

Achraf Kassioui

## ***Statement of Purpose***

I'm interested in the nature of the subjective experience. What is needed to have a subjective experience, and what kind of practice is able to capture it?

That translates to philosophy of mind being my main area of interest. Examples of questions I'd like to better articulate are: what would a theory of consciousness look like? Suppose I had a complete theory of pain: would exposure to my theory be a painful experience? If it's not, then how would we know that it is indeed a theory of pain? Such questions could be related to the knowledge argument and the philosophy of perception. Another line of questioning could be: what is the theoretical setup that prompts someone to wonder about the nature of the mind as opposed to the body? And if one is troubled with the nature of consciousness, what is it exactly that would ease her concerns? These questions could be linked to the history of the mind-body problem and the meta-problem of consciousness.

Another thread I follow is philosophy of technology, especially topics about human-computer interaction. A typical concern of human-computer interaction is to somehow augment the human abilities. For example, a good user interface allows the visualization and manipulation of complex sets of data, or enables new domains of artistic expression such as computer animation. In that spirit we might ask: could we design new tools that help tackle the problem of consciousness? What kind of mental technologies could the philosopher of mind use? These questions are intertwined with topics such as the extended cognition framework and the philosophy of cognitive science.

I'm also interested in metaphilosophy. "What is philosophy" strikes me as an important question: is philosophy a theoretical or a practical discipline? What sort of results can we expect from philosophy? For instance, if one asks about what is needed to have a subjective experience, where is the demarcation between a philosophical, scientific, and artistic approaches to that question? Speaking of different approaches, I'm puzzled by the differences within philosophy, especially in the form of the so-called analytical and continental divide. Despite the distinctions in style and communities, I can read phenomenology and philosophy of mind with equal interest, and I wish to participate in efforts of communication between different perspectives.

There are many more questions I'd like to clarify. For example: what is the difference between what carpenters and physicists do? Is there something revolutionary in the modern scientific method? Is there a fundamental difference between what we can conceptualize (for example the mechanism of natural selection) and experience (as in pain and joy)? Such questions could be addressed within the history and philosophy of science, metaphysics, and other areas I have yet to learn about.

Beside research, I'm interested in teaching. I look forward to train as a teacher as well as to engage with a broader public within and outside academia. For example, can people interested in user interface design benefit from the concepts of philosophy of mind? Another concern I relate to is open access. I owe as much to academic training as I do to content freely available online, and I'd like to contribute back with accessible educational resources.

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