Review of: "[Commentary] Reporting and Subjectivity Traps: A Brief Opinion Article on Consciousness as Belief"

Jonathan Nash

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Dear Dr. Martin,

After reading your brief commentary on consciousness, subjectivity, and belief, I think your article could benefit from some fundamental changes. For the purpose of brevity, I have used the abbreviation 'C' for consciousness.

1. I think it would be better to state up front that this is about human consciousness ('C'), not about animal 'C' in general.

2. It would strengthen your argument if you provided a cogent definition of what you think 'C' is, and is not – you assume that your readers know what you mean. As you know, there are many different views on this subject.

3. Instead, you have conflated several other terms with the term 'C' as if they are synonymous, often in the same sentence, without offering a definition to tie these notions together under one rubric, e.g., 'conscious experience', 'subjective experience', 'conscious perception', 'phenomenological experience', and sense of self. I have attached a marked-up copy of your manuscript which highlights your use of these terms.

4. Your focus on the conscious state as the basis of your discussion of human 'C' ignores the state or states of 'C' in the unconscious state, e.g., dreaming, coma, general anesthesia, etc. I strongly support the notion that any attempt to discuss/define 'C' in academic discourse must account for both the conscious and unconscious, and not conflate these terms with the 'C' that is the subject of this paper.

5. For these reasons, and as we have previously discussed in your review of the Irwin paper, I recommend capitalizing this use of the word consciousness to distinguish it from the common and medical usages. Otherwise, for example, it is awkward and semantically challenging to discuss such notions as consciousness during a state of unconsciousness.