

PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

QUALIA VS. CONCEPT: INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE PHENOMENA

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In contemporary philosophy of language and mind, the interconnection between such phenomena as *concept* and *qualia* plays a crucial role in understanding the relationship between subjective experience and linguistic representation. While both phenomena are rooted in human cognition, they are mainly considered belonging to fundamentally different epistemological domains.

Concept is a mental and cultural unit of knowledge that underlies linguistic signs, represents generalizations over experience, and serves as the cognitive basis for categorization, meaning, and communication [7; 9]. It may be defined as an abstract and general mental representation that allows the classification of phenomena and their communication through language. Concepts are socially shared, intersubjective, and serve as tools for reasoning and collective knowledge construction. For example, the concept of GREENNESS functions as a general category under which various shades and instances of green can be subsumed.

In contrast, *qualia* (sg. *quale*) denote the raw, subjective qualities of individual experience, in other words, the “what-it-is-like” aspect of perception that is immediately given to consciousness [3; 4]. *Qualia* (sg. *quale*) is a term, used to describe the nature, or content, of subjective, phenomenal experiences; qualia are what beings are aware of when they see, hear, taste, touch or smell something [2; 5; 10; 11]. Qualia are essentially pre-linguistic, unique to each subject, and resist exhaustive description in words. The perception of *this particular green* in a specific moment, with its unrepeatably vividness and nuance, illustrates the nature of qualia [4].

From an epistemological standpoint, concepts are accessible to intersubjective validation and discourse, whereas qualia remain private and irreducible to linguistic exchange. This asymmetry results in different roles

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within cognition: concepts provide structure, categorization, and communicability, while qualia furnish the experiential grounding of thought.

The relation to language marks another crucial difference. Concepts are intimately connected with linguistic expression: they can be named, defined, and transmitted [7; 9]. Qualia, by contrast, precede linguistic articulation and often escape precise verbalization [11]. This leads to their complementary role in the formation of knowledge. On the one hand, concepts are constructed on the basis of recurring qualia, which are abstracted and generalized into stable categories. On the other hand, qualia acquire significance only within a conceptual framework, since raw sensations in isolation remain mute and incommunicable.

Philosophical reflection highlights the specific problems attached to each phenomenon under question. Concepts raise the issue of abstraction; how linguistic or mental categories relate to concrete lived experience. Qualia give rise to the so-called «hard problem of consciousness»: how and why subjective qualities emerge from physical or neural processes [1; 2].

The relationship between qualia and concepts is not merely oppositional but also generative. While concepts function as abstract and socially shared categories, their formation is arguably grounded in the immediacy of qualia. That is, the subjective qualities of experience provide the raw material from which conceptual structures are abstracted and stabilized through language.

From the standpoint of cognitive linguistics, conceptualization arises from recurrent embodied experiences [8]. These experiences are not purely intellectual; they are phenomenological in nature, involving what can be described as *qualitative feels*, e.g. the immediacy of color perception, tactile sensation, taste, or affect. For instance, the concept of GREEN presupposes countless instances of visual qualia that are gradually categorized, abstracted, and then fixed in linguistic form. Without the original qualitative impressions, the concept would lack experiential grounding.

This interdependence suggests that qualia serve as the epistemic foundation of concepts. They provide the perceptual richness and diversity from which the cognitive system extracts patterns and builds generalizations. In terms by Husserl, the “hyle” (sensory matter) is given meaning only through intentional acts of consciousness, yet without such sensory matter there would be no substrate for meaning at all [6].

However, once established, concepts reciprocally shape the way qualia are interpreted and remembered. The lived sensation of a particular green is immediately subsumed under the linguistic and cultural category of GREEN, which not only enables communication but also stabilizes and structures the fleeting quality of perception. In this sense, qualia and concepts form a

dialectical pair: qualia furnish the immediacy of lived experience, while concepts impose communicable form upon that experience.

Therefore, linguistic conceptualization can be said to be both dependent on and constitutive of qualia. It is dependent insofar as concepts must ultimately be grounded in the subjective texture of perception, and constitutive insofar as these raw textures are given cognitive and communicative significance only when integrated into conceptual frameworks. While concept and qualia represent different poles of human cognition, the generalizable and the singular, the shareable and the ineffable, they are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are interdependent: concepts provide the cognitive and linguistic scaffolding for communication, whereas qualia ensure that these abstractions remain anchored in the immediacy of experience.

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