

David Chalmers



1 Philosophical Significance

David Chalmers is most well known for his work in philosophy of mind, particularly on the philosophical problem of consciousness. He distinguishes “easy” problems of consciousness from the “hard” problem. The “easy” problems, he thinks, are ones that can be solved by research in psychology, cognitive science, or neuroscience. The “hard” problem is a philosophical one: it requires us to explain the nature of consciousness itself, accounting for how it arises in the natural world. Chalmers also is known for his work in philosophy of language, particularly for his theory of two-dimensional semantics, which can be seen as a development of theories advanced by Kripke and Frege.

2 Writing Style

Chalmers is a contemporary philosopher, so his writing will likely be comparatively easy to understand. (It is certainly easier than, say, Wittgenstein was.)

3 Reading Questions

These reading questions are intended to help you focus when doing the reading. You are not required to write up answers; this is purely for your

benefit. This class tests you on how well you understand the authors that we cover, and these questions are intended to help promote that understanding.

- 1) What distinguishes the “easy” problems of consciousness from the “hard” problem?
- 2) Why does Chalmers say that the “easy” problems are easy?
- 3) Why does Chalmers think a functionalist solution to the hard problem fails?
- 4) Why does Chalmers think we will never be able to explain conscious experience in physical terms?