

The possible existence of zombies

A philosophical bachelor thesis.

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Introduction

Is it possible that there is a situation in which someone's actions, thoughts and feelings are no longer theirs? Rene Descartes addresses this question briefly in his meditations. Descartes methodically doubts all the fundamental 'certainties' that he knows in search of the most fundamental certainty. By doubting everything he knows to be true he arrives at the question of whether his experiences of the world are true or illusory. He doubts this because he wonders whether he is not being fooled by an evil demon, who makes him think that he has certain experiences, when he does not. This demon would, according to Descartes, fool him about outside experiences and experiences of the body. He goes on by questioning if these are illusions, then what is a fundamental certainty. Descartes concludes that the fundamental certainty is that he knows he exists because he can think— doubt— in every situation. However, by concluding this, the mind-body duality arises that has occupied many thinkers with questions about the nature of consciousness itself. These questions are mostly concerned with if consciousness can be seen as belonging to the physical or to the metaphysical.

If Descartes honestly considers it possible that his experiences are illusions because a demon fools him, it would seem far-fetched. Yet it is human nature to fantasize about possibilities where our experiences are taken over by a third party. Zombies are the perfect example of this. Our image of zombies often comes from Hollywood films. Here zombies are defined as people who have risen from the dead and eat the brains of people. The cause of the creation of such zombies is often a virus— a third party— which takes over the motor functions of the brain, mind and body of the person. The question remains if cases like zombies can exist.

In this thesis I would like to explore the possible existence of zombies. I will be exploring the possible existence of 'philosophical zombies' which differ by definition from the 'hollywood zombies'. 'Philosophical zombies' are beings that are functionally similar to humans but lack the subjective experience.

My goal in this thesis is to develop a theory concerning the concept of 'philosophical zombies'. To achieve this, during the thesis I will introduce two changes of perspective. The first change in perspective is based on Jay Garfield's contribution at the end of the provided background discussion. Garfield points to the Buddhime because that is where possible answers can be found to the question of whether it is possible for 'philosophical zombies' to exist. I will introduce a second perspective change that gives a new definition to the concept of 'philosophical zombies'.

Furthermore I will make some assumptions that I will validate by referring to the following philosophers: Jay Garfield, David Chalmers, Thomas Nagel and Jonardon Ganeri. In doing so, I propose a theory that outlines the conditions necessary for claiming that 'philosophical zombies' possibly exist.

Background Discussion

Consciousness plays a central role in philosophy of mind. This discipline deals with the nature of the mind and its relations to the physical and external world.

The notion of consciousness comes, like most philosophical concepts, with philosophical problems. One of these problems is known as the 'hard' problem according to David Chalmers.¹ The 'hard' problem of consciousness that Chalmers acknowledges concerns: how subjective experience can be possible in a physical organism. This poses a hard problem because subjective experience is not easily explained from a subjective point of view; because one would have to know what goes on from the agent's point of view. This entails that one would have knowledge of the experience of the inner and outer world of someone else, which would require having access to their feelings, thoughts but also to how the agent perceives qualities like sound. All these things are subjective and can thus differ from how each person experiences them. My experience of a bell ringing can wholly differ from your experience of the same bell that is ringing.

However, from a strictly scientific and objective perspective, to explain how physical processes give rise to experience we just need to explain the mechanism of the functioning organs. In this case objective science can explain for example: the process of sensory perception by looking at the mechanism of the brain. This objective reasoning looks at the brain in terms of specific functions. For instance when I hear a bell ringing, my experience of hearing this can be explained by the sound waves that my ear picks up when the bell is rung. Which is made possible by the sensory part of the brain. This approach is also known as functionalism.

Chalmers argues instead that consciousness cannot be explained only in terms of a function of a physical organ. Rather, it should be explained in metaphysical terms.² Chalmer's statement goes against the physicalist account of consciousness. The physicalist view is that everything is physical and that everything immaterial can be explained by, and be found in the physical world. Functionalism is a form of physicalism in the way that everything in the world is explained in terms of the function it has in the material world. When applying this supposition to philosophy of mind, it states that: all mental processes, characteristics, qualia and faculties can be explained in terms of the physical world. This includes our consciousness and subjective experience. Chalmers argues for a metaphysical approach first of all, because the physical approach to explaining consciousness will resort to a functionalist approach. The problem with that for Chalmers is that consciousness is then mainly described as processes in the brain. Moreover, does functionalism fail to give a concrete explanation for the arising of the subjective experience. This approach thus fails to account for the real problem. The real problem is to account for how the process of the physical brain gives rise to the subjective experience of a whole inner and outer world. This statement sparks the

¹ Jay Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 132.

² Hans Dooremalen, Herman de Regt en Maurice Schouten, *Stof tot denken: Filosofische aspecten van brein en bewustzijn* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2010) 156.

contemporary debate on whether consciousness is something metaphysical or something physical.

But what is consciousness and what does it mean for me to state that I am conscious? In the 'philosophy of mind' there are several competing different definitions of consciousness. In the most general sense, consciousness refers to a certain state of awareness of a subject who is aware about something – an object, process, another subject and so on. The main characteristic of consciousness is that it is always directed towards something else. This means that consciousness always has an object towards which it is directed. In his book *Engaging Buddhism; Why It Matters to Philosophy* Jay L. Garfield depicts two senses of the term consciousness based on western literature.³ The first sense is called "access consciousness" and the second is called "phenomenal consciousness". He describes them as follows:

By "access consciousness" I will mean introspectibility. A psychological state or process is conscious in this sense if we are able to report on it, to take awareness of it as input into our reasoning process. My belief that I am typing right now is access consciousness in this sense. I can introspect and determine that I do believe this. "phenomenal consciousness", on the other hand, denotes something like the felt character of experience.⁴

Garfield argues for different senses of consciousness as they bring about something different. "Access consciousness" is available to an individual through introspection. By looking reductive to one's own thought processes and going inward one has access to awareness of one's own reasoning. "Phenomenal consciousness" refers to the conscious subjective experience of a particular agent.⁵

Phenomenal consciousness will play the central role in this part of the thesis. This type of consciousness is experienced from a first person's perspective. Experience can be understood in two ways. The first way to understand experience is to define it in terms of mental faculties— like thinking, perceiving, processing, discriminating— which give us information about our external and internal world. On the other hand, experience has a subjective character. This is defined by Thomas Nagel as follows:

But no matter how the form may vary, the fact that an organism has conscious experience at all means, basically, that there is something it is like to be that organism. There may be further implications about the form of the experience; there may even (though I doubt it) be implications about the behavior of the organism. But fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to be that organism— something it is like for the organism.⁶

³ Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*.

⁴ Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 123.

⁵ Jay Garfield goes on to distinguish two more senses of consciousness, namely, "responsive consciousness" and the Husserlian notion of consciousness to which he does not give a name. But rather regards it as a bare basic precondition of any type of consciousness

⁶Thomas Nagel, *What It Is Like To Be a Bat?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974) 436.

To have a conscious experience is to have '*something that it is like*' to be that organism. A certain organism is then conscious when it has: '*something that it is like to be*' that organism. The '*something that it is like to be*' in this case refers to the subjective experience of that organism. For an organism to have consciousness means that that organism has a subjective experience. This would mean that I would be conscious of drinking a glass of water when I have the subjective experience of drinking that water. What unites the experiences for Chalmers is that perception all have a state of '*something to be like*' in them. This means that experience is '*something that it is like to be in a mental state*'.⁷ These individual subjective mental states are *qualia*. Both Chalmers and Nagel were of the opinion that these *qualia* are not something to be explained through objective science like; physicalism, functionalism or material reductionism. To prove this point Chalmers creates a thought experiment where he introduces the term: 'philosophical zombies'.

The thought experiment asks you to imagine a parallel world to this one where only all the physical elements exist. In this parallel world there are duplicates of human beings but without phenomenal consciousness. These beings lack the subjective experience or the '*something that it is like to be*'. These beings — human duplicates— are functionally the same as us, causing them to act functionally the same. If I were to drink a glass of water, my zombie duplicate would also drink this glass of water. Even if I were to state that the water was too warm for my opinion, my zombie duplicate would share this belief and also voice it. The difference between us would be that I have the experience of drinking a glass of water, when my zombie duplicate would not have this experience. This means that these beings share the same beliefs, desires and other intentional states. This causes an uncanny resemblance between the beings in the thought experiment and us. The only difference is a lack of qualitative states. Chalmers calls these beings without subjective experience: philosophical zombies. He uses the term zombie because a zombie does not experience: "*something that it is like to be*" a zombie.

The question raised by Chalmers thought experiment is whether this scenario is metaphysically possible, not nomologically possible. Nomologically possible means that zombies are possible according to elaborate descriptions of scientific laws. However, philosophical zombies cannot be explained by science as consciousness itself is a mystery to science. Being 'metaphysically possible' refers to something that is possible according to the principles of metaphysics. This means that the nature of the debate surrounding philosophical zombies is whether beings without consciousness are possible according to the nature of reality. When something is said to be metaphysically possible, it means that it is conceivable or imaginable according to the fundamental principles governing the nature of reality. This doesn't necessarily mean that it is physically or empirically possible in the actual world we inhabit, but rather that it doesn't violate the basic principles of existence or logic.

Chalmers argues that *qualia* do not play any role in the philosophical zombie world because the philosophical zombies lack qualitative states.⁸ He goes on by questioning what the role is of *qualia* in our world and states that in this world they neither play a role. Chalmers concludes this because in both worlds the same thing happens. A consequence of

⁷David Chalmers, *The Character of Consciousness* (New York, Oxford University Press: 2010), 5.

⁸ Dooremalen, de Regt en Schouten, *Stof tot denken: Filosofische aspecten van brein en bewustzijn*, 158.

this line of reasoning is that in the zombie world, all physical actions can be explained without the usage of qualia. Hans Dooremale describes Chalmers argument in the following manner:

...het standaardmodel van verklaren is de bewering dat *qualia* in onze wereld helemaal niets doen hetzelfde zeggen dat ze niet functioneel analyseerbaar zijn. Chalmers trekt hieruit de conclusie dat het bestaan van zijn bewuste ervaring niet logisch volgt uit de feiten over zijn functionele organisatie. Met andere woorden: *qualia* zijn niet functioneel analyseerbaar en daarom is het standaard verklaringsmodel niet te gebruiken. Als dit klopt, dan zijn *qualia* dus niet reductief te verklaren en moet het fysikalisme wel incorrect zijn.⁹

Dooremale shows that Chalmers concludes that it does not logically follow that his consciousness experience follows from facts about the functional mechanisms in the standard explanatory model. The standard statement model of declarations holds that *qualia* do not play a role in our world. To state that something does not amount to something else — plays a role or engages in an activity— is to state that something cannot be analyzed by its function. Merely because it does not actively do something and a function is an action of something happening. This leads Chalmers to conclude that *qualia* are not able to be explained in terms of their function in physical material. The lack of reductively being able to explain *qualia* leads Chalmers to state that physicalism is the incorrect assumption about the nature of our reality.

Instead he comes up with an alternative way of explaining consciousness outside the general physical scientific view. For this to be possible he recognizes a form of dualism which he calls: 'natural dualism'.¹⁰ For Chalmers it is clear that consciousness cannot be explained reductively. He argues that things that cannot be reductively explained, but that do exist nonetheless, must be fundamental. This entails that consciousness can be considered fundamental.

Chalmers proceeds to analyze science and argues that every science is built upon fundamental building blocks, which not all cases are explained reductively.¹¹ He argues for consciousness to be accepted as a fundamental building block upon which a new science can emerge. Namely the science of consciousness which would explore and create new theories about the nature and workings of consciousness. This would mean creating a new form of science that takes in fundamental laws that link consciousness and the physical world. His dualism refers to the gap between consciousness and the physical world that exists when it is acknowledged that consciousness cannot be explained reductively to a physical object. Even with the existing gap, he argues that the physical world is primal to consciousness. This causes him to call his alternative 'natural dualism'.

There are two main points of critique to be found in Chalmers thought experiment and theory. The first point of critique is that in Chalmers's argument against physicalism, he argues for the conceivability and possibility of zombies. This is also known as the

⁹ Dooremalen, de Regt en Schouten, *Stof tot denken: Filosofische aspecten van brein en bewustzijn*, 158.

¹⁰ Dooremalen, de Regt en Schouten, *Stof tot denken: Filosofische aspecten van brein en bewustzijn*, 159.

¹¹ An example to be named is: physics, medicine, biology, advanced math, which use theories as their building blocks to advance further scientific theories.

conceivability argument that goes as follows: A) Zombies are conceivable. B) Whatever is conceivable is possible. C) zombies are therefore possible.¹² The term conceivability in this case is defined in the following manner: "*something is conceivable if and only if it cannot be ruled out a priori*". However, conceivability does not necessarily lead to possibility, and this is exactly what Chalmers does hold into account.¹³ This means that the 'philosophical zombies' are conceivable, but that does not imply that they possibly exist.¹⁴

The second point of critique is given by Chalmers himself. He asks how he can know if he has phenomenal consciousness if it does nothing. Chalmers questions this because this knowledge requires a causal relation with phenomenal consciousness. The presupposition underlying this question is the common philosophical claim that we have knowledge about this world through causal relations. Following this claim would mean that if a person has consciousness it means a person would have a causal relation with the phenomenal consciousness. Chalmers Calls this the 'paradox of phenomenal judgment'.¹⁵ The nature of the paradox lies in that claim that we on the one hand state that we know we have consciousness. Whereas, on the other hand, his notions of consciousness and the acquisition of knowledge preclude us from having knowledge of it.

Other philosophers also react to Chalmer's theory and thought experiment, besides the two points of critique that are given.¹⁶ Jay L. Garfield gives a short overview of the existing discussion in *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*.¹⁷ Garfield starts the discussion by making a distinction between philosophical zombies seen as 'physical duplicates' and as 'functional duplicates'. The former option is to characterize them as physical duplicates without qualitative states. Whereas the latter option is to consider them as functional duplicates without containing qualitative states. Garfield argues for the second characterization as he states:

There are good reasons to prefer the second option dialectically. If we are asked to imagine physical duplicates of us who lack *any* cognitive states at all, we might simply balk at the imaginative exercise. That is an exercise in special effects: we are asked to imagine something that *appears to be a duplicate*, but is not. I might as well be asked to imagine a triangle whose

¹² Kirk, Robert, "Zombies," in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Fall 2023), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/zombies/>

¹³ Chalmers does acknowledge this after the point of critique being made but answers that the opposite should be proved by his opponents: the physicalists.

¹⁴ Philosopher Daniel Dennett questions whether 'philosophical zombies' are indeed actually conceivable. He argues that they are not by questioning the reader to imagen 'philosophical zombies' in as much detail as possible. As he does this he states that by imagining them in this way, 'end up imagining something that violates their own definition'. (Daniel, Dennett, " The Unimagined Preposterousness of Zombies," in Journal of Consciousness Studies, 322.)

¹⁵ Dooremalen, de Regt en Schouten, *Stof tot denken: Filosofische aspecten van brein en bewustzijn*, 160.

¹⁶There exists a broader discussion with more detailed debate regarding the conceivability argument of 'philosophical zombies'. Both sides expand their argumentation surrounding the nature of whether conceivability leads to possibility— e.g. Danniell Dennett's counterargument— and whether there is to be made an epistemological claim from this. Nigel Thomas, Saul Kripke, Robert Kirk, Alexander Carruth and Henry Taylor provide a more detailed attack on the conceivability arguments.

I won't be going into this side of the existing discussion but I will be proceeding following Jay. L.Garfield and his objections.

¹⁷ Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*.

interior angles sum to 100 degrees. The fact that I claim I am able to do so would be no guide to metaphysics, only to my own strange imaginative powers, real or illusory.¹⁸

Characterizing philosophical zombies as physical duplicates only requires a person to enter an imaginative exercise. Requiring this does not lead to a philosophical perspective that can be cultivated, because it does not require the participant to logically think or lead to a metaphysical basis with epistemological character. In other words, it does not require an explanation founded on truths, just imaginative powers.

Garfield defines a functional zombie as being cognitively identical to humans but lacking qualitative states¹⁹. The key point of the zombie argument is that despite the behavioral resemblance they share with humans, there is nothing '*that it is like*' to be a zombie. Garfield spots a problem with this notion. The problem with this definition becomes apparent when he analyzes the reasoning behind the definition. According to Garfield it consists of four statements that Chalmers and other *zombologist* make indirectly.²⁰

The four statements go as follows. The average zombologist posits that firstly, our belief in perceptual states are caused by the qualitative character of our states. This is just like our introspective belief that we have experienced something. Secondly, zombies are cognitively and functionally identical to us. Thirdly, zombies perceive the world unconsciously but believe they have qualitative perceptual states. Lastly, the beliefs of zombies are not caused by qualitative states because they do not have them. Their perceptual and introspective beliefs are false. Garfield argues that these four assertions together are inconsistent, leading to a '*reductio ad absurdum*' of the hypothesis of the metaphysical possibility of philosophical zombies.²¹ A '*reductio ad absurdum*' in logic refers to an argumentation that attapend to establish a claim by showing that the opposite scenario would lead to a contradiction.

The first premises suggest that we have certain beliefs about our perceptions because we have a qualitative experience of perceiving them. The second premise states that philosophical zombies operate mentally the same as humans. The third premise proposes that even though zombies lack qualitative perceptual experiences, they still believe they have them. Leading to the last premise that stated that the beliefs of zombies are not caused by qualitative states because they do not have them making their perceptual and introspective beliefs false. The conclusion that arises from these premises is that if zombies lack qualitative perceptual states but still believe they have them, then their beliefs about their perceptual experiences are false. This would mean that their introspective beliefs are also false. Accepting these premises leads to a contradiction. The notion that 'philosophical zombies' can hold false beliefs about their own perceptual experiences contradicts the first premise.²² Namely that our beliefs about perceptual states are caused by the qualitative nature of those states. The false beliefs undermine the connection between qualitative experiences and the

¹⁸ Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 167—168.

¹⁹ Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 168.

²⁰This Term is used by Jar Garfield in his book: *Engaging buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*. Zombologist are people who believe and argue for the existence of zombies.

²¹Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 169.

²² Following the line of this argumentation philosophical zombies are here characterized as functional and cognitively identical to humans.

beliefs about them because the zombies can have perceptual experiences without actually having those experiences.

Chalmers responds to Garfield's objection by claiming that the first assertion is false and by denying the second assertion. According to Chalmers, Garfield's first assertion is false on the basis that the relationship between qualitative states and qualitative beliefs is not causal but rather constitutive.²³ This leads Chalmers to state that philosophical zombies do not have beliefs about qualitative states. Chalmers disregards the second assertion because according to him the mental states of a zombie are not caused by qualia as they are to humans.

Garfield finds it questionable that Chalmers argues that the first assertion is false, because a constitutive relation would first of all require a unique set of intentional states that are partially constructed by their object.²⁴ Secondly, the consequence of Chalmers' statement is that it denies the possibility of false—qualitative beliefs. Leaving room for us to speculate and state that it is not possible to determine if we, ourselves are not zombies. This suggests that on this basis alone anyone can be a zombie.

Garfield reacts against Chalmers's second counter argument in the following manner:

[Chalmers] denies (2) on the grounds that whereas our states are caused by (or constituted by) qualia, zombie's states are not. But this would be to deny that zombies are enough like us to be duplicates, as opposed to mockups... So, when we claim that zombies are devoid of qualitative states, while claiming that our own are cognitively relevant to our lives, we can no longer claim that zombies are cognitively like us.²⁵

By stating that the mental states of the philosophical zombies are not caused by qualia makes them no longer functionally identical to humans. The reason for this is that the brain mechanism of the philosophical zombies would function in another way than it would in humans. Furthermore philosophical zombies would then be mock-ups. This defines philosophical zombies according to Garfield as physical duplicates. The problem with this was stated at the beginning of Garfield's argumentation against Chalmers.²⁶ The consequence of this argument is that the basis on which Garfield reacts to Chalmers by making the distinction between the two ways of conceiving zombies, falls apart. Therefore, the whole contribution of Garfield to this discussion would have little importance.

The existing discussion surrounding 'philosophical zombies' aims in this case to provide a counter argument against physicalism.²⁷ Garfield's counter argumentation is not further countered by Chalmers. Thereby, Chalmers fails to give a definitive argument that would give his initial claim real validity. This leaves the discussion between Garfield

²³Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 169.

²⁴Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 169.

²⁵Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 169.

²⁶Garfield argues to define the philosophical zombies as functional duplicates rather than physical duplicates because to imagine them as physical duplicates requires the participants to partake in a mere imaginative exercise.

²⁷ Philosophical zombies are also used by different philosophers as arguments against other claims made about the nature of consciousness. Searle uses the example of philosophical zombies to argue against the notion of computationalism. Other philosophers use the term zombie to make a case against certain claims that are made about the function of mechanisms in the brain, not mentioning consciousness.

and Chalmers at an open end. Garfield made his last contribution to the discussion by pointing it in a different direction, namely in the direction of Buddhism.

Summing up the discussion at hand, the 'hard' problem of consciousness that is introduced by Chalmers remains unsolved. It is yet to be answered how physical mechanisms in the brain give rise to subjective experience or— *consciousness*. In hoping to solve this problem Chalmers comes up with a thought experiment that would prove that the nature of everything which exists is not physical. He does this by stating that consciousness is not of a physical nature. By introducing 'philosophical zombies' as a thought experiment and debating the conceivability and possibility of their existence he argues that consciousness is metaphysical. Many philosophers, among whom Garfield, react to this debate with counter arguments supporting the claim that a being without consciousness would not be possible. Chalmers reacts on his counter debaters by dismissing two claims made by Garfield. To my understanding Chalmers does this in the debate because his main point is: that subjective experience— consciousness—cannot be explained by physicalism. He therefore argues that the subjective experience is metaphysical. Garfield's main point is to argue for the possibility of zombies.²⁸ I.e. The discussion is being moved from the question whether subjective experience is physical or metaphysical to whether philosophical zombies are conceivable and thus possible. Therefore Chalmers leaves his theory to be proven wrong by the opponents. His opponent views him as failing to prove physicalism wrong.²⁹

Garfield uses the open discussion to make a different claim about the nature of consciousness inspired by Buddhist thought. By doing this Garfield moves the discussion in a different direction where there is still room to argue for the possible existence of philosophical zombies. Although there is no account of zombies in Buddhism, Buddhism does explore the nature of consciousness in a way that could support the existence of philosophical zombies. In the second part of this thesis, I would like to explore this possibility. To do this, I will introduce a twofold change in perspective. Firstly, I will introduce how Buddhism regards the concept and nature of consciousness. Secondly, I want to redefine what is meant with 'philosophical zombies' on the basis of the Buddhist notion of consciousness. I will give an alternative theory based on how Buddhism views consciousness, to argue for the possible existence of 'philosophical zombies'. This theory however is not meant to be a counter argument to physicalism like Chalmers tries to do. It is neither an epistemological claim about the nature of consciousness. Nor an argument that debates whether consciousness exists. This theory that will be proposed should be interpreted as a possible theory that provides possible grounds for the possible existence of 'philosophical zombies'. The assumptions underlying this theory are that firstly, consciousness exists. Secondly, the nature of consciousness according to the Buddhist view is the correct view. Lastly, I assume that based on these assumptions the theory put forth argues for the possible existence of 'philosophical zombies'.

²⁸Other philosophers that took up this discussion also argue for the conceivability and possibility regarding zombies. They do not engage in trying to dismiss Chalmers main point: namely, that subjective experience is metaphysical.

²⁹Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 169.

The Buddhist perspective

Garfield provides the first change in perspective needed for the continuation of this thesis. Garfield points to Buddhism because Buddhism approaches the nature of consciousness in a way that leaves room to debate the possible existence of 'philosophical zombies'. There is room to debate for the existence of 'philosophical zombies' in Buddhism because Buddhism does not approach consciousness as a *unified whole*. Garfield states that Western schools of thought, perceive consciousness as a *unified whole* with attributes and characteristics.³⁰ Although Western literature has provided different forms of consciousness, these forms are always approached as a *unified whole*.³¹ When consciousness is approached in this sense it has the nature of a property or a thing that a person has or does not have.³² This means that in the case of Chalmers thought experiment the question of the existence of 'philosophical zombies' is a question whether consciousness as a whole is absent or present. The absence of consciousness is then perceived as proof for the possible existence of 'philosophical zombies'. Garfield states that consciousness— according to the general Buddhist view— cannot be seen as something singular, nor as a property.³³ Consciousness is on the contrary seen as something complex with multiple levels of types of consciousness ranging in levels of awareness that are intertwined with one another and with 'the self'.³⁴ The nature of consciousness is then to be understood as a complex multileveled and layered phenomena. I want to use this nature of consciousness to introduce the second change in perspective. Namely, argue that 'philosophical zombies' possibly exist when consciousness is approached as a multilayered phenomena. 'Philosophical zombies' possibly exist when consciousness is approached as a multilayered phenomena because the question of their existence is not proved by the absence or presence of consciousness as a whole. Instead I argue that 'philosophical zombies' can possibly exist as a type of consciousness in the multilayered nature of consciousness, with a certain type of awareness of the subjective experience.

The structure of this argumentation will be as follows. First of all, I will define the nature of consciousness according to the Buddhist view by giving a brief overview of what Buddhism entails. Secondly, I will provide arguments from Buddhism that argue why consciousness is a multilayered phenomena. These argumentations will be in line with expanding the explanation of the Buddhist view of consciousness. Lastly, I will use the multilayered characteristic to argue for the possible existence of 'philosophical zombies'.

³⁰Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 131.

³¹These known different forms of consciousness in Western schools of thought and literature are: access consciousness, phenomenal consciousness, responsive consciousness and the subjective consciousness. I have mentioned these different forms of consciousness in the previous part of this thesis.

³²Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 169.

³³Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 131.

³⁴Note that this is according to the line of thought of the multiple Buddhistic schools and that this does not mean that I claim this to be the nature of consciousness for certain. I thus do not make an epistemological claim here about the nature of consciousness, just a reasoning in accordance with how Evan Thompson and Garfield describe Buddhism's view on Consciousness.

Buddhism is an umbrella term for various Eastern philosophical and religious schools of thought from different eras and geographical locations.³⁵ Buddhism has different branches, each with their own name and philosophical thought and notions.³⁶ The different branches and traditions in Buddhism share a foundational doctrine which they all follow to a varying degree, called: 'The four noble truths'.³⁷ The four noble truths form a path that can be understood as a path from suffering towards enlightenment. Enlightenment is defined as realizing the illusion of life like the Buddha has.³⁸ The illusion that the Buddha saw through, is that people think that everything in life is permanent when instead life is ever changing. This illusion causes people to suffer.³⁹

The first truth holds that life is surrounded by moments of suffering caused by "The five aggregates of existence"— also known as the five *Skandhas*.⁴⁰ The second truth addresses the cause of suffering. The five *Skandhas* stimulate the illusion of permanency of 'the self' and the world. Humans are attached to this illusion of permanency and therefore refuse to recognize that nothing is permanent. This causes humans to fear change and in turn crave for the safe surroundings of permanency. The Buddha argues that this craving for permanency is the root cause of all suffering. The third truth addresses that the end of suffering comes with an end of doing the things that make us suffer. Therefore a person must recognize and acknowledge the presence of suffering that is caused by the illusion and craving for permanency. The fourth truth is 'The Path' which refers to a manner to navigate life, known as 'The middle way'.⁴¹ Buddha called it the 'Eightfold Path' which entails eight practices: right view, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right diligence, right mindfulness and right concentration. These eight points are concerned with wisdom, behavior and mental discipline and together form the path of liberation from craving and suffering. Joshua Mark points out that these truths are named noble because the people who realize these truths can be deemed as noble.⁴²

Buddhism's 'five aggregates of existence'— The *Skandhas*— and way of defining consciousness both support the belief that consciousness is a multi-layered phenomenon. The *Skandhas* contribute to that belief as follows: the *Skandhas* are the elements that together constitute a person by constituting the sensation of 'The self' or an 'I'.⁴³ The sensation of 'The

³⁵Buddhism originated in the Eastern part of the world. Over time the Buddhist thought has spread all over the world and inspired a lot of people to adapt this thought in their lives.

³⁶The different Buddhist branches are the traditions. The tradition refers to the area and geographical location of a certain Buddhist school of thought. Traditions have multiple branches depending on the philosopher and their input.

³⁷Joshua, J. Mark, "Four Noble Truths." *World History Encyclopedia*. (Last modified July 22, 2021).

https://www.worldhistory.org/Four_Noble_Truths/

³⁸Buddhism started with Siddharta Gautama, an Indian teacher who lived in the fifth century BCE. Siddharta Gautama is also known as the Buddha— which means the man who woke up, or attained enlightenment.

³⁹The term suffering refers to: diseases, aging, death, loss, pain and association with uncomfot and unpleasant situations and so on.

⁴⁰Mark, "Four Noble Truths." https://www.worldhistory.org/Four_Noble_Truths/

⁴¹Mark, "Four Noble Truths." https://www.worldhistory.org/Four_Noble_Truths/

⁴²Joshua Mark points out that the scholars Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Donald S. Lopez, Jr. argue that the term 'noble' refers to people and not to concepts. These scholars make this claim as according to them the original translation from Sanskrit and Pali provide a misleading translation. The term noble is also known as Arya and does not refer to the truths but to the people who try to understand them.

⁴³Barbara O'Brien, "Definition of the Buddhist Term: "Skandha".", *Learn Religions*, (accessed June 1, 2024) <https://www.learnreligions.com/skandha-definition-449692>

self' or an 'I' is the subjective experience of an agent. The five *Skandhas* thereby give rise together to a subjective conscious experience.⁴⁴ These five *Skandhas* are: form, feeling— or sensations, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness.⁴⁵ The constituting of 'the self' means the *Skandhas* do not exist independently of each other, nor do they have a superior position above others.

Evan Thompson gives a more detailed explanation of the mutually intrinsic arising relationship between the five *Skandhas*. Thompson refers to the Buddha's statements in the *Suttas* to show that consciousness and "name-and-form", are mutually contingent on each other.⁴⁶ According to the Buddha "Name-and-form" refers to the material and mental conditions of the perception of an object.⁴⁷ "Name-and-form" are the five *Skandhas* where "Name" refers to the four mental aspects of the five *Skandhas* and "Form" refers to the material *Skandha*.⁴⁸ "Name" consists of the following *Skandhas*: feelings— or sensations, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. The mutual dependency means that on the one hand "name-and-form" cannot appear in perception without consciousness.⁴⁹ On the other hand consciousness depends on "name-and-form" because without them nothing would appear to the perception. Garfield therefore states that the basis of 'The self' is not a single thing but a complex, interwoven set of the *Skandhas*.⁵⁰ Garfield furthermore claims that because 'the self' does not exist only of consciousness but of the all five *Skandhas*, there is a possibility that a part of the self is unconscious.⁵¹ Consciousness is hereby understood as a part of a whole which underlies personhood— I.e. a condition of being a person.⁵²

The nature of consciousness becomes clearer when Garfield describes how Buddhism defines consciousness. Garfield states that consciousness can be translated from Sanskrit as: '*that which enables knowledge*'.⁵³ The first definition of consciousness was given by the Brahmin teacher, Yajnavalkya in the Indian scriptures called the *Upanishads*.⁵⁴ The Buddhist view of consciousness is based on the definition of consciousness that is found in the *Upanishads*. Yajnavalkya describes 'The self' as the inner light that is the person.⁵⁵ This inner

⁴⁴This in essence means a subjective experience that is understood by an agent.

⁴⁵Mark, "Four Noble Truths." https://www.worldhistory.org/Four_Noble_Truths/

⁴⁶Evan Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 25.

⁴⁷Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 24.

⁴⁸Evan Thompson gives further explanation of "name-and-form" in the following manner: the term "Form" comes from the Sanskrit word Rupa— the four basic material qualities of an object. They are: cohesion, temperature, solidity and motion. These material qualities impinge upon our five senses and create our experience of matter. Name refers to the five mental processes that help apprehend something through a concept. These are: contact, feeling, perception, attention and intention.

⁴⁹Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 25.

⁵⁰Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 129.

⁵¹The self does not according to the Skandhas only exist of consciousness but of four other parts that are interwoven with each other and with consciousness.

⁵²Garfield's view that consciousness underlies personhood corresponds with the general Buddhist view that consciousness is one of the aggregates of existence— which constitute the sense of 'the self' or the 'I'.

⁵³Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 127.

⁵⁴ The Upanishads is an ancient Indian scripture dating back to the seventh century B.C.E where the first notion of consciousness is mentioned.

⁵⁵Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 3.

light is the *Skandhas*: consciousness. Thompson elaborates on this notion by stating that according to the Yajnavalkya, consciousness is like a light which consists of knowledge.⁵⁶ To explain what Yajnavalkya means I want to elaborate consciousness according to the yogic traditions of Indian philosophy put forth by Thompson. The yogic tradition states that consciousness is "that which is *luminous* and has the capacity for *knowing*".⁵⁷ *Luminosity* is defined as the ability to reveal.⁵⁸ *Knowing* refers to the ability to apprehend whatever appears to the perception. In this sense consciousness possesses two abilities which on the one hand reveal a certain thing to a particular agent. On the other hand consciousness has the ability of making the agent apprehend the appearing thing in his or her perception. The agent now understands what he or she has perceived— what has appeared into their perception. These two abilities of consciousness make a subject aware of something. Awareness is defined by Thompson as: the light that reveals whatever it shines upon and thus becomes known by the subject.⁵⁹

Thompson argues that consciousness has the capacity to reveal itself due to consciousness's *self-illuminating* property.⁶⁰ This means that consciousness does not need to be revealed by another type of consciousness; it reveals itself.⁶¹ The *self-illuminating* property i.e. states that consciousness and perception arise together. This shows that consciousness is intrinsic to the perception itself. This intrinsic relation to perception is because of the mutually contingent relation between "name-and-form" and consciousness.⁶² This causes consciousness to reveal itself at the moment of a perception giving consciousness a self-perceiving character. Thompson describes this as follows: "...consciousness also perceives itself. This self-perceiving, however, is not like a mirror image; it contains no doubling or subject-object structure."⁶³ Thompson clarifies that at the most fundamental level, consciousness is not revealed to you as an object.⁶⁴ Instead, consciousness makes itself conscious to the agent without positioning itself as an object or subject. The judgments "this is an object" or "this is a subject" are not applied to the perception of consciousness.

Buddhism's belief that consciousness is a multilayered phenomena becomes appeared when Buddhism claims that the nature of consciousness is a river— or stream. Thompson elaborates this claim by stating that consciousness revealed to an agent may appear to have

⁵⁶Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 3.

⁵⁷Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 13.

⁵⁸Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 14.

⁵⁹Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, XXXii.

⁶⁰In western philosophy this characteristic of consciousness is also known as the reflexive character of consciousness.

⁶¹Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 16.

⁶²Note that both consciousness and perception belong to one of the five *Skandhas* that have a mutually dependent relation and constitute together the sensation of 'The self' as is mentioned above by Thomson and Garfield.

⁶³Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 18.

⁶⁴Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 17.

the nature of a river.⁶⁵ The *Abhidharma* tradition of Buddhism, however, claims that this river consists of multiple discontinuous moments of awareness, also known as "mind moments".⁶⁶

These "mind moments" contain certain contents.⁶⁷ This content can be caused by a physical or other mental process. Each of these moments of which the agent becomes aware arises contingent on the previous one, creating the appearance of a flow. According to Thompson, does the *Abhidharma* view in addition claim that every "mind moment" consists of two factors.⁶⁸ The first is a "primary awareness", which arises in conjunction with the second factor : the various constitutional "mental factors". There are six types of primary awareness, each of which corresponds to one of the senses through which an agent apprehends a perception. Awareness is defined by the *Abhidharma* as: "The impression or bare apprehension of something".⁶⁹ These six are: visual awareness, mental awareness, auditory awareness, olfactory awareness, gustatory awareness and tactile awareness. Mental awareness refers to the awareness of mental contents which include: thoughts, emotions, mental images, memory and ideas. The primary awareness in turn gives rise to six corresponding types of consciousness. This characteristic shows that consciousness in Buddhism consists of more than one type of consciousness unlike the Western view.

These primary awarenesses are however never experienced as bare apprehension because they arise in conjunction with "mental factors". "Mental Factors" qualify awareness in a certain manner i.e. forms a judgment.⁷⁰ The "mental factors" ensure that an agent grasps the object of awareness.⁷¹ There is one "mental factor" called: "attention", which enables consciousness to refer and orient towards the object of primary awareness.⁷² Attention furthermore binds all other mental factors to the primary awareness ensuring consciousness. Attention and the bare primary awareness together are required for an agent to have a subjective experience of which the agent is aware. They are the conditions for an agent to be aware of a mind moment.

Buddhism belief that consciousness is a multilayered phenomena becomes furthermore appeared when Thompson states that The Indian Yogic tradition approaches consciousness as a continuum of levels of awareness.⁷³ This continuum varies from gross consciousness— or coarse consciousness to subtle consciousness. Gross consciousness is defined as an awareness

⁶⁵Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 34.

⁶⁶The *Abhidharma* tradition of Buddhism is based upon the *Abhidharma*. This is a collection of Buddhist philosophical texts dating back to the third century BCE— before Christ. These texts in essence build upon the first notion of consciousness explaining the nature and workings of consciousness more in depth.

⁶⁷Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 35.

⁶⁸Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 35.

⁶⁹Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 35.

⁷⁰Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 36.

⁷¹According to the *Abhidharma* tradition, there are over fifty "mental factors" which characterize the bare moments of awareness.

⁷²Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 38.

⁷³Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 7.

level where there is an active sense of perception. An active sense of perception means that an agent directly receives the perception of his or her environment in which he or she is engaged.⁷⁴ From this perception—depending from which of the six primary consciousnesses the perception is received—a type of consciousness arises.

Thompson defines subtle consciousness as the deeper levels of phenomenal consciousness to which the human does not cognitively have access.⁷⁵ This is a subtle level of awareness on which gross and other levels of consciousness depend. At this level an agent has the phenomenal awareness of a certain perception but cannot necessarily access it through cognitive reasoning. The particular agent of the example given at the gross consciousness can have an experience without being able to fully report on it. The experience of seeing the glass of water is then subtly conscious present in the agent, but he or she is not fully aware of the experience. I.e. the agent does not have full knowledge of the experience of him seeing the water nor his judgment and reflective ability on the experience. According to Thompson the subtle level of consciousness is present among other things when the person dreams or remembers.⁷⁶ Consciousness in this level takes mental impressions of which the agent is only subtly aware and forms dreams with them.

Thompson makes a distinction between two types of consciousness that play a role at the subtle level of consciousness according to the *Yogācāra* school.⁷⁷ The *Yogācāra* distinguish in the multilayered nature of consciousness between 'store-consciousness' and 'ego-consciousness'.⁷⁸ The 'store-consciousness' is seen as the most fundamental level of consciousness on which all other levels of consciousness rest. The function of this consciousness is to connect the gross level with the subtle level of consciousness. Here all moments of awareness are stored.⁷⁹ So that they are always accessible to us by manifestations in dreams, or by the means of mediation.⁸⁰ They are always accessible because at this most fundamental level of consciousness the discontinuous moments of consciousness are stored as part of the self. They are stored in the deepest level of the Shikanda consciousness and become part of the sense of the self. This would mean that according to this line of thought all perceptions, regardless of whether the agent is aware of them, are accessible. So if an agent is not aware they can always become aware.

⁷⁴Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 7.

⁷⁵Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 8.

⁷⁶Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 85.

⁷⁷The *Yogācāra* is an Indian Buddhist school of thought. This school's core idea is that our experiences of the world are shaped by consciousness and that external objects have no independent reality outside of this consciousness. For the *Yogācāra*, one can gain insights into the true nature of consciousness through meditation and introspection. They also use these practices to achieve enlightenment by letting go of wrong perceptions.

⁷⁸Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 61.

⁷⁹This means that the store of consciousness also stores the moments that pass our active cognition in the gross level of consciousness. One could state that this level of consciousness also holds all the 'unconscious'— the moments of which an agent does not have awareness of his perception— moments.

⁸⁰Meditation is a method used in Buddhism and especially in the *Yogācāra* school to access other levels of consciousness where the cognitive mind is less active. It is essentially a method of introspectability in phenomenal consciousness.

'Ego-consciousness' has the function to place the sense of an 'I', 'Mine' upon an experience.⁸¹ It places the sense of the ego of the agent on their experience. This causes there to be a subject-object structure projected onto the experience giving the sense of "my" awareness or "my" experience.⁸² According to the *Yogācāra* the 'ego consciousness' creates a sense that the perception and the awareness of the perception are separate, when in truth they are not.⁸³ The sense of "my" consciousness that is caused essentially makes an agent think that a certain consciousness is his. This makes the agent think that he is the subject of his consciousness. This is one of the definitions of self-consciousness.

Thompson gives another sense of self-consciousness, where an agent can experience themselves both as the object and as a subject of awareness.⁸⁴ He claims that in both memory and dreams the 'I' that is experienced— experience of 'The self'— can be experienced from a third-person's perspective and from a first-person's perspective. From a first-person's perspective the dreams or memories are experienced from a subjective point of view. This entails that an agent has the experience of seeing the glass of water. From a third-person's perspective the agent himself has become the object of the dream or memory. The agent experiences himself from the outside as an observer. When an agent is an observer he does not have access to the subjective experience of the first-person's perspective in a dream. The agent does not have *the* 'phenomenal consciousness' of the person seeing the glass of water. The agent rather is the observer of the dream but does however have his own objective perspective and subjective perspective of the person seeing the water.

Thompson states that in a memory an agent can remember themselves both as an observer and as the experiencer of the memory.⁸⁵ An agent can furthermore switch between these two perspectives because of 'self-othering' the mental ability.⁸⁶ The 'Self-othering' ability helps an agent relate to other people by stepping out of their first-person's perspective and assess the experience from a third-person's perspective. By doing this an agent stimulates their empathetic capacity. By taking in a third-person's perspective an agent can get an objective view of his behavior and the experience and thereby view how it affects the surrounding. This 'self-othering' ability is in essence an empathic ability that causes an agent to switch their perspective in an experience.

I propose that the distinction of the two perspectives is not only present in a dream or memory based. But that the switch in perspective is applicable, when a situation occurs in which there are two agents and one of the agents shows their empathic ability by relating to the subjective experience of the other agent. When agent A empathizes with the subjective experience of agent B, then agent A has a third-person's perspective of the first-person's

⁸¹Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 61.

⁸²Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 63.

⁸³According to the *Yogācāra* this illusion comes from the ego which imposes the subject-object structure onto the perception but also unto dreams and memory.

⁸⁴Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 133.

⁸⁵Note that all memories that a person has are from a first-person's perspective.

⁸⁶Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 131.

perspective of agent B. In this case agent A is the observer of agent B's subjective experience.

Here I will introduce two definitions that will make the distinction between the perspectives of the agent clear. An agent can have *first-hand* or *second-hand* experience of an experience. In a first-hand experience, the agent actively participates in the experience from a first-person perspective— this is agent B.⁸⁷ In a second-hand experience, the agent participates in the experience as an observer has a third-person perspective— this is agent A. The person with the second-hand experience does not have an "objective" but an experience based on the subjective experience of another.

I propose here that there exists a phenomenon in such a situation where: the subjective experience of agent B is claimed as 'mine' by agent A because of this empathic ability. This phenomena is the 'self-othering' where the 'ego- consciousness' claims an experience to be its own. This causes agent A to think, believe and act as if the subjective experience of agent B is their own without being aware of it. I.e agent A takes his second-hand experience of agent B's first-hand experience to be their own first-hand experience without being aware of it. I call this phenomenon of agent A, 'zombie-consciousness'.

To substantiate this theory I first want to look at the original definition of 'philosophical zombies' according to Western philosophy and introduce 'philosophical zombies' from a Buddhist perspective. 'Philosophical zombies' are defined as beings without subjective experience or without phenomenal consciousness.⁸⁸ They do not have the experience of 'something that it is like to be'. As mentioned above, in the discussion between Garfield and Chalmers, consciousness is approached as a whole thing that is either present or absent.⁸⁹ What I propose is that 'philosophical zombies' possibly exist when consciousness is approached as a multilayered phenomena and as one of the five *Skandhas* that constitute the sense of 'the self'. I argue that in a multi-layered nature of consciousness there is one layer which causes a person to claim a second-hand experience as their own first-hand experience without being aware of it. The unawareness is causing the other person to act as if the other person's experience is their own and thus does not have their own subjective experience but that of someone else. This is what I call: 'zombie-consciousness'.

Secondly, I appeal to Jonardon Ganeri's notion of phenomenal ownership to support my argumentation. How I interpreted Ganeri, he argues that a person can have experiences that are not directly perceived by the agent himself and can make them their own.⁹⁰ Ganeri argues this by referencing to Harry Frankfurt, to argue that a person can own feelings and thoughts that are not lived. According to Ganeri, Frankfurt states that: "thoughts and experiences are only properly one's own insofar as one endorses them and commits oneself to

⁸⁷Later in this thesis, I link the first-hand experience to the experiential aspect and the second-hand experience to the normative aspect of ownership from Ganeri's theory.

⁸⁸Note that here I strictly follow the definition of 'philosophical zombies' that is used throughout the thesis and the debate between Chalmers and Garfield.

⁸⁹ If consciousness is approached as the West views it, an indication that there 'philosophical zombies' possibly exist is the absence of the whole consciousness or 'phenomenal consciousness'. Consciousness is approached as a whole thing or property and not as Buddhism approaches consciousness as a multilayered phenomena.

⁹⁰ Jonardon, Ganeri. "The Self Restated". *Philos Stud* 174, 1713–1719 (2017).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0831-z>

them."⁹¹ Ganeri states that ownership in this sense means: "endorsement and commitment".⁹² This means that thoughts, feelings and perceptions are endorsed if a person thereby commits himself to them being true. As long as a person owns a thought or feeling it belongs to the sense of 'the self'. Ganeri continuously distinguishes between two aspects of ownership, them being: the 'normative' aspect and the 'experiential' aspect. The latter has a phenomenological role as it claims content of consciousness by having the sense of "for-me-ness".⁹³ 'For-me-ness' is defined by Zhavi in Ganeri's paper as the 'experiential self', it is the self immersed with experience— this is in accordance with the Buddhist notion of the five *Skandhas* which constitute the sense of 'The self'.⁹⁴

I relate this to an agent having a 'first-hand experience'. To link the 'first-hand experience' to the experiential aspect and the second-hand experience to the normative aspect of ownership from Ganeri's theory, makes, what I call, zombie-consciousness possible. The former aspect, I relate to the 'self-othering' ability which causes an agent to mistake their second-hand experience to be a 'first-hand experience'— i.e. have the 'zombie consciousness'. To my understanding, Ganeri's 'normative' aspect of ownership causes a person to own an experience, that they have not themselves lived. The 'normative' aspect governs the way the immersed self relates normative towards the sense 'for-me-ness'.⁹⁵

What a person associates with, as to be part of 'the self', is to my understanding influenced by the norm, i.e. the culture based on their internal and external world— desires, thoughts, ideas. These norms— internal or external— help form the fundamental normative framework and let an agent own these norms as part of 'the self'. It is clear that Ganeri follows the Buddhist thought that the self is constituted of more than the *Shakanda* consciousness. This becomes clear when he cites Zahavi who states that: "The self is not something that stands opposed to the stream of consciousness, but is, rather, immersed in conscious life".⁹⁶ These norms thus form how 'the self' is experienced. A person can take the thoughts or experiences of another or the norm as his own by taking ownership for them and accepting them as part of his own beliefs and values. This means that an agent internalizes the beliefs and actions that result from them and becomes responsible for them.

Take for example agent (A) who may feel the feeling of sadness when the other agent (B) tells him about a personal experience of the death of someone close. agent A has the second-hand experience that is based on the norm 'feel sadness' if someone close dies. It is normative because agent A has the empathic ability to relate to agent B's sadness. When agent A mistakes his experience of the normative sadness to be exactly the experience of the sadness of agent B, then agent A interprets his second-hand experience as a first-hand experience, like agent B has. In this case agent A is not aware of this and acts by means of the 'normative' aspect, owning the experience of the loss as if it is his own subjective experience. But, agent A does not have the subjective experience of the loss, just the normative sadness. When this awareness lacks Buddhism talks of a subtle level of

⁹¹Ganeri. "The Self Restated". 1714. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0831-z>

⁹²Ganeri. "The Self Restated". 1715 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0831-z>

⁹³Ganeri. "The Self Restated". 1715 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0831-z>

⁹⁴Ganeri. "The Self Restated". 1714 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0831-z>

⁹⁵Ganeri. "The Self Restated". 1715 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0831-z>

⁹⁶Ganeri. "The Self Restated". 1714 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0831-z>

consciousness where there is no active sense of perception.⁹⁷ This supports my take on 'zombie-consciousness'.

There are several objections to the theory I propose. The first is that this theory is based on several assumptions. The first assumption that I make is that consciousness can be approached metaphysically above the physical. I make this assumption based on the debate between Chalmers and Garfield where Garfield points towards Buddhism, because it may hold a possible answer to the question whether 'philosophical zombies' could exist. I have chosen to make this assumption because Garfield argues that Buddhism defines consciousness differently than Western philosophy. This gave me ample reason to argue for the possible existence of 'philosophical zombies' and validate my switch in perspective.

The second assumption that I assume is that the definition of buddhism is correct. This assumption entails that I assume that consciousness is not a *unified whole* but a multi-layered phenomenon that is part of the sense of 'the self'. This motivates me to approach 'philosophical zombies' as part of the multi-layered phenomenon and to change the definition of 'philosophical zombies'. For me this step is validated because the concept of 'philosophical zombie' is based on consciousness. As a result, I find that the concept of 'philosophical zombies' is validly adapted by the definition of consciousness on which it rests. In this case, I take a Buddhist approach, whereby the question whether 'philosophical zombies' possibly exist rests on the Buddhist concept of consciousness. This leads me to posit that 'philosophy zombies' may exist because these beings have a certain layer of consciousness where there is no subjective experience. Because the being is not aware that it is having the experience of experiences influenced by the norm owning them as part of 'The self'.

The third and fourth assumptions are found in the argumentation of my proposed theory. The third assumption is that the Buddhist schools of thought that I used to argue for consciousness to be of a different nature are correct. According to Garfield, the Madhyamaka states that mind and consciousness are hidden.⁹⁸ Because of this, we cannot gain knowledge through introspection about the precise nature as the other schools do. The Dalai Lama, however, states that when different Buddhist schools contradict each other, the highest perspective must be taken.⁹⁹ He regards the Vajrayana system as the highest perspective.¹⁰⁰ The Vajrayana assumes that we can know levels such as the subtle life of consciousness. This validates my third assumption.

The fourth assumption on which the theory is based is that I assume that the self-othering capacity can not only provide a change of perspective that happens in direct experiential situations through the empathy capacity of the human being. I defend this assumption by referring to Ganeri's notion of 'normative' ownership, which makes me argue that a person can take over a subjective experience of another and can be a norm which forms the normative aspect of experience. This takeover goes so far that a person mistakes the

⁹⁷This is mentioned earlier in this thesis on page 15- 16 and is stated by Evan Thompson in his book: '*Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*,' on page 9.

⁹⁸ Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, 170.

⁹⁹ Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*, 84.

¹⁰⁰ The Daila lama states that these schools contain the most comprehensive ways of investigating and are therefore the most reliable.

subjective experience of another for his or her own experience and acts, thinks and feels accordingly. I furthermore defend this assumption with Nagel's statement that we cannot know what it is like to be a bat. Nagel argues that an agent cannot know what it is like to have the experience of another agent because we always put our own ego between it. When a secondhand experience is then "made" our own we experience our own empathic ability but not that subjective experience. If one is not aware of that; and acts like the second hand experience is their own: we could speak of a state of consciousness where there is no awareness that there is no authentic experience happening of the agent. This would be the 'zombie state of consciousness'— a type of being unaware of this mix up between experiences.

Conclusion

'Philosophical zombies' are, in conclusion, defined in the West as: beings without subjective experience— also referred to as phenomenal consciousness. The question surrounding this concept according to Chalmers is whether consciousness is of physical or metaphysical nature. Chalmers proposes the latter and creates a thought experiment where he argues for the existence of 'philosophical beings' to argue that functional duplicates without experience exist. Leaving him to conclude that consciousness must be metaphysical. Garfield is Chalmers main opponent in this thesis and focuses the debate on to what extent it is possible that 'philosophical zombies' exist. His point is to prove that Chalmers argumentation does not prove the possible existence of these beings. Garfield closes the debate by pointing into a new direction which I take on, to again argue for the possible existence of 'philosophical zombies'.

I propose that they can possibly exist when two new perspectives are taken in. The first new perspective is to turn towards Buddhism. The second new perspective is that 'philosophical zombies' should be defined according to the Buddhist notion of consciousness. 'Philosophical zombies' are thereby defined as beings without a certain type of awareness in the multilayered phenomena, which reach from gross levels of consciousness to subtle levels of consciousness. To argue this I explain how these levels are seen in Buddhism. I then refer to the 'ego-consciousness' on the subtle level of consciousness to point out what modes of self-consciousness exist. Thompson argues that on this subtle level a change of perspective occurs through the 'self-othering' capacity in dreams and memories.

I use this division of perspectives to introduce two new definitions and substantiate them with Ganeri. An agent then has 'zombie consciousness' when they confuse the 'first-hand-experience' of someone with their own 'first-hand-experience'. When they in fact have a 'second-hand experience'. The 'ego-consciousness' projects the feeling of 'my' experience onto the first-hand experience of another because the agent is an observer of the situation. This happens because humans have a 'the self-othering' ability which is an empathic capacity that allows them to empathize with the first-hand experience of the other. Here I see a comparison between the concepts of a 'second hand experience' and Ganeri's concept of 'normative' ownership. I make this comparison to argue that a person can take over a subjective experience of another in the form that the norm dictates how 'the self' is

experienced. This particular normative aspect towards the sense 'for-me-ness' can take over a person's subjective experience when they have mistaken another's 'first-hand experience' for their own. When this person is not aware of this happening, the experience is thought, lived and felt as their own. Another explanation for this 'self-othering' to happen without a subject being aware is that the 'ego-consciousness' views the others 'first-hand experience' as its own. The 'ego-consciousness' wrongly claims the experience as 'mine' because of the empathic ability. The agent with the 'second-hand experience' now pretends to have access to the subjective experience of the other agent. I state that in a situation where this happens, the agent who is not aware has 'zombie consciousness'.

To end this on a critical note, this proposed theory is based on multiple assumptions which can be questioned and objected to. I have tried to validate the made assumptions and counter a few possibly imaginable objections. This however does not mean that the proposed theory has weaker points that would still need to be explored further to solidify. This proposed theory is not meant to make an epistemological claim about the nature of consciousness, nor an epistemological claim about the existence of 'philosophical zombies'. I do not intend to claim that there are beings without subjective experience. This theory should rather be seen as a theory that considers what requirements and/or conditions there must be to possibly state that there are beings without subjective experience. The conditions being that the assumptions I make are correct.

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