

THE PHENOMENAL BRAIN:
MAKING ROOM FOR A PHENOMENAL-NEURAL TYPE IDENTITY THEORY
OF PHENOMENAL CONSCIOUSNES

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ABSTRACT

It is currently popular among physicalist philosophers of mind to suppose that phenomenal consciousness is essentially a representational phenomenon and that a representational theory of phenomenal consciousness will prove to be the best sort of reductive theory physicalists can offer. In my dissertation I take steps to show that this is not the case and suggest that a phenomenal-neural type identity theory should be the preferred physicalist theory of phenomenal consciousness. Specifically, I consider the prospects for Michael Tye's PANIC theory. The PANIC theory is the most fully developed, and perhaps most promising, representational theory of phenomenal consciousness to date. The main thesis of Tye's theory is the reductive claim that phenomenal character is one and same as a certain sort of representational content. Tye argues for this thesis by appealing to its explanatory power. I show, however, that the thesis in question is inessential to the relevant explanatory features of the PANIC theory and that phenomenal-neural type identity theory, when supplemented with those features, enjoys all the explanatory benefits the PANIC theory. Furthermore, I argue that the PANIC theory cannot adequately account for how phenomenal character could be causally relevant to behavior, which is a problem the phenomenal-neural type identity theory easily avoids. Though these considerations alone may not establish the superiority of the phenomenal-neural type identity theory over that of that of the PANIC theory, I hope to demonstrate that the phenomenal-neural type identity approach to reducing phenomenal consciousness has much more going for it than is typically acknowledged and that the phenomenal-neural type identity theory I develop is a serious rival to the PANIC theory.