as its ontological basis. This seems to evade the problem of consciousness neatly.

The trouble is that consciousness cannot be a centre *of experience* as we ordinarily conceive it. If experience is a misconception, and our notion of consciousness is of something that is at the centre of our perceptions and perspective, then we must be misconceiving what consciousness is. Our notion of a “centre of experience” does not capture what consciousness is, because consciousness has independent existence whereas the notion of a centre of experience is a misconception.

As such, even if consciousness is a centre *in some sense*, it is not a centre of experience, and as I have suggested it is not entirely clear what the notion of a centre even really means once we consider experience and perspective to be misconceived. This means that under the transcendent hypothesis, I still have to attempt to make sense of the idea of a centre of experience fitting into a world consisting of things that are not themselves centred. Once again, we seem to have arrived at something that seems like almost a trivial re-wording of the original

problem of consciousness and as such we seem to have travelled a great distance with no perceptible gain.

Unfortunately, this seems to exhaust all of the available options. Either consciousness is a centre of experience that is ontologically dependent upon centreless parts, or our centre of experience is misconceived as being a part of consciousness. The first option leaves us with something closely resembling the problem of consciousness, since consciousness still must be accounted for in terms of centreless parts, and the second option also leaves us with something closely resembling the problem of consciousness, since centres of experience still must be accounted for in terms of centreless parts.

Conclusion

In summary, Tartaglia offers an original and ambitious alternative to the accepted model of consciousness fitting into an everyday conception of objective thought. It strives to avoid the problem of consciousness by taking away objective reality's role in providing the ontological basis for consciousness and giving that role to the mysterious transcendent reality instead.

The trouble is that even if we cannot understand transcendent reality, using the same arguments that Tartaglia uses to oppose other positions, such as what he calls "revisionism," we are able to determine that transcendent reality cannot have any features that would be required to account for consciousness in any better way than objective reality.

Given that the motivation here for accepting the transcendent hypothesis was supposed to be to avoid the problem of consciousness, winding up with more or less the same problem defuses this inclination to move to such a position entirely.