

Galen Strawson

## *Panpsychism?*

*Reply to Commentators  
with a Celebration of Descartes*

### 1. Introduction

I'm very grateful to all those who have written replies to my paper 'Realistic monism: why physicalism entails panpsychism' ('RMP'), and to the editors of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* who have provided a forum for the debate. I enjoyed all the papers, and the good humour that characterized most of them, and I know that it is a great privilege to have one's views scrutinized in this way in an age in which there is so much good work in philosophy and in which almost all of us feel that our work is neglected. The sense of neglect is often justified; too much is being written. Things haven't improved since 1642, when Descartes — the hero of this piece — observed that 'it is impossible for each individual to examine the vast numbers of new books that are published every day'.<sup>1</sup>

My experience since I first lectured on the 'mind-body problem' in the late 1980s has been one of finding, piece by piece, through half-haphazard reading, that almost everything worthwhile that I have thought of has been thought of before, in some manner, by great philosophers in previous centuries (I am sure further reading would remove the 'almost'). It is very moving to discover agreement across the centuries, and I quote these philosophers freely, and take their agreement to be a powerful source of support. Almost everything worthwhile in philosophy has been thought of before, but this isn't in any way a depressing fact (see p. 200 below), and the local originality that consists in having an idea oneself and later finding that it has

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[1] 1642, p. 386; 'books' had a wide reference. This can happen to anyone; my father, for example, had a particular affection for a book — *Subject and Predicate in Logic and Grammar* (1974) — that received very little attention.

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already been had by someone else is extremely common in philosophy, and crucial to philosophical understanding.<sup>2</sup>

This is a long paper; my hope is that it is easier and quicker to read than a shorter one. The main reason for its length is not Pascal's — it isn't 'longer simply because I have not had time to make it shorter' (1656–7, letter 14), although I have had little time; it is rather Abbé Terrasson's, who remarked — as Kant pointed out when seeking to justify the length of his *Critique of Pure Reason* — 'that if the size of a volume be measured not by the number of its pages but by the time required for mastering it, it can be said of many a book, that it would be much shorter if it were not so short' (Kant 1781, Axviii). I have tried to write out the problem in a new way as it came to me, in particular in §§10–14, and it has stretched in the telling. I have made free use of footnotes to help the flow of the main text. There are those who look down on footnotes, but I think they are one of the great pleasures of life.

My aim is not to try to convince anyone of anything, but to record the truth of the matter as far as I can. I am aware, down to the details, I think, of this paper's vulnerability to unsympathetic reading or constructive misunderstanding, but it would take too long to try to block it all. The only lesson of science that I apply is the general lesson that we are profoundly in the dark about the nature of things, and in particular the nature of the non-experiential. This is a very old lesson, and one that Locke knew well, having learnt in particular from Descartes's difficulties,<sup>3</sup> but the magnificent science of the last hundred years has found overwhelming and bewildering new ways to drive it home. And yet some still largely ignore it.

Anthony Freeman and I agreed on the title of this book — a simple modification of the title of C.D. Broad's book *The Mind and its Place in Nature* (1925) — at the end of 2005. In April 2006, examining Sam Coleman's PhD thesis, I discovered that David Chalmers had in 2003 published a piece with the same title. It was too late to change, but there seemed to be nothing but good in further homage to Broad.

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- [2] It is not particularly saintly not to be disappointed that one has been anticipated (although it helps if the anticipator is a little in the past); that kind of disappointment is knocked out of anyone who survives as a philosopher after writing a doctoral thesis on free will — a process that invariably involves living through the problem in such a way that one feels that it is peculiarly one's own. A little inconsistency, furthermore, allows one to derive considerable gratification both from observing that one has powerful allies among the heroic shades of philosophy and from noting, in a deflationary way, that the views of one's living colleagues were put forward long ago by others.
- [3] As had many others, as Wilson observes on p. 178 (all simple page references are to the present volume).

## 2. Conditional Physicalism (*ad hominem* physicalism)

I have a number of preparatory tasks. The first is to note the published ancestors of RMP, because although RMP is self-standing it cites its predecessors on matters that are relevant to the objections but couldn't be set out in sufficient detail in the space provided. They are, in reverse order, 'What is the relation between an experience, the subject of the experience, and the content of the experience?' (M2003b — the 'M' marks the piece's ancestral status), 'Real Materialism' (M2003a), 'Realistic Materialist Monism' (M1999a), and 'Agnostic Materialism', chapters 3 and 4 of *Mental Reality* (M1994), a book for which I feel affection, although it fell more or less dead-born from the press. In *Mental Reality* I was already arguing for the panpsychist (or at least 'micropsychist') view that there must be experientiality at the bottom of things (see e.g. pp. 60-2, 68-9), in such a way that Chalmers correctly classified me as holding a version of the position he now calls 'Type-F monism',<sup>4</sup> but in those days one felt considerably more abashed about doing such a thing. Chalmers talked in the same spirit of the 'threat' of panpsychism, in spite of his own respect for it (1997, p. 29).

One thing the four 'M' works have in common with each other and with RMP, and that needs to be mentioned now, given some of the replies to RMP in this book, is that they are all conditional in their overall form: they are dialectically *ad hominem*, in the non-aggressive sense of the term. That is, they are directed to someone who is assumed to hold a certain position, and their principal arguments are designed to have whatever force they have because the person to whom they are addressed holds that position. The position in question is materialism or physicalism, as defined on p. 3, and the general form of argument in each case is 'If you accept physicalism, if, that is, you are a serious and realistic materialist, then you also have to accept this.'<sup>5</sup>

In order to run the conditional, *ad hominem* argument smoothly<sup>6</sup> I assume in each of these works that physicalism is true, while setting no great store by the word 'physicalism'. I point out the sense in which my use of the term risks rendering it descriptively vacuous (at least so far as non-experiential phenomena are concerned) and suggest that

[4] See Chalmers 2003. Chalmers read the typescript of M1994 before it was published, although he subsequently made no mention of it, and judged then that we were broadly in agreement, although we differed about how to use the word 'materialist'.

[5] As before I take 'materialist' and 'physicalist' to be synonymous.

[6] As things have turned out, it has led to misunderstanding.

this seeming calamity is just what is needed at the current stage of the debate.<sup>7</sup> To those who balk at such a use of ‘physicalism’ I offer, each time, ‘experiential-and-non-experiential monism’, or even ‘experiential-and-non-experiential ?-ism’, as more cautious names for the position I am assuming to be true: this is the position of someone who

[a] fully acknowledges the evident fact that there is experiential being in reality, [b] *takes it* that there is also non-experiential being in reality, and [c] is attached to the [stuff-] ‘monist’ idea that there is, in some fundamental sense, only one kind of stuff in the universe (p. 7, emphasis added).<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Equal-status Monism

In *Mental Reality* I set out a version of this position called *equal-status monism*, according to which

reality is irreducibly both experiential and non-experiential, while being substantially single in some way *W* that we do not fully understand, although we take it that *W* is a way of being substantially single that does not involve any sort of *asymmetry* between the status of claims that reality has non-experiential aspects and claims that reality has experiential aspects. [On this view] it is not correct to say (a) that the experiential is based in or realized by or otherwise dependent on the non-experiential, or (b) vice versa. The truth is rather (c) that the experiential and non-experiential coexist in such a way that neither can be said to be based in or realized by or in any way asymmetrically dependent on the other; or if there is any sense in which one can reasonably be said to be dependent on the other, then this sense applies equally both ways . . . .

To get an explicitly materialist form of equal-status monism one

- [7] M1994, pp. 99, 105; M2003a, p. 73; RMP, p. 8. Compare in particular Crane and Mellor 1990. McGinn objects to it, as does Macpherson, at least in part; but I embrace it, for I am only trying to set out what one has to say if one is a (realistic) physicalist.
- [8] In M1994 I justified calling myself a materialist or physicalist as follows: ‘Why do I call myself a materialist, rather than a “?-ist”? My faith, like that of many other materialists, consists in a bundle of connected and unverifiable beliefs. I believe that experience is not all there is to reality. I believe that there is a physical world that involves the existence of space and of space-occupying entities that have nonexperiential properties. I believe that the theory of evolution is true, that once there was no experience like ours on this planet, whether panpsychism is true or false, and that there came to be experience like ours as a result of processes that at no point involved anything not wholly physical or material in nature. Accordingly, I believe that however experiential properties are described, there is no good reason to think that they are emergent, relative to other physical properties, in such a way that they can correctly be said to be nonphysical properties. Finally, with Nagel (1986, p. 28), I believe that one could in principle create a normally experiencing human being out of a piano. All one would have to do would be to arrange a sufficient number of the piano’s constituent electrons, protons, and neutrons in the way in which they are ordinarily arranged in a normal living human being. Experience is as much a physical phenomenon as electric charge’ (p. 105)

simply has to add in the words ‘properties of the physical’ in (c) to get ‘The truth is that the experiential and non-experiential properties of the physical coexist in such a way that neither can be said to be based in, or realized by, or in any way asymmetrically dependent on, the other, etc.’....

I will restate ... this ... although it is clear enough. [i] All reality is physical (the basic materialist premise). [ii] There are experiential and non-experiential phenomena (unavoidable realism about the experiential, plus the assumption (!) that there is more to physical reality than experiential reality). [iii] Among physical phenomena, experiential physical phenomena do not depend on non-experiential physical phenomena ..., or do not depend on them in any way in which non-experiential phenomena do not also depend on experiential phenomena.<sup>9</sup>

My reason for mentioning this straight away is that I take it that real (realistic) physicalists must be equal-status monists, given the argument in RMP that the experiential cannot possibly emerge from the wholly and utterly non-experiential. If one is a realist about the experiential, a *real* realist about the experiential (see p. 3), one faces the fact that any asymmetry or one-way dependence or reducibility must be to the detriment of the non-experiential.

I am going to continue to assume for purposes of argument that monism is true, in spite of the difficulties in the notion:<sup>10</sup> both insofar as I continue to assume for *ad hominem* purposes that physicalism is true (for whatever physicalism is it is a monist position), and on my own account — at least until the term ‘physical’ falls apart (see p. 234 below). No monism can be ‘neutral’, however, given that there is no sense in which experience considered just as such can be mere appearance, in the sense of not being really real at all,<sup>11</sup> and given that this is so — given that neutral monism is out —, it looks as though the only monism that really makes sense, given the certain existence of experience, is experiential or panpsychist monism. If so, continued use of the word ‘physicalist’ will sound ever more oddly, with an increasingly *reductio ad absurdum* ring, and equal-status monism will turn out to be a pipe-dream — unless, that is, Spinoza can save it.

[9] Strawson M1994, pp. 73-4; the assumption marked with an exclamation mark is indeed that, an assumption; unlike the acknowledgement of experiential phenomena.

[10] See e.g. M1994, pp. 43-4, M2003, pp. 74-5

[11] See e.g. M1994, pp. 50-1, M1999a, pp. 24-5, M2003a, p. 54. The point is not only that we can know that experience considered just as such is real; it is also that we can and do know the intrinsic nature of the experiential, at least in certain respects, simply in having it. This will become important later on.

#### 4. 'Panpsychism'

My characterization of panpsychism in RMP was intentionally imprecise: 'all physical stuff is ... an experience-involving phenomenon'.<sup>12</sup> This is too loose as it stands, as Stapp observes (p. 164), and for the moment I am happy to solidify it by fusing it with Nagel's characterization — 'by panpsychism I mean the view that the basic physical constituents of the universe have mental [and in particular experiential] properties'.<sup>13</sup> Let me stress that I make — find — no distinction between panpsychism and panexperientialism, because the word 'panpsychism' doesn't have any implications that the word 'panexperientialism' doesn't also have. 'Psyche' was a mass term before it was a count noun, and the word 'panpsychism' doesn't in itself imply that there are subjects of experience in addition to experiential reality, or indeed that everything that exists involves the existence of a subject of experience in addition to the existence of experiential reality.<sup>14</sup>

#### 5. Subjects of Experience

In fact, though, it wouldn't matter if the word 'panpsychism' did carry this implication, because it is 'an obvious conceptual truth that an experiencing is necessarily an experiencing by a subject of experience, and involves that subject as intimately as a branch-bending involves a branch'.<sup>15</sup> There cannot be experience without a subject of experience simply because experience is necessarily experience *for* — for someone-or-something. Experience necessarily involves experiential 'what-it-is-likeness', and experiential what-it-is-likeness is necessarily what-it-is-likeness *for* someone-or-something. Whatever the correct account of the substantial *nature* of this experiencing something, its *existence* cannot be denied. 'An experience is impossi-

[12] p. 25; compare M1994, pp. 76-7, where I distinguish between 'experience-involving' and 'experience-realizing' versions of panpsychism.

[13] 1979, p. 181. That said, I am going to avoid talking about properties as far as possible, for reasons that will emerge; and I certainly don't want to rule out the version of panpsychism according to which there is no non-experiential being at all.

[14] I make the same provision in M1994, p. 76. Here I disagree terminologically with Coleman (pp. 48-50). Skrbina (2005, p. 21) traces the term 'panexperientialism' to Griffin 1977.

[15] Shoemaker 1986, p. 10. The point is made briefly in RMP p. 26. Here, it seems, I may have a substantive disagreement with Coleman (pp. 48-50), but I still like to think it is really only terminological.

ble without an experiencer' (Frege 1918, p. 27). To understand this claim in the sense in which it is intended is to see that it is true.<sup>16</sup>

This is not to commit oneself to any view about the ontological status of the necessarily existing subject. It is certainly not to commit oneself to the idea that it must be a substance in any conventional sense of that word, i.e. any sense in which a substance is understood to be something stands in fundamental ontological contrast with a property. One can be certain that an experience is impossible without an experiencer while knowing nothing more than Descartes knows in his *Second Meditation* when he says 'I know that I exist; the question is, what is this "I" that I know?'. Descartes makes it as explicit as he can that he is at this stage entirely uncommitted on the question of the ontological nature of what gets referred to when he says 'I'.<sup>17</sup> Kant does the same in his Paralogisms, using for this purpose the terms of the conventional substance/property distinction. Certainly one knows that one exists, but it is 'quite impossible' for one, he says, given one's self-conscious experience of oneself as a mental phenomenon, 'to determine *the manner* in which [one] exist[s], whether it be as substance or as accident' (1781/7, B420; my emphasis). Certainly 'the I who thinks or is conscious must *in such thought or consciousness* always be *considered* as a *subject*, and as something that does not merely attach to thought or consciousness like a predicate', but — this is Kant's central point — nothing follows from this about how things actually are, metaphysically speaking.<sup>18</sup> What we have to do, then, is acknowledge the certainty of the existence of the subject, the experiencing 'someone-or-something', in a way that is wholly metaphysically neutral as to ontological category, even while the essentially discursive, subject-predicate tenor of our thought and language revolts against the attempt at such neutrality.

It may be thought to be misleading to make the experience-entails-an-experiencer point while using individual-substance-suggesting noun phrases like 'experiencer', 'subject of experience', or

[16] It is in fact analytic, if not obviously so. To understand what experience is is to understand that it is essentially experience-*for*, in the intended sense. Note that I take 'experience' to cover not just sensory episodes but all conscious mental goings on, including the most abstract conscious thoughts (see e.g. Strawson M1994, ch. 1).

[17] 1641, p. 18; for all he knows at this point in his meditations, he observes, he may be nothing more than his body.

[18] 1787, B407; first two emphases mine. Kemp Smith (1933) and Guyer & Wood (1999) mistranslate this sentence. They have 'can' instead of 'must' (the mistake results indirectly from a mistaken reading of 'gelten' as 'to be valid' rather than 'to consider as' or 'to count as'). Pluhar (1996) gets this right, and the correctness of his translation has been confirmed to me by many native speakers, including professional translators, and — among philosophers — Fred Beiser, Han-Jo Glock and Michael Rosen.

‘someone-or-something’, and I think it is worth stressing that nothing in Buddhism conflicts with the point when it is understood as it is here (certainly the notion of a subject carries no implication of long-term persistence). One can put the point paradoxically by saying that if *per impossibile* there could be experience without any experiencer, if there could, say, be pain-experience — massive, appalling, avoidable, wholly useless pain — without any subject of experience, there would be no point in stopping it, because no one, no someone-or-something, would be suffering.

If someone is prepared to grant that there is necessarily *subjectivity*, when there is experience, but not that there is necessarily *a subject of experience*, we have a merely terminological disagreement, for I understand the word ‘subject’ in a maximally metaphysically neutral way (with Kant and the Descartes of the *Second Meditation*) given which the existence of subjectivity entails the existence of a subject.<sup>19</sup>

## 6. Thin Subjects

It is plain to most philosophers that there cannot possibly be experience — experiencing, experiential reality, experiential being (I will use these terms interchangeably) — without a subject of experience.<sup>20</sup> What is less plain, or less remarked on, is that there is an important use of the term ‘subject of experience’ given which the converse is also true. I will record it here because it is helpful in many contexts, and helps to diminish resistance to the necessary truth recorded in the last section.

There are two common conceptions of what a subject of experience is. First,

[a] the *thick* conception according to which it is only human beings and other animals *considered as a whole* that are properly said to be subjects of experience.

Second,

[19] See further M2003b, pp. 293–4. This is part of the explanation of why Lichtenberg’s famous objection to Descartes is no good.

[20] Let no one think that Hume thought otherwise. His target in ‘Of personal identity’, section 1.4.6 of the *Treatise*, is not this view, which is after all a necessary truth. It is the view, standard in his time, that the self or subject is something that has ‘perfect identity and simplicity’ and that ‘continue[s] invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives’; together with the view that this is something that we can know to be the case. See Strawson forthcoming *a*.



[b] the *traditional* conception of the subject, the traditional *inner* conception according to which the subject *properly or strictly speaking* is some sort of persisting, inner, mentally propertied entity or presence.

I take it that [a] and [b] both build in the assumption that a subject may and standardly does continue to exist even when it is not having any experience (for whether you think that human subjects are whole human beings or whether you think they are inner loci of consciousness, you are likely to allow that they can continue to exist during periods of complete experiencelessness — in periods of dreamless sleep, say), and it is this that creates the need for the third, relatively unfamiliar conception of the subject

[c] the *thin* conception according to which a subject of experience, a true and actual subject of experience, does not and cannot exist without experience also existing, experience which it is having itself.

The thin conception stands opposed to both [a] and [b] precisely because they both contain the natural assumption that a subject of experience can be said to exist in the absence of any experience. It doesn't, though, offer any support to the idea that thin subjects are short-lived or transient entities. I believe that they are short-lived or transient, momentary, in the human case, as a matter of empirical fact, but Cartesian subjects also qualify as thin subjects by the present definition, and they are long-lived, possibly immortal.<sup>21</sup>

There is a problem of exposition here, because most are so accustomed to [a] and/or [b], and to the idea that they exhaust the options, that they cannot take [c] seriously. And yet [c] simply makes a place for a natural use of the term 'subject' according to which it is a necessary truth, no less, that

there cannot be an actual subject *of experience*, at any given time, unless some *experience* exists for it to be a subject *of*, at that time.

On this view, there can no more be a subject of experience without an experience than there can be a dent without a surface.

Most think that to talk of the subject of an experience is necessarily to talk of something ontologically distinct from the experience or

[21] See further §8. Other thinkers whose subjects are 'thin' in this sense include Leibniz, whose subjects are like Descartes's long-lived. On the short-lived side we find Hume and William James, Buddhists, who are often supposed to deny the existence of subjects of experience altogether, and, arguably, Fichte.

experiencing itself (in this book see e.g. Coleman pp. 48-9). Others think that to talk of the subject of experience is necessarily to talk of something that can be said to perceive, or to be in intentional states. I reject both of these views (if, that is, intentional states are externalistically construed). So far as the first is concerned I am inclined to agree with Descartes that to talk of a subject of experience in the fundamental thin sense is not only not *necessarily* to talk of something ontologically distinct from the experiencing ('thinking'), but is also not *in fact* to talk of something ontologically distinct from the experiencing, and is indeed *necessarily not* to talk of something ontologically distinct from the experiencing.

This will be clarified in the next three sections, which will also constitute my main reply to Macpherson's very helpful paper. Here let me just state that I had thin subjects in mind when I noted in RMP that panpsychism, conjoined with the assumption that there are many 'ultimates' or fundamental constituents of reality, leaves us with 'a rather large number of subjects of experience on our hands' (p. 26). The semi-humorous 'rather large' acknowledged that this claim would be thought by many people to constitute a special extra problem for panpsychism, but then as now I am quite sure that it does not, however many ultimates there are (each with its own feeling-hum of existence and/or representation of its environment). I think, in fact, that it constitutes exactly as much as a problem for panpsychism as the claim that there are  $n$  ultimates does for ordinary physicalism — whatever the value of  $n$ .

### 7. Objects and their Properties

I need now to explain how I conceive the relation between objects and their properties — something mentioned only in passing in RMP (p. 28). This will allow me to explain why I say on p. 28 that 'property dualism' is incoherent insofar as it claims to be distinct from substance dualism — unless it is nothing more than the claim that there are two very different sorts of properties. It will also allow me to explain why I have to turn down Macpherson's invitation (on p. 81) to accept that I am really a property dualist. After that (in §8) I will explain why I think we need to return to Descartes, the thrilling Descartes, if we want to go anywhere with the mind-body problem.<sup>22</sup>

Objects have properties, we say. Our habit of thinking in terms of the object/property distinction is for everyday purposes ineluctable.

[22] This section is adapted from M2003b.

And it is perfectly correct, in its everyday way. But ordinary thought is not a good guide to metaphysical truth, any more than it is a good guide to scientific truth, and there is an equally ineluctable sense in which any sharp or categorial distinction between an object and its properties is profoundly misleading. I think we can in fact sufficiently grasp the truth about the relation between objects and their properties, although it eludes sharp formulation, has done so for millennia and will doubtless continue to do so. It is a truth that violates a deep precept of our ordinary thought in such a way that thought-expressing language does not provide adequately for its clear expression, but I think it is not entirely beyond our reach.

In setting this out I will consider only concrete phenomena, so my concern with properties will be only with concrete ‘property-instantiations’, or ‘property-concretions’, rather than with properties considered as universals considered as abstract objects (one can substitute ‘property-instantiation’ or ‘property-concretion’ for ‘property’ wherever it fits), and only with intrinsic (non-relational), natural (non-conventional), categorial properties of objects.<sup>23</sup> What is at issue is the relation between a particular concrete object and its properties, i.e. its whole actual qualitative being,<sup>24</sup> and the proposal is that one has already gone fatally wrong if one thinks that there is any sort of ontologically weighty distinction to be drawn according to which there is the object, on the one — concrete ontological — hand, and the properties of the object, on the other — concrete ontological — hand: according to which one can distinguish between the existence or being of the object, at any given time, and its nature, at that time; between the thatness of the object and the whatness or howness of the object, at any given time. (One of the deep agents of confusion in this matter is counterfactual thinking, which I will come to in due course. Leibniz stands in the background as an ally, as also does Descartes.)

Plainly objects without properties are impossible. There can no more be objects without properties than there can be closed plane rectilinear figures that have three angles without having three sides. ‘Bare particulars’ — objects thought of as things that do of course *have* properties but are *in themselves* entirely independent of properties — are incoherent. To be is necessarily to be somehow or other, i.e.

[23] I am taking the general propriety of such notions for granted. For some recent discussion, see Lewis & Langton 1996 and the ensuing debate in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 2001, p. 347–403. See also note 162 below.

[24] ‘Qualitative’ has nothing in particular to do with experience — my teapot has many qualities.

to be some way or other, to have some nature or other, i.e. to have (actual, concrete) properties.

Rebounding from the obvious incoherence of bare particulars, one may think that the only other option is to conceive of objects as nothing but collections or ‘bundles’ of properties — property-concretions. And this option may seem no better. Mere bundles of properties seem as bad as bare particulars. Why accept properties without objects after having rejected objects without properties?

But this is not what we are asked to do. The claim is not that there can be concrete instantiations of properties without concrete objects. It is that the best thing to say, given our existing terms, is that objects are (just) concrete instantiations of properties. This claim won’t do either as it stands, but I think that it can (just about) be given an adequate sense.

The debate is as troublesome as it is ancient, conducted as it is against the stubborn background of everyday thought and talk. It will always sound intolerably peculiar, to say of a child or a refrigerator that it is (‘strictly speaking’ — but this qualification brings little relief) nothing but instantiated properties. To some it may continue to sound little better than the claim that there are bare propertyless objects. But again, or so I propose, this is because our natural conception of the relation between an object and its properties is not adequate to representing reality correctly. The claim is not that there are, ontologically, only collections of properties *given the standard conception of a property*. It is, again, that the standard existing categories of object, substance and property are not adequate to the nature of reality. The sense of intolerable peculiarity is not an objection to this claim, but evidence of its truth.

For all that, I think that philosophers have managed to find ways of rendering the object/property topos correctly. When Kant says that

in their relation to substance, accidents [or properties] are not really subordinated to it, but are the mode of existing of the substance itself

I think he gets the matter exactly right.<sup>25</sup> Nothing more needs to be said (language will make a mess if you try). Consider an actual object in front of you. There is no ontological subordination of properties (property-instances) to object, no existential inequality or priority of

[25] Kant 1781/7, A414/B441. It’s important that ‘mode of existing’ cannot just mean ‘the particular way a substance is’, where the substance is thought to be somehow independently existent relative to its mode of existing; for that would be to take accidents or properties to be somehow ‘subordinate’ after all. (I’m assuming that here ‘accident’ means effectively the same as ‘property-instance’.)

any sort, no dependence of either on the other, no independence of either from the other. (The counterfactuals are coming.)

There is, in other terms, no ontological subordination of the total *qualitative* being of the object to the object *an Sich*, ‘in itself’, no ontological subordination of its nature to its existence. One might put the point by saying that the distinction between the actual being of a thing or object or particular, considered at any given time, and its actual properties, at that time, is a merely conceptual distinction (like the distinction between triangularity and trilaterality) rather than a real (ontological) distinction.<sup>26</sup> We can as Armstrong says ‘*distinguish* the particularity of a particular from its properties’, but

the two ‘factors’ are too intimately together to speak of a *relation* between them. The thisness and the nature are incapable of existing apart from each other. Bare particulars are vicious abstractions...from what may be called states of affairs: this-of-a-certain-nature.<sup>27</sup>

Nagarjuna talks in the same vein of the complete codependence of things and their attributes,<sup>28</sup> Nietzsche is admirably brief — ‘A thing = its qualities’ (1885–8, p. 73; see also pp. 88, 110, 104–5) — and P.F. Strawson’s use of the suggestive phrase ‘non-relational tie’ can profitably be extended from a logico-linguistic application (to grammatical subject-terms and predicate-terms) to a straightforwardly metaphysical application (to objects and their properties).<sup>29</sup>

I believe it should be. One should — must — accept the ‘non-relational’ conception of the relation (!) between an object and its intrinsic properties, if one is going to retain words like ‘object’ and ‘property’ in one’s metaphysics at all. This is entirely compatible with claiming that an object’s properties — including its intrinsic or non-relational properties — may and do change through time, while it remains the same object.

‘But we also want to be able to say that an object would have been the very object it is, at *t*, even if its properties had been different, at *t*. We think that the (actual) object could have existed apart from some at least of its (actual) properties.’ Nothing here forbids this way of

[26] In Descartes’s sense — see the next section. When writing M2003b I had not realized that this is Descartes’s own view, although I used his terms.

[27] 1980, pp. 109–10. Armstrong puts things this way for well known dialectical reasons to do with stopping ‘Bradley’s regress’ (see Loux 2002, p. 39–40), but I take it that there are completely independent metaphysical reasons for saying it.

[28] c150 CE, chapter V (1995, pp. 14–15, see commentary pp. 149–52).

[29] Strawson 1959, pp. 167–78. ‘Tie’, though, is not a very good word for this non-relational mutual metaphysical involvement.

talking about the non-actual. To see this, all one needs to do is to lose any tendency to slip (even in one's underthought) from the evident fact

- (i) that there are contexts in which it is entirely natural to take it that (some at least of) an object's properties might have been different from what they are while it remained the same object

to the entirely mistaken idea

- (ii) that an object has — must have — *some* form or mode of being independently of its having the properties it does have.

'But we also want to be able to say that an object would still be the object it is even if (some at least of) its properties were other than they are in fact.'

True. This is how our ordinary notions work. But present-tense counterfactual talk is no more problematic than past-tense. It is simply an expression or manifestation of what the current proposal explicitly rejects: the way we ordinarily think about the relation between objects and their properties. Counterfactual talk *has a whole metaphysics built into it*, one that is simply incorrect, on the present view (although currently dominant). So it cannot by itself ground any argument that the current proposal is incorrect. The adequacy of ordinary thought and talk to represent reality is already in the dock, and already stands condemned on many counts. Those who wish to reject the current proposal will have to produce independent (non-linguistic) metaphysical arguments in support of their view. They cannot simply appeal to our common understanding of counterfactuals. We face the fact that some of our most fundamental thought categories simply do not get the world right. When we think obstinately I think we can see *a priori* that this is so.<sup>30</sup> But we cannot really liberate ourselves from the framework these thought categories dictate.<sup>31</sup> Ramsey does not exaggerate, I think, when he says that 'the whole theory of universals is due to mistaking ... a characteristic of language ... for a fundamental characteristic of reality' (Ramsey 1925, p. 60). If anything he doesn't go far enough, for it is perhaps not just ordinary language but ordinary thought that misleads us and will perhaps always do so.

There is, in any case, no real problem of universals and particulars. When one first achieves this insight, it may feel uncomfortable, and

[30] 'Metaphysics means nothing but an unusually obstinate effort to think clearly' (James 1890, 1.144.)

[31] The free will debate has some of the same characteristics, but it is I think far less difficult.

for some time; but it matures powerfully in the space of a couple of years. One looks at any ordinary object and it is mysterious how there can be thought to be a problem.

Nietzsche often puts the point in terms of language

language is built in terms of the most naïve prejudices ... we read disharmonies and problems into things because we *think only* in the form of language — thus believing in the ‘eternal truth’ of ‘reason’ (e.g. subject, predicate, etc.)

but also in terms of thought

That we have a right to *distinguish* between subject and predicate — ... that is our strongest belief; in fact, at bottom, even the belief in cause and effect itself, in *conditio* and *conditionatum*, is merely an individual case of the first and general belief, our primeval belief in subject and predicate.... Might not this belief in the concept of subject and predicate be a great stupidity?<sup>32</sup>

That is one way to put it. But the best thing to do, I think, is simply to keep Kant’s phrase in mind: ‘in their relation to the object, the properties are not in fact subordinated to it, but are the mode of existing of the object itself’.<sup>33</sup> This is another of those points at which philosophy requires a form of contemplation, something more than theoretical assent: cultivation of a shift in intuitions, acquisition of the ability to sustain a different *continuo* in place in the background of thought, at least for a time. The object/process/property/state/event cluster of distinctions is unexceptionable in everyday life, but it is wholly superficial from the point of view of science and metaphysics.

Some think that conflict with ordinary ways of thinking is always an objection to a philosophical theory, but this is certainly untrue if it is anything more than a recommendation to keep in touch with common-sense conceptions. Philosophy, like science, aims to say how things are in reality, and conflict with ordinary thought is no more an automatic objection to a philosophical theory than it is to a scientific

[32] 1885–8, pp. 110, 104–5. ‘The separation of “doing” from the “doer”, of what happens from a something that makes it happen, of process from something that is not process but is enduring, substance, thing, body, soul, etc — the attempt to grasp what happens as a kind of displacement and repositioning of what “is”, of what persists: that ancient mythology set down the belief in “cause and effect” once this belief had found a fixed form in the grammatical functions of language’ (1885–8, p. 88). Note with regard to the last two quotations that Nietzsche firmly believes in causation in the sense of natural necessity; what he is objecting to is the substantialist separatism of talk of individual causes and effects: ‘The unalterable sequence of certain phenomena does not prove a “law” but a power relation between two or several forces. To say: “But precisely this relation remains the same!” means nothing more than: “One and the same force cannot be a different force as well” (1885–6, p. 88).

[33] I have substituted ‘object’ and ‘property’ for ‘substance’ and ‘accident’ respectively.

one. There are many areas in which we can see clearly that our ordinary concepts and ways of thinking are not and cannot be fully adequate to the reality they purport to represent (our ordinary concepts of space, time, and matter, for example), and it so happens that one of the deepest and most startling demonstrations of this inadequacy is provided by our commitment to thinking of the relation between an object and its properties in the way we ordinarily do. In large parts of philosophy this commitment causes no problems (the same is true of Newtonian mechanics in physics), but there are inevitably areas in metaphysics where its inadequacy to reality is part of the problem at issue, explicitly or not, and then its uncritical use — its use in any robust form — wreaks absolute havoc, havoc aggravated by the ease and success of its employment in other areas, which understandably misleads many into thinking that it must be quite generally viable.

In discussing the mind-body problem, in particular, I think it best to talk in categorially more neutral terms of a thing's *being* or *reality*, rather than of its *properties*, and I will very often do so. Uncritical use of the object/property distinction has caused a truly huge number of unnecessary problems in the debate, and has wasted a vast amount of time.

### 8. Real Descartes [1]<sup>34</sup>

Descartes, it appears — the magnificent, contumacious Descartes — , is the most distinguished holder of the view about the relation between objects and their propertiedness that I have just endorsed, at least in the Western tradition. This by itself is a good reason to start from his views, when entering into the mind-body debate, but it is not the only one. He still oversees the debate. He is still constantly referred to and is still its deepest thinker. Having recently read (and re-read) some of his writings, along with those of his contemporary critics and correspondents, and later commentators, I think that everyone engaged in the current discussion of the mind-body problem in philosophy should hold everything and read Descartes, especially his correspondence and his replies to objections — if, that is, they want to have their perspective on the problem sharpened, reinvigorated, simplified and deepened. (It is deepened by being simplified.)

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[34] This section was inspired by reading Clarke 2003 and 2006 and fortified by Yablo 1990 (it may perhaps go a little further than either of them would approve). There is a huge and in many respects wonderful scholarly literature on Descartes of which I am almost entirely ignorant and to which I surely have nothing to add, except, perhaps, a slightly new arrangement.



To do so is to realize that there is really nothing radically new in the existing debate — nothing both new and true — ,<sup>35</sup> but this is a moment of illumination, not defeat. The fundamental positions in the mind-body debate have been marked out for a long time, and the quality of the present-day debate is embarrassingly lower than it was in the seventeenth century.<sup>36</sup>

It does not follow that there is nothing difficult and important left to do; nothing could be further from the truth. When Pascal imagined someone charging him with lack of originality, he replied:

Let no one say that I have said nothing new: the organization of the subject matter is new. When we play tennis, we both play with the same ball, but one of us places it better.<sup>37</sup>

The point is of great importance and holds for all the discursive arts and sciences, even if it has special force in philosophy. The object of philosophy is not just to state the truth in a domain where matters are often so very difficult, but to make it shine out. To think that Pascal's dictum reflects badly on philosophy is comparable to thinking that the best science never produces new results; or like thinking that once someone had painted a picture of the Madonna and Child, or the Montagne Saint Victoire, there was no point in anyone else doing so.

This is why we should go back to the older debate before trying to go anywhere else. There is a great deal of time to be saved. Everything that matters can be put far more simply and more clearly than it is being put in the present debate, with its atrocious muddling of metaphysical issues with epistemological and semantic issues and its for the most part witheringly unhelpful, rococo, scholastic, multiply duplicative and multiply inconsistent terminologies. Descartes offers us one great anchor and framework, in spite of the terminological peculiarities of his time (far easier to master than those of the present day). If you want to get intimate with texts, get intimate with Descartes, Arnauld, and Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia. If you want to publish papers on the mind-body problem, there are fine papers to be written laying out and developing Descartes's treatment of currently fashionable issues. It's a tragedy for all those who coming into philosophy — a tragedy of waste, deprivation, stupidity and disrespect (it is

[35] Some might prefer to say: nothing both true and new and important.

[36] 'Things have clearly gone downhill in the last three hundred years' (M1994, p. 102, with reference to Locke).

[37] c1640-1662, §575. 'One might as well say that I've used old words', he continued. For 'just as the same words constitute different thoughts by being differently arranged, so too the same thoughts constitute a different body of work by being differently arranged'.

also a farce) — that there is so often a huge, sometimes grotesque, gap between the popular understanding of a great philosopher’s treatment of a topic, by which I mean the popular philosophical understanding of the philosopher’s treatment of the topic, and the understanding possessed by the clear-headed historians of philosophy. Descartes on substance, Locke on personal identity, Hume on cause — these are some salient examples. I found this out from twenty years of teaching history of philosophy (for which I had, otherwise, no special inclination) in tutorials at Oxford, and I can’t see how it is ever going to get better, given the vast breeding population of misguided introductory texts and *idées fixes*. What I say here about Descartes will, in any case, be brief, and will take a basic grounding in his ideas for granted.

We start, then, with Descartes — but with the real Descartes, not the ‘Descartes’ of present-day non-historical philosophy.<sup>38</sup> And the first things to note about him, I think, given that we (the generality of philosophers) refer to him so much, and so freely, and so inaccurately, and in so many contexts, are that he is

[1] a *direct realist*

about perception, in the sense in which it is correct to be a direct realist,<sup>39</sup>

[2] an *outright externalist*

about the content of experience, in the sense in which it is correct to be an externalist,<sup>40</sup> and

[3] a *representationalist*

about sensations, in the new and current sense of the term, in holding that all sensations are representational, i.e. ideas or representations of, and intentional with respect to, objective physical properties.<sup>41</sup>

[38] I am not guiltless, when it comes to misrepresenting him.

[39] According to direct realism what you now see is a book, and not in any sense a mental intermediary, a representation of a book. There is of course a mechanism, on Descartes’s view as on any sensible view, and there is also a certain sort of intermediary. But this is a wholly non-mental item (for Descartes, it is a brain-pattern), and one’s registration of that brain-pattern is one’s seeing the book (today we might replace ‘registration’ by something like ‘instantiation’). There is a beautifully clear exposition of Cartesian externalism, and of direct realism, in Arnauld 1683, especially pp 54–73 and the paragraph running from pp. 76–7; for a good discussion of this see Pyle 2003, ch. 4.

[40] The book itself is what my belief is about, part of the content of my belief.

[41] They are ‘confused’ ideas or representations rather than clear and distinct ones, on Descartes’s view. (The new use of ‘representationalism’ is pretty disastrous, because it is often used to mean the opposite of what it used to mean. See Strawson 2005.)

He takes it, of course, that experiential states have, essentially, ‘internal’, private, subjective, qualitative-experiential, ‘what-it’s-likeness’ (etc.) characteristics, over and above anything they are about or represent. He is, in other words,

[4] *a real realist about experience*

or consciousness (‘thinking’, in his terminology) as everybody agrees.<sup>42</sup> But there has never been any conflict between real realism about experience and any correct version of direct realism, externalism, or representationalism; contrary to what some have supposed.<sup>43</sup>

[1]–[3] are good to have in mind, but [4] is much more important for present purposes, and the next thing to note is that Descartes is

[5] *not a substance dualist*

in any conventional understanding of this term, for he does not think that the notion of substance has any meaning or intelligible reference or explanatory force insofar as a substance is supposed to be something whose existence is supposed to be in any way distinct from the existence of its properties (see e.g. Clarke 2003, chapters 1, 8, 9). In this sense the notion of substance is for him a dummy term, an empty placeholder.<sup>44</sup>

As is well known, Descartes thinks that there are only two kinds of substance: experiencing (‘thinking’) substance and extended substance.<sup>45</sup> Both have the maximally general ‘attributes’ or fundamental essential properties of duration and existence that any substance must have. They differ from each other only in their only remaining fundamental and essential property: the attribute of experience, in the one case, and the attribute of extension in the other. Many (including myself) find the term ‘attribute’ and its companion ‘mode’ off-putting and dusty-sounding, but the distinction between them is in fact very

[42] For ‘real’ realism as opposed to ‘looking-glass’ realism about experience see p. 5 n. 6.

[43] Nor is there any sort of conflict between real realism about the experiential and the thesis of the ‘transparency’ or ‘diaphanousness’ of perception (see e.g. Reid 1785, Essay II Chapter 16, Montague 2007, §8).

[44] Hume is gravely mistaken if he thinks he is ahead of Descartes in this matter.

[45] Descartes’s identification of physical existence with extendedness is very far from foolish, given his overall understanding of extendedness, and seem profoundly in accord with leading present-day scientific conceptions of the physical. So too his view that the universe is a plenum, or in other words that there is no such thing as a vacuum (‘plenum’ is the opposite of ‘vacuum’) — inasmuch as the so called ‘vacuum’ of present-day physics is seething with activity (particle-pair creation and annihilation) and is defined simply as the lowest energy-state of the field system, which has no ‘holes’ or true vacua at all.

clear, simple and useful.<sup>46</sup> ‘Mode’ is used for particular types of experiencing, or extendedness, ‘attribute’ is a ‘broader term’ used when one is ‘simply thinking in a more general way of what is in a substance’ (Descartes 1645/6, p. 280, 1644, p. 211). Plainly one can think quite unspecifically about experience in general, or extension in general. Equally plainly, these attributes cannot actually be possessed at any given time without being possessed in some particular manner or mode at that time. If something is extended it must be either triangular, or pyramidal, or cubic, or giraffe-shaped, etc., and it must also have a certain specific size. If something is experiencing, it must either be thinking, doubting, fearing, hoping, imagining, willing, feeling pain, sensing, etc. If it is hoping, it must be hoping that p, or that q or that r, and so on; if it is sensing, it must be sensing visually or olfactorily, and so on; if it is sensing visually, it must be sensing redly or bluely, and so on. Modes, then, can be more or less precisely specified.

How do the two attribute terms relate to the term ‘substance’? Discussing experience and extendedness in the *Principles* Descartes says that ‘the distinction between these notions and the notion of substance itself is a merely conceptual distinction’.<sup>47</sup> By this he means that although it is a distinction that can indeed be made in thought, it is not a ‘real’ distinction, where to say that there is a real distinction between two things is simply to say that each can exist in reality without the other existing. They are in that sense ontologically unentangled. Each can exist ‘separately’ in complete ontological separation from the other.

There is nothing mysterious or difficult about the expression ‘real distinction’; ‘real’ simply means ‘in reality’, ‘in concrete reality’. A real distinction is a distinction or separation that can exist in concrete reality or as Descartes puts it ‘outside our thought’. It is a distinction or separation that can exist independently of our thought as opposed to a distinction or separation that can be made only ‘in our thought’ (1645/6, p. 280). The ‘can’ means that a real distinction is not a matter of what things actually do exist separately, at any given time, but a matter of what things can concretely exist separately, a matter of what is possible as a matter of real, objective, mind-independent fact.<sup>48</sup>

[46] It is just a restriction of the equally old but currently more favoured distinction between ‘determinable’ properties like colour and their ‘determinate’ values like red or phthalo green or elephant’s-breath grey (an example used by Bernard Williams, with a humorous reference to paint manufacturers, in his introductory lectures in Cambridge in 1972–3).

[47] *Principles* 1.63 (1644, p. 215). Cottingham et al. have ‘conceptual distinction’ in place of ‘distinction of reason’.

[48] Note that the fact that an attribute cannot exist without existing in a certain mode means that there is no more a real distinction between a substance, considered at a given time, and

Consider triangularity and trilaterality (in a closed plane rectilinear figure). We can certainly make a genuine *conceptual* distinction between triangularity and trilaterality, but there is no *real* distinction between them, for neither of them can actually concretely exist without the other also existing. And the ground of this inseparability in reality is in fact a matter of identity, concrete identity, identity in the concrete, as it were. Any actually existing concrete case of triangularity is literally *identical* to the concrete case of trilaterality that it cannot exist without, for that in which the real existence of the one consists is the very same thing as that in which the real existence of the other consists.

The same goes, according to Descartes, for experiencing substance and the attribute of experiencing. Neither can exist without the other, any more than a thing can exist without itself. When he states, as he famously does, that the mind or soul or subject of experience does not and cannot exist in the absence of actually occurring conscious experience — when he holds that experience is an essential property of mind in this sense, a property that it can never lack — this is not some sort of odd and implausible stipulation on his part.<sup>49</sup> A mind in which no experience is going on is as impossible as a physical object without extension simply because there is, for Descartes, no real distinction between (a) the concrete existence of the attribute of thinking and (b) the concrete existence of thinking substance. His root — radical — idea about the nature of the subject of experience or soul is that it is somehow wholly and literally *constituted* of experience, i.e. of conscious experiencing: that is what *res cogitans* — a soul — is. A Cartesian soul is nothing like an immaterial soul as traditionally conceived. Rather, its whole being is experience, a matter of occurrent experiencing conceived of as some sort of inherently active phenomenon — so it obviously can't exist when there isn't any.<sup>50</sup> In the *Principles* Descartes talks of 'our soul or our thinking' as if the two terms were strictly interchangeable (1644, p. 184). Later he writes, seemingly unequivocally, that 'thinking', in being the essential attribute of thinking substance, 'must be considered as nothing else than thinking

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the particular modes that its attributes are exemplifying at that time, than there is between a substance and its attributes *tout court*. Its being, if I may say so, is its being — of interest, perhaps, to 'trope theorists'.

[49] This is how Locke polemically chooses to treat it (1689, p. 108 (2.1.10)).

[50] I record this point about Descartes in M1994, pp. 124-7; for a better statement see Strawson 2007, §9. The view raises puzzles that I can't address here; it seems that the process of conscious experiencing that constitutes the mind is also to be conceived as a 'potentiality'.

substance itself ..., that is, as mind' (1644, p. 215). In his *Notes against a Certain Broadsheet*, reiterating his official doctrine of the real distinction between mind and body in the face of Regius' most unwelcome exposure of his actual baseline view (see p. 214 below), he treats being a thing and being an attribute as effectively the same, saying of the attributes of extension and experience 'that the one is not a mode of the other *but is a thing, or attribute of a thing*, which can subsist without the other' (1648a, p. 299; my emphasis picks out two expressions that are offered as equivalent). Questioned on the point by Burman, he confirms that his view is that 'the attributes [of a substance], when considered collectively, are indeed identical with the substance' (1648b, p. 15).

Contrary quotations can be found — at one point in his conversations with Burman Descartes also speaks of substance as a 'substrate' — but his basic commitment is quite clear, and the matter is usefully adjudicated by Cottingham.<sup>51</sup> Descartes, as Broad remarked, 'was a man of genius with an extreme dislike of anything misty and confused' (Broad 1944, quoted by Kemp Smith 1952, p. 190), and when he seems equivocal it must be remembered that he is concerned not to wake the Church and the philosophers of the Schools by explicitly denying the existence of entities to whose existence they are committed ('I do not deny that...' is a recurring phrase). The trick, for Descartes, is to do one's philosophy using the conventional terminology, but without making any real substantive appeal to these entities, knowing that one's intelligent readers will see that this is what one has done. 'I wish above all that you would never propose any new opinions', he wrote to Regius in 1642,

but, while retaining all the old ones in name, only offer new arguments. No one could object to that, and anyone who understands your new arguments properly will conclude immediately from them what you mean. Thus, why did you need to reject substantial forms and real qualities explicitly?<sup>52</sup>

The standard picture of the immaterial soul or self, then, is nothing like Descartes's. According to the standard picture P1 there is [i] some

[51] Descartes 1648b, p. 17, Cottingham 1976, pp. 17, 77-9. Nadler agrees, noting that Descartes's 'considered position ... is that while there is a conceptual distinction between substance and attribute ... there is not a real distinction between them. Substance and attribute are in reality one and the same' (2006, p. 57). He goes on to point out that Spinoza also holds this view.

[52] Quoted by Clarke 2006, p. 224, see Descartes 1619-50, p. 205). Descartes had particular reason to ask Regius to be more circumspect because Regius was already publicly identified with the Cartesian cause.

sort of immaterial soul-substance or soul-stuff that is [ii] the *ground* or *bearer* of conscious experiencing and that [iii] can continue to exist even when there isn't any going on, and that therefore [iv] has some nature other than conscious experiencing.

Everyone agrees that Descartes rejects [iii], in holding that a mind or subject must always be experiencing, but his claim that 'each substance has one principal property which constitutes its nature or essence... and thinking *constitutes the nature of thinking substance*' (1644, p. 210, my emphasis) is often read as allowing, as in P2, [iv] that the soul has *some* other necessary manner of being that is not conscious experiencing. This reading is, however, very problematic, because to claim that something constitutes the nature of something is to claim that nothing else does, even if it has other essential attributes like temporal duration (and ultimate dependence on God).

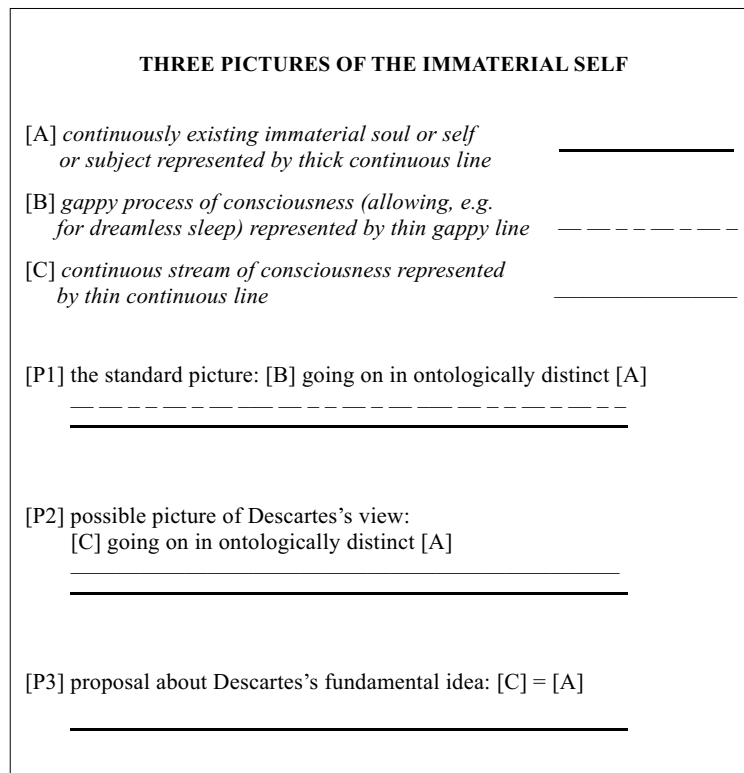


Diagram 1

Descartes, then, rejects all of [ii] to [iv], and accepts [i] only inasmuch as he takes it that there is no real distinction between a substance and its attribute. His picture is more like [P3]. There is ‘no real distinction, in the Cartesian sense, between a thing and its properties’ (Clarke 2003, p. 215). To that extent, Descartes is an attribute dualist or

[6] a *property dualist*.

Insofar as we seek ‘to keep the peace with the philosophers’ (1637b, p. 268) we employ the language of ‘inherence’ and ‘substance’; we speak of thought or extension as ‘inhering in a substance’; we agree that it is obvious that properties or ‘attributes ... must inhere in something if they are to exist’, for to say this is simply to say that they have to be somehow concretely instantiated, if they are to exist, ‘and we call the thing in which they inhere a substance’ (1641, p. 156, my emphasis). ‘Inherence in a substance’ is, however, and to repeat, a dummy phrase used simply to express the fact that the properties or attributes in question are concretely instantiated (‘exist’). The word ‘substance’ does no separate ontological work; the clear implication of *Principles* 1.11 is that ‘substance’ simply means ‘not nothing’, ‘existent’ (1644, p. 196).

It may be added that being able to exist on one’s own (God apart) is a sufficient condition of being a substance, on Descartes’s view. Thus he notes, strikingly, that those who think that ‘the heaviness of a stone is a real property distinct from the stone’ deny that heaviness is a substance, but ‘in fact they conceive of it as a substance because they think that it is real and that it is possible ... for it to exist without the stone’ (letter of 29 July 1648, 1619–50, p. 358).

This point will be important later on. For the moment, the proposal is that Descartes is a property dualist in any sense in which he is a substance dualist, and that to say that he is a substance dualist is, on his terms, to add nothing to the claim that he is a property dualist. Descartes is not, therefore, a ‘Cartesian dualist’, as this term is usually employed. The word ‘substance’ is furthermore subsidiary to the word ‘property’ or ‘attribute’, being a mere placeholder that does no more than express concrete existence. Descartes’s dualism is completely and more clearly expressed simply as the claim that the attribute of experience can possibly be concretely instantiated without the attribute of extension being concretely instantiated.

It is even better expressed as the claim that there can be experiential *being*, or experiential *reality*, without there being extended being, or extended reality; for this way of putting it avoids words like ‘property’



and ‘attribute’ and the conventional metaphysics that they force on most people’s minds. The word ‘property’, in particular, has proved lethally dangerous in recent discussion of the mind-body problem, and is best avoided altogether.

If either of two things can be concretely instantiated without the other being concretely instantiated then there is as noted a real distinction between them, in Descartes’s terminology. Now the relation of *being really distinct from* is evidently symmetrical, so that although Descartes concentrates on arguing that the experiential can exist without the physical, he also accepts the converse, including, of course, the possibility that

[P] there could exist beings who were physically qualitatively identical to experiencing human beings but who were not fully qualitatively identical to them because their existence involved no experience

a view defended in our day by philosophers like Chalmers, whose ‘zombie’ argument against physicalism is Descartes’s argument run in reverse — the two of them make exactly the same sort of conceivability claim — with the restriction described in [P].

Goff reverses Chalmers, arguing that the experiential could exist without the physical, and in particular for the possibility that

[Q] there could exist beings who were experientially qualitatively identical to experiencing human beings but who were not fully qualitatively identical to them because their existence involved nothing physical<sup>53</sup>

and is on the whole a classical Cartesian. It is, however, arguable that he goes further than Descartes on this point, because Descartes thinks that the truth of [Q], as opposed to the truth of the weaker claim that

[R] experiential reality can exist without anything physical existing

requires the existence of a supernatural power (whether it be an omnipotent god or a *malin génie*) putting in some special work. On Descartes’s view, the experience or thinking of an immaterial mind unconnected with a body will be restricted to operations of pure reason — things like logic and mathematics. It will need specifically targeted supernatural assistance to have sensation, personal memory, imagination and so on, for all these things essentially involve the

[53] Or indeed anything else. See Goff 2006.

brain, on Descartes's view, so far as our actual daily existence is concerned. But perhaps Goff thinks the same.

Many want to say that they are property dualists but not substance dualists, and call themselves 'property dualists' precisely in order to distinguish themselves from 'substance dualists'. As remarked in RMP (p. 28), I think that this position is incoherent if it amounts to anything more than the claim that there are two seemingly very different sorts of properties, and Descartes agrees. The term 'property dualism' has been used in many ways, and has in consequence been rendered more or less useless, but the key question for property dualists (I am assuming that they are dualists with respect to the experiential and the extended, the conscious and the physical) is perhaps this:

Are the two property-types essentially mutually exclusive in such a way that the being (the concrete realization) of one of them cannot be the same thing as the being (the concrete realization) of the other?

(triangularity and trilaterality provide us with an immediately apparent example of properties where the concrete realization of the one is the concrete realization of the other), or perhaps

Is there nothing the full being of which can be both the being of extension (or physical existence) and the being of experience (or consciousness)?<sup>54</sup>

The question for those who call themselves property dualists, in other words, is whether they are *ontological* property dualists.

In public Descartes never stopped arguing for ontological property dualism in this sense.<sup>55</sup> That said, he never found a reply to what was perhaps the most vivid objection ever put to him, by Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia<sup>56</sup> when she famously wrote:

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[54] Note that use of the word 'being', while not fudging anything, crucially avoids the distinction between object/substance and property, which cannot properly stand up in philosophical contexts like the present one.

[55] It seems that most of those who call themselves property dualists today are also ontological property dualists when they say, for example, that experiential (consciousness) properties are non-physical properties. It follows, on the present view, that they are therefore also substance dualists.

[56] 1618-80. Her mother was a Scot, and she was the niece of King Charles I of England, then engaged in civil war.

I have to admit that it would be easier for me to attribute matter and extension to the soul than to attribute to an immaterial thing the capacity to move and be moved by a body<sup>57</sup>

and it is striking how keen he was on his empirical argument against materialism,<sup>58</sup> which aims to show that a wholly material thing, a mere machine, could never respond to an potentially infinite number of previously unencountered statements in the way that even the ‘dullest of men’ can.<sup>59</sup> I think he was right, in his time, to find this argument attractive, but it would have been pointless if it had been clear that his *a priori* arguments worked.<sup>60</sup> Worse, it would have been a tactical error to propound it, insofar as to do so is to suggest that the *a priori* arguments are not conclusive. But then, the *a priori* arguments were at the time thought to be inconclusive: the key argument was challenged in every one of the seven sets of Objections to his Meditations, published in 1641–2.

### 9. Real Descartes [2]

I have set out the sense in which ‘substance’ is for Descartes an empty term. One might say that it attaches an existence operator (an ‘it exists’ operator) to a property conceived in the abstract, and does absolutely nothing else. And yet we may I think add something important to it, for when Descartes writes to Henry More he says that he conceives ‘incorporeal substances ... as sorts of powers or forces’ — i.e. as something essentially active, in a large sense of ‘active’ (letter of 5 February 1649, 1619–50, p. 361). There is no space for a detailed discussion of this, but one might say that Descartes conceives of thinking — conscious experiencing — as a kind of ‘powerful process’ in some sense of the word ‘process’ that does not require that there be a

[57] Letter of 20 June 1643, quoted in Descartes 1619–50, p. 220 n. In his letter to More of 15 April 1649 Descartes, still without an adequate reply, says rather touchingly that ‘it is no disgrace for a philosopher’ to think that an incorporeal substance can move a body (1619–50, p. 375).

[58] I use ‘physicalism’ and materialism’ interchangeably.

[59] 1637a, p. 140. Note that Descartes says only that ‘it is *for all practical purposes* impossible for a machine to have enough different organs to make it act in all the contingencies of life in the way in which our reason makes us act’ (1619–50, p. 365, my emphasis). Note also that the argument aims only to show that a material thing could not have reason. Descartes did not think he could rule out the possibility that a machine, e.g. a non-human animal, could have sensations or experience.

[60] It is interestingly discussed by Chomsky, whose work helped to undermine it once and for all (see e.g. Chomsky 1968). It is a question whether Descartes would also have thought the argument undermined by the fact that there are 10<sup>11</sup> neurons, with many more interconnections than that. The answer, I think, is ‘Very probably’.

substance distinct from the process in which the process can be said to go on or occur, any more than it requires any fundamental ontological or ‘real’ distinction between concretely existing attributes and substance, or indeed between concretely existing attributes and processes.

I think Descartes has his basic metaphysics exactly right, just as he has almost everything else right, in spite of his central, unsuccessful *a priori* argument for the real distinction in the *Meditations*, which is the only thing holding back his otherwise utterly comprehensive — one might say ruthless — physicalism.<sup>61</sup> I am inclined to go a step further, for the phrase quoted in the last paragraph occurs in a passage that can be read as a well hidden acknowledgement by Descartes of the possible truth of (real) materialism, given the analogy it employs. He says that he conceives incorporeal substances — which, remember, are themselves nothing but thinking or experience (1644, p. 215) —

as sorts of powers or forces, which although they can act upon extended things, are not themselves extended — *just as fire is in white-hot iron without itself being iron*.<sup>62</sup>

Now this is only an analogy, but it bears comparison with a proposal in a letter to Arnauld written a few months previously, in which, not for the first time, he uses heaviness as an analogy for the ability for incorporeal mind to move body. Speaking of those who seek (vacuously) to explain the movement of a falling stone towards the centre of the earth by appeal to the property of ‘heaviness’, he says that

it is no harder for us to understand how the mind moves the body than it is for them to understand how such heaviness moves a stone downwards (1619–50, p. 358)

and here too one may find a concealed acknowledgement, in someone who was, for all his extreme circumspection, truly and utterly devoted to expressing the truth, that the mind may not in the end be a ‘real quality’ relative to body, i.e. may not in the end be something that can

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[61] I have in mind the basic argument that can be variously sliced — as the Conceivability Argument, the Argument from Clear and Distinct Ideas, and the Argument from Doubt — and whose unsoundness was as remarked asserted in every one of the seven sets of Objections to the *Meditations* published in 1641–2. (I put aside the almost universally derided Argument from the Indivisibility of the Mind, for although there is a sense in which it is correct on its own terms, it is well answered by Kant in his second Paralogism, and by others before him, insofar as it is supposed to offer any support for immortality.)

[62] 1619–50, p. 361, my emphasis. Descartes is here replying to a passage in which More is pressing the same point as Princess Elizabeth.

exist without body.<sup>63</sup> Descartes the indefatigable dissector was in every other pore of his philosophy a physicalist (a real physicalist, in my terms), as just remarked, and had a few months earlier conceded to Burman, directly contrary to his official position, that ‘we cannot claim to have adequate knowledge of anything, including even bodies, and that we are obliged to work within the limitations of our concepts even if we recognize those limits’ (Clarke 2006, p. 385); from which it appears to follow that we cannot claim to be able to rule out the possible corporeality of mind.<sup>64</sup>

My proposal, then, is that in his letters *Descartes acknowledges the possibility that physicalism, i.e. real physicalism, may be true* — an idea that was already familiar in his time. The case for the proposal may seem weak, but it cannot be otherwise, for Descartes was extremely cautious in what he wrote down and would certainly not have wished it to be otherwise.<sup>65</sup>

He had used the analogy of heaviness before, in a letter to Princess Elizabeth. She had replied robustly, by telling him (in Kenny’s enjoyable words) ‘that she was too stupid to understand how the discarded idea of a falsely attributed quality could help us to understand how an immaterial substance could move a body, especially as Descartes was about to refute the notion of heaviness<sup>66</sup> in his *Physics*’ (letter of 20 June, 1643, 1619–50, p. 220 n.). There are I think three possible readings of her response. First, and wholly implausibly, given that Descartes was himself responding to her earlier and famous protest that she could not conceive how an immaterial thing could move or be moved by a material thing, Elizabeth simply did not register the most striking implication of the analogy, to wit that mind, too, like heaviness might not in the end be a ‘real quality’ capable of existing apart

[63] See the passage about heaviness quoted on p. 211. It is well concealed because the argument is at this point *ad hominem* against the Schools.

[64] For an excellent discussion of ‘adequate’ as ‘opposed to ‘inadequate’ knowledge, and the associated but different distinction between ‘complete’ and ‘incomplete’ knowledge, see Yablo 1990, pp. 158–77. Effectively the same distinctions — and claims — are in play in the current discussion of the mind-body problem.

[65] His caution was not without reason, in Europe in the first half of the seventeenth century, although he was perhaps also a little paranoid, if only in the looser sense of the term. For a good account of his caution, his reaction to the Inquisition’s condemnation of Galileo in 1633, his awareness of those whom the Inquisition had put to death, his concealment of and frequent changes of his address, his efforts to keep in with groups likely to be offended and alienated by his overtly stated ideas, see Clarke 2006. Writers at that time had exactly the same sorts of skills of concealment and interpretation as those that evolved under Communist rule in the twentieth century (and at many other times and places in human history).

[66] To refute the idea that heaviness was a ‘real quality’, i.e. a property capable in principle of existing apart from body. See again the passage quoted on p. 211.

from body. Second, she did register it, but was not prepared to let Descartes get away with the subterfuge. Third, and most plausibly, she saw it quite clearly, and was in her own equally ingenious way making it quite clear to him that she had seen it. The second and third reading are not strictly incompatible, and Descartes's reply can in turn be seen either as an evasion or as a similarly veiled acknowledgement of her point:

I did not worry about the fact that the analogy with heaviness was lame because such qualities are not real, as people imagine them to be. This was because I thought that Your Highness was already completely convinced that the soul is a substance distinct from the body (1619–50, p. 228).

This, one might say, is a bit rich, and Descartes goes on to close down the discussion in the next paragraph, remarking that it is 'very harmful to occupy one's intellect in frequently meditating upon' metaphysical matters. He wants the exchange to go no further, and it doesn't.

The proposal, then, is that Descartes may be at bottom a real physicalist, in my sense, or rather that he is well aware of this position as a possibility, and suspects (like Locke, who learnt so much from the debates in which Descartes was involved) that it may true. It is, of course, a possibility that removes a host of difficulties for him, the Princess-Elizabeth difficulty foremost among them, although it is equally obviously incompatible with his official view.

It may be objected that it is really not very helpful to say that Descartes is a real physicalist. More cautiously, less provocatively, more in Descartes's idiom, we may say that he is in the end not a real-distinctionist, i.e.

[7] *not a completely convinced or committed real distinctionist*

i.e. not someone who thinks he really can know for sure that the mind can exist apart from body; and that he is to that extent open to being a

[8] *a realistic monist*

i.e. open to a version of the position to which Spinoza was inexorably led by Descartes's work, and later explicitly adopted, in his own special metaphysical idiom (see §14 below).

The notion of monism is in a sense not helpful, as already remarked (pp. 7, 188), and monism need not be adopted as a positive thesis. It is, to be sure, Occamically agreeable. It is also quite *overwhelmingly* natural as soon as we forget philosophy, religion, fear of death, and so on, and simply consider ourselves, alive now, with our demanding bodies

and streaming consciousnesses, so evidently substantially unified, physical, in every aspect.<sup>67</sup> Still, all we need to do at this point is to grant that we cannot know that there is not some good and fundamental sense in which there is only kind of stuff. It is, as Descartes says to Hobbes,

perfectly reasonable ... for us to use different *names* for substances that we recognize as being the subjects of quite different acts or accidents ..., and ... to leave until later the examination of whether these names signify different things [the dualist option] or one and the same thing [the monist option].<sup>68</sup>

A final piece of evidence, I propose, is provided by Regius's *Broad-sheet*. Regius was at one point Descartes's closest intellectual ally, and was well known as a Cartesian, but by 1647 they had fallen out. Regius was irritated by what he saw as Descartes's dishonesty, or lack of courage, and in 1647 published a somewhat careless and provocative broadsheet in which he was bold enough to express something that was perilously close to — indeed was — Descartes's own real view:

(2) So far as the nature of things is concerned, the possibility seems to be open that the mind can be either a substance or a mode of a corporeal substance. Or, if we are to follow some philosophers, who hold that thought and extension are attributes which are present in certain substances, as in subjects, then since the attributes are not opposites but merely different, there is no reason why the mind should not be a sort of attribute co-existing with extension in the same subject, although the one attribute is not included in the concept of the other. For whatever we can conceive of can exist. Now, it is conceivable that the mind is some such item; for none of these implies a contradiction. Therefore it is possible that the mind is some such item. (1647, pp. 294-5)

He ended his broadsheet in an extremely aggressive way, with a direct quotation from Descartes's own work that directly implied that Descartes was concealing his true views: 'No one acquires a great reputation for piety more easily than the superstitious or hypocritical person' (Regius 1647, p. 296, quoting Descartes 1644, p. 191).

Descartes, understandably, felt very put out, not to say threatened, and replied with a thick version of his official view in order to try to

[67] Compare P.F. Strawson's thesis about the 'primitiveness of our concept of a person' (1959, ch. 3). Descartes is also anxious to stress the *extreme* intimacy of the 'substantial union' of mind and body within his official dualistic theory.

[68] 1641, p. 124, my emphasis. Here as so often Descartes talks of 'substance' in the accepted way, without advertising his substance/property identity thesis. Hobbes does, however, pick up on it, and Descartes duly placates him (1641, p. 125; see also Strawson 2007).

cover the damage. I do not, however, think that there is any real doubt that Regius had expressed Descartes's true and sensibly agnostic view. The fact that this is in effect an '*a posteriori* physicalist' view is further illustration of the foolishness of the present-day debate in continuing to ignore the historical debate and turning Descartes into a silly straw man.

In conclusion, then, I suggest that in addition to being [1] a direct realist, [2] an externalist, [3] a certain sort of representationalist, and — this at least no one denies — [4] a real realist about experience, Descartes is also [5] not a substance dualist in any conventional sense of the term, and certainly not in any sense that is incompatible with being a [6] property dualist. Finally, he knows that he cannot actually definitively rule out the possibility that there is no real distinction between mind and body, and indeed suspects that this may be the case. To that extent he is [7] not a truly convinced real-distinctionist with respect to mind and body, and is to that same extent [8] a realistic monist, or at least someone who does not rule it out.

I am aware that textual evidence can be brought against this proposal. It is after all part of the present proposal, and is in any case independently well established, that Descartes had reason to conceal certain of his views, and did so,<sup>69</sup> and was in many respects very evasive in his dealings with others (see, again, Clarke 2006). What this means practically, though, is that it is no good simply piling up contrary quotations against the current interpretation.<sup>70</sup> What one has to do is to feel one's way into the intellectual heart of this man who went to the butcher's for brains when he wanted to understand the mind, and was so very fiercely concerned with reaching the truth whatever the cost, even if it required considerable public circumspection, even deception.<sup>71</sup>

[69] Stopping the publication of his book *Le monde*, for example, on hearing of Galileo's condemnation by the Inquisition.

[70] This is what usually happened in the so-called 'Hume wars', as orthodox Hume scholarship responded to the unorthodox interpretation of Hume put forward most visibly by Wright (1983), Craig (1987) and myself (1989). There was very little attempt to confront any of the central arguments behind the new interpretation.

[71] It's worth noting that Descartes did not think one could prove the immortality of the soul, and when the second edition of the *Meditations* appeared he took care to delete the words 'in which the immortality of the soul is demonstrated' from the subtitle, for they had been added in the first edition without his knowledge or consent. See e.g. Clarke 2006, pp. 202–3. Clarke also quotes Martin Schook, who expresses a common contemporary opinion, if with more than usual force, when he writes in 1643 that Descartes, 'while giving the impression of combatting atheists with his invincible arguments, ... injects the venom of atheism delicately and secretly into those who, because of their feeble minds, never notice the serpent hiding in the grass' (2006, p. 235).



But let me end this section with the more moderate words with which Desmond Clarke concludes his book *Descartes's Theory of Mind*:

Descartes's dualism was an expression of the extent of the theoretical gap between a science of matter in motion, within the conceptual limits of Cartesian physics, and the descriptions of our mental lives that we formulate from the first-person perspective of our own thinking.... The properties that feature in these very different perspectives

are not, however,

sufficient to justify the conclusion that it is impossible, in principle, to develop an explanation of human thought by including new theoretical entities in one's concept of matter. The underlying support for Descartes's property dualism was not a metaphysical theory of substances, or a plausible argument about the distinctness of properties, but an impoverished concept of matter ....

Was Descartes, then, a substance dualist? Yes and no. He was not a substance dualist if that means that one explains the human mind by reference to a non-material substance. For Descartes, substances as such are non-explanatory. We speak about different substances in the same way as we speak about ... properties that are theoretically irreconcilable. Descartes acknowledged that he had no theory about the way in which thinking might be caused or explained by the known properties of matter, and he was persuaded that such a theory was most implausible. For that reason he was a property dualist. However he also argued unconvincingly in the *Meditations* that the implausibility of finding a theoretical link between thinking and the properties of matter implied a 'real distinction' between the substances to which such properties belong. Cartesian dualism, therefore, is not a theory of human beings but a provisional acknowledgement of failure, an index of the work that remains to be done before a viable theory of the human mind becomes available (2003, p. 258)

As already remarked, the fundamental objection to his central argument for the real distinction between mental reality and physical (extended) reality occurs in all seven sets of Objections published in 1641–2.

I want now to try to regiment the key claims in the mind-body debate. First, though, a brief note about 'supervenience'; for nearly all those who call themselves physicalists accept something called the 'supervenience thesis', so far as the relation between physical and experiential phenomena is concerned.

### 10. 'Supervenience'

The supervenience thesis as formulated by Joseph Priestley in 1778 is that

[i] 'different systems of matter, organized exactly alike, ... would feel and think exactly alike in the same circumstances'.<sup>72</sup>

He does not consider the converse supervenience thesis

[ii] if different minds thought and felt exactly alike in the same circumstances, then they would be identical in respect of their material constitution

and most, understandably, think [ii] is obviously false. In fact, when people talk today of the supervenience thesis in the philosophy of mind they usually mean [i] plus the denial of [ii], although [ii] makes no supervenience claim at all. I avoid the notion altogether when discussing the mind-body problem, because although it is perfectly clear it has never been of any real help, and has been very unhelpful in appearing so helpful. It is, however, popular, so let me record my view that although [i] is surely correct, given the truth of physicalism, the denial of [ii] may not be correct: not if we are realistic about the nature of mental reality, i.e. the nature of actual concrete mental contents.<sup>73</sup>

The argument for rejecting [ii] seems impregnable, for you and I both believe that grass is green, and so do speakers of many different languages, and our brains are most certainly not identical in respect of whatever it is about them that makes it true of us that we believe that grass is green. True — but this fails to address the real issue. If you understand [ii] in such a way that this gives a sufficient reason to reject [ii], then you are right to reject [ii]. The mental entities that really matter, however, the mental entities that are actually in play when we get down to the concrete business of real metaphysics and raise the question of the truth or otherwise of [ii], are not things like beliefs, or any other such dispositional phenomena. Nor are they particular occurrent conscious phenomena like individual sensations, if these are considered in any sort of isolation from the total experiential fields of which they are a part. We can slice reality in many ways in thought and language, but the mental realities that we have to do with when we are being metaphysically serious are total experiential fields, total

[72] 1778, p. 47; the same idea may be said to be succinctly expressed by Spinoza: 'as the body is, so is the soul' (c. 1662, p. 96).

[73] John Heil set me off on this line of thought in 1993. See Heil 1992, pp. 133-4, M1994, p. 49.

occurrent conscious experiential states considered at any given moment, the precise details of whose contents far outrun any possible human description. These are the items that we must consider when we examine the supervenience thesis as a thesis about the relation between the mental and non-mental (experiential and non-experiential) being of the brain. These are the only mental items that are actually to be found when mental reality, i.e. occurrent mental reality, is considered independently of any intellectual abstraction (any ‘conceptual distinction’, in Descartes’s terms) that allows us to consider it, or a segment of it, in a merely partial manner. The question is then this: could two human beings X and Y really be in identical total experiential states, qualitatively speaking, between times  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , and still be in qualitatively different brain states? Could they in other words be identical in their ‘E features’, between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  and yet differ in their ‘B features’?<sup>74</sup>

Yes, plainly, for their brains are involved in a great deal of activity that has nothing to do with their current experience, or so we may assume. This, though, is uninteresting, and we can tighten the question by putting aside all those things about their brains that have nothing to do with their current experience, together with all those things that are merely causally antecedent to their current experience. Having done so, we consider only those B features that are — how to put it? — directly constitutive of? — ‘realizers’ of? — well, how else to put it? — their E features between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ . We may call these the B\* features, and then ask again whether X and Y can really be identical in their E features, between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  and yet differ in their B\* features. Many, I think, will still confidently answer Yes, rejecting [ii]. Plainly, they will say, X and Y can possibly have exactly the same E features while differing in the precise nature of their B\* features. But it is by now far from clear that this answer is obviously right.

On one view (worth noting because it illustrates the treacherousness of the terms in which the mind-body problem is discussed) it can’t be right. This is because the tightening of the question has produced a version of the *identity* theory about the relation between B\* features and E features. But if a Yes answer is to be possible on the terms of the identity theory, then the theory must involve the assumption that B\* features involve something more or other than E features. But this assumption is necessarily false, if the theory is really an

[74] I take B features to include E features, so that the question whether their B features can differ from their E features arises only given the standard assumption that their B features include features that are not E features. One could call the relevant B features ‘non-E features’, but it is not necessary.

identity theory, by the basic logic of the identity relation. This is an old point that must surface whatever terms one uses: where can the gap be, for any supposed identity theorist, between radical eliminativism and panpsychism?

I am going to put this objection aside, however, because many will think that X and Y can plainly differ in their B\* features while being identical in their E features even after the tightening has been carried out. (It follows that they can't be identity theorists, if they are real physicalists who are neither radical eliminativists nor panpsychists; I'd rather not enquire further into what they are.) It is, they will say, plainly possible that X and Y should differ in their B\* features, even those B\* features that are directly constitutive of their E features,<sup>75</sup> while being identical in their E features. Many of us have been brought up on this 'token-identity' possibility and find it very comfortable, and do not think it is threatened by the restriction of attention to colossally complex total experiential fields that is required by a serious metaphysical approach to the question.

Is it a real possibility? Before trying to answer this question, let me first note that the claim is restricted to physical beings. We do not need to rule out the possibility that two creatures in different universes made of fundamentally different kinds of substantial stuff could be in qualitatively identical experiential states. If we knew what God knows about what sorts of substantial constitution are possible for minds, we might see that even this two-universe possibility is not in fact a real possibility; but we don't need to pursue the matter.

Let me also note that I have, in talking of X's and Y's experience, put panpsychism aside. I have put aside all the 'microsubjects' that constitute their brains according to my kind of panpsychism. I am sticking to the point of view of the 'top' subjects, as it were, 'macrosubjects' of experience of the kind that you and I, say, experience ourselves as being in our ordinary everyday experience. Perhaps there are still other subjects of experience in our brains between the macrosubjects and the microsubjects, relatively high-level but still subsidiary subjects, but we may put these, too, aside. The present question is whether subjects of experience X and Y can be E-identical and B\*-different.<sup>76</sup>

One might first reply that it may not be physically possible even if it is logically possible — that it is at the very least an open question

[75] These are the only ones that we are considering, since tightening the question.

[76] I am not here worried about the precise nature of these 'top' subjects of experience, or whether they have sharp identity conditions.

whether it is physically possible. In reply to that, it will be said that it must be possible for *X* to have one electron (or indeed a million) in a different place, as compared with *Y*, between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , without *X* and *Y* being E-different — in which case there can indeed be B\*-difference without E-difference. But we must then go back to the notions of realization and direct constitution. Is this electron indeed itself directly constitutive of, realizatory of, any E features? If it is not it is irrelevant; if it is, then it is again not clear whether *X* and *Y* can be E-identical and B\*-different.

There is more to say about this question, but I am going to leave it here and conclude by recording my suspicion that if we approach the question of supervenience realistically, and as real physicalists, in the way I have sketched, then we have good reason to suppose it to be two-way. If we can avoid incoherence in setting up an interesting, substantive account of what features of the world make supervenience claim [i] true, then the most plausible — if not the only — realistic supposition will be that [ii] is also true. It will not only be true, in other terms, that

[i] physical qualitative identity entails experiential qualitative identity

but also that

[ii] experiential qualitative identity entails physical qualitative identity (in the relevant parts of the brain).<sup>77</sup>

‘But the panpsychist supposition that the existence of a human brain between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  necessarily involves the existence of other — many — subjects of experience requires one to say that there is, irreducibly, more than one experiential field in question, and therefore no such thing as the “total experiential field”.’ Reply. The total experiential field in question is the experiential field of the ‘top’ subject. More generally, what is in question is the total quantum of experientiality associated with a brain, and the question is whether two brains could ever have the same total quantum of experientiality and be physically different in any way. The proposal is that the answer is No even if we stick to relatively high-level subjects of experience. If we go on to include the microsubjects (the experientiality of the ultimates) the No cannot be less secure, but the present claim is independent of any such version of panpsychism.

[77] It should be unnecessary to note that physical qualitative identity entails identity of physical law.

### 11. The Basic Framework [1]

I want now to try to make a clear case for realistic monism by putting everything on the table in full view. My aim is to mark out a framework in which to consider the objections to RMP, although I cannot hope to reply to all the points raised by the other contributors to this book. I will begin with a list of theses about this universe (the only object of my concern), some of which have already been mentioned and some of which have no neat name. The list has a somewhat hectic air, because the linked theses constantly jostle each other and overlap, and the real action begins in §13.<sup>78</sup>

The first thesis is

*Stuff Monism*

[1] There is a fundamental sense in which there is only one kind of stuff in reality

a thesis that I accept for purposes of argument without further comment.<sup>79</sup> [1] contrasts with

*Thing Monism*

[2] There is a fundamental sense in which there is only one thing in reality

a thesis that I put aside, at least for now and for purposes of argument, aware that there are some rather good reasons for thinking that [2] may be the best thing to say at the level of fundamental ontology.<sup>80</sup>

The next thesis is an *a posteriori* certainty

*The Experience thesis*

[3] There is experiential reality, experiential being<sup>81</sup>

[78] There is no need to try to remember the names of the theses, many of which I will not use again. For another brief but searching survey of the geography, see Nagel 1986, pp. 28–32, 46–53.

[79] The trouble with ‘substance monism’ is that ‘substance’ has both a mass-term use, which gives [1], and a count-noun use, which gives [2] below. In §8 I use ‘substance dualism’ in a standard way to contrast with ‘property dualism’, and will continue to do so when it seems most natural, but on the present terms ‘substance dualism’ is properly called ‘stuff dualism’.

[80] A compelling present-day version of this view is the view that spacetime is the only thing that exists, and that all particles, for example, are to be ‘explained as various modes of vibration of tiny one-dimensional rips in spacetime known as strings’ (Weinberg 1997, p. 20). On this view, then, we are made of spacetime, and recent work on loop quantum gravity also appears to support this idea. (If one’s conception of spacetime makes it seem implausible, or even impossible, then one needs to rethink one’s conception of spacetime.)

[81] I give an argument for this — insofar as one is needed, or possible — in RMP (p. 7 n. 7) and M1994 (pp. 51–2).

**THE BASIC FRAMEWORK AT A GLANCE**

*Metaphysical theses*

- [1] There is a fundamental sense in which there is only one kind of stuff in reality (*Stuff Monism*)
- [2] There is a fundamental sense in which there is only one thing in reality (*Thing Monism*)
- [3] There is experiential reality or being (*Experience thesis*)
- [4] There cannot be experience without a subject of experience (*Subject thesis 1*)
- [5] There cannot be a subject of experience without experience (*Subject thesis 2*)
- [6] There is physical reality or being (*Physicality thesis*)
- [7] All reality is either experiential or physical (*Only-Experiential-and-Physical thesis*)
- [8] There is only one kind of stuff. It has experiential reality and physical reality and no other kind of reality (*Realistic Monism*) [from [1], [3], [6], [7]]
- [9] Experiential reality can exist without any physical reality existing (*Real Distinction thesis 1*)
- [10] Physical reality can exist without any experiential reality existing (*Real Distinction thesis 2*)
- [11] Experiential reality can exist without any extended reality existing (*Real Distinction thesis\* 1*)
- [12] Extended reality can exist without any experiential reality existing (*Real Distinction thesis\* 2*)
- [13] Experiential reality of *any kind* can exist without any physical (extended) reality existing (*Real Distinction thesis<sup>+</sup> 1*)
- [14] Physical/extended reality can exist *in any arrangement* without any experiential reality existing (*Real Distinction thesis<sup>+</sup> 2*)
- [15] Experiential reality cannot possibly *be* physical reality (*Cartesian Intuition 1*)
- [16] Physical reality cannot possibly *be* experiential reality (*Cartesian Intuition 2*)
- [17] There is only physical reality (*Physicalism*)
- [18] All experiential being is physical being (*Experiential Physicalism*) [from [3], [17]]
- [19] All physical being involves experiential being (given that physicalism is true) (*Weak Panpsychism*)
- [20] All physical being is experiential being (*Pure Panpsychism*)
- [21] At least some ultimates are experience-involving (*Micropsychism*)
- [22] At least some ultimates are (wholly a matter of) experiential being (*Micropsychism strengthened*)
- [23] All physical reality is (at bottom) the same stuff (*Homogeneity thesis*)
- [24] There is non-experiential being (*Non-experientiality thesis*) [compare [6]]
- [25] All (concrete) being involves experiential being (*Weak Panpsychism restated*)
- [26] All being is experiential being (*Pure Panpsychism restated*)

**Metaphysical theses** (cont.)

- [27] All reality is (at bottom) the same stuff (*Homogeneity thesis* restated)
- [0!] All non-experiential reality is experiential reality and conversely (*The Experiential = Non-experiential Thesis*)
- [28] Experiential reality cannot be non-experiential reality (*Experiential ≠ Non-experiential thesis 1*)
- [29] Non-experiential reality cannot be experiential reality (*Experiential ≠ Non-experiential thesis 2*)
- [28] Experiential reality cannot be wholly non-experiential reality (*Experiential ≠ Non-experiential thesis 1 emphatic*)
- [29] Wholly non-experiential reality cannot be experiential reality (*Experiential ≠ Non-experiential thesis 2 emphatic*)
- [[3]+[24]] There is experiential reality, there is non-experiential reality (*Fundamental Duality thesis*)
- [30] Experiential reality cannot emerge from wholly and utterly non-experiential reality (*No-Radical-Emergence thesis 1*)
- [31] Non-experiential reality cannot emerge from wholly and utterly experiential reality (*No-Radical-Emergence thesis 2*)
- [32] All physical reality is — in itself, in its fundamental nature — wholly non-experiential reality (*Mindless Matter thesis*)
- [33] All facts are (fully) determined by facts about ultimates (*Smallism*)
- [34] All reality is either experiential or non-experiential (*The Only-Experiential-and-Non-experiential Thesis*) [compare [7]]
- [35] There is only one fundamental kind of stuff. It has both experiential reality and non-experiential reality. There is no other kind of reality (*Fundamental-Duality Monism*) [compare [8]]
- [36] Reality is substantially single. All reality is experiential and all reality is non-experiential. Experiential and non-experiential being exist in such a way that neither can be said to be based in or realized by or in any way asymmetrically dependent on the other (etc.) (*Equal-Status Fundamental-Duality monism*)

**Epistemological theses**

- [37] I am acquainted with the essential nature of experience generally considered—i.e. with whatever all possible experiences have in common just insofar as they are indeed experiences—just in having experience (*General Revelation Thesis*)
- [38/39] In the case of any particular experience, I am acquainted with the essential nature of that particular experience just in having it (*(Local) Revelation Thesis*)
- [40] In the case of any particular experience, I am acquainted with the whole essential nature of the experience just in having it (*Full Revelation Thesis*)
- [41] In the case of any particular experience, I am acquainted with the essential nature of the experience in certain respects, at least, just in having it (*Partial Revelation Thesis*)



to which we may immediately subjoin the necessary truths discussed in §6

*The Subject thesis*

- [4] There cannot be experience without a subject of experience  
 [5] There cannot be a subject of experience without experience<sup>82</sup>

and a standard assumption

*The Physicality thesis*

- [6] There is physical reality, physical being.

I make this assumption myself except where I explicitly question it, and I question it only for terminological reasons, i.e. because the way in which the word 'physical' is standardly used may well mean that I would do better not to use it as I do.<sup>83</sup>

My next assumption, for convenience of argument, and alongside Descartes (but not, say, Spinoza), is

*The Only-Experiential-and-Physical Thesis*

- [7] All reality (or being) is either experiential or physical.

[1], [3], [6] and [7] entail

*Realistic Monism*

- [8] There is only one kind of stuff and it has both experiential reality and physical reality and no other kind of reality.

Consider next

*The Real Distinction Thesis*

- [9] Experiential reality can exist without any physical reality existing  
 [10] Physical reality can exist without any experiential reality existing.

If you hold that physical reality is necessarily extended,<sup>84</sup> or indeed, with Descartes, that being physical or material is just a matter of being

[82] [5] is a necessary truth given the definition of 'thin subject' in §6.

[83] Plainly [6] is just as much of an *a posteriori* certainty as [3] if one takes 'physical' as a pure natural-kind term that applies to anything 'real and concrete', as in RMP, p. 3. Here, however, I have a different argumentative purpose, and do not need to make that move. Stoljar holds a strongly convergent view about the two uses of 'physical'. See his paper 'Two Conceptions of the Physical' (2001).

[84] I do this in RMP in assuming, if only for argument, that 'the universe is spatio-temporal in its fundamental nature' (p. 9). Note that this leaves the question of the intrinsic nature of spacetime wholly open.

extended (a view that seems far from foolish, given Descartes's understanding of what it is to be extended), then you can re-express this as

*The Real Distinction Thesis\**

[11] Experiential reality can exist without any extended reality existing

[12] Extended reality can exist without any experiential reality existing

The thesis can also be made more specific as follows:

*The Real Distinction Thesis<sup>+</sup>*

[13] experiential reality of *any kind* can exist without any physical (extended) reality existing

[14] physical (extended) reality can exist *in any arrangement* without any experiential reality existing.

Descartes rejects [13] so far as the ordinary running of the universe is concerned, holding that its possible truth requires a special intervention from God. Chalmers, I take it, is an example of someone who accepts [14], but one can accept [12], when thinking of a stone, say, while rejecting [14] when thinking of a living brain.<sup>85</sup>

Like most people I believe that Descartes's *a priori* arguments for the Real Distinction thesis fail (as do his *a posteriori* arguments), but the same appears to be true of all recent *a priori* arguments for the falsity of standard physicalism, many of which are not importantly different from Descartes's.<sup>86</sup> As for Descartes's central intuition — the intuition that there is a fundamental gulf between physical reality and experiential reality of such a kind that experiential reality cannot possibly be physical reality and physical reality cannot possibly be experiential reality —, that is still found intensely compelling, and is still accepted by most participants in the present-day debate:

[85] I reject [14]. One reason why Chalmers accepts it may be that he subscribes to the idea that one can in counterfactual speculation suppose that one is talking about qualitatively the same physical objects when one varies the physical laws that govern them. It seems plain to me that the laws of physics are constitutive of the nature of the physical in such a way that one cannot do this. It is I think equally questionable (but this is much more controversial) to think one can take oneself to be talking about numerically the same physical objects when one varies the laws in counterfactual speculation.

[86] Descartes's *a priori* arguments fail in spite of some lovely ingenuity (e.g. his elaboration of what it is to conceive of something as a 'complete thing'). For a very rewarding discussion of his Conceivability Argument see Yablo 1990. Examining Arnauld's (1641) main objection, Yablo notes how powerful it is and expresses exactly my feeling when he writes: 'How wonderful then that Descartes had the chance to hear it and respond' (p.159).

*The Cartesian Intuition*

[15] Experiential reality cannot possibly *be* physical reality

[16] Physical reality cannot possibly *be* experiential reality

It is striking that the Cartesian intuition receives its most passionate endorsement from those self-styled physicalists who are most dismissive of Descartes — those who, accepting that everything is physical, are thereby led to deny the existence of experience (experiential reality) altogether. These physicalists are so strongly committed to the Cartesian intuition that when they couple it with their belief that physicalism is true they are prepared to deny the existence of the most certainly known thing there is — experiential reality. Descartes was right when he wrote that ‘nothing can be imagined which is too strange or incredible to have been said by some philosopher’ (1637a, p. 118), but the denial of the existence of experience shows that he was more right than he could ever have imagined. That said, he also noted that a philosopher will take the more pride in his views ‘the further they are from common sense . . . , since he will have had to use so much more skill and ingenuity in trying to render them plausible’ (1637a, p. 115), and I don’t suppose he assigned any upper bound to human pride. What he may have underestimated (but no doubt he makes the point somewhere) is the extent to which people can be blinded, rationality and cognitively, by presuppositions that they can’t renounce or properly see as such.<sup>87</sup>

I reject the Cartesian Intuition as stated. I accept for purposes of argument that physicalism may be true, but I reject the Cartesian Intuition because I take it that all experiential reality is physical reality — if indeed physicalism is true.<sup>88</sup> If, that is, one accepts

*Physicalism*

[17] There is only physical reality

then

*Experiential Physicalism*

[18] All experiential reality is physical reality

follows, given the indubitability of [3].<sup>89</sup>

[87] Claims of this sort are risky, because one opens oneself to accusations of exactly the same sort. For my vulnerability in this regard see in particular Goff p. 60, Stoljar pp. 175–6, Coleman p. 47, and pp. 265–6 below.

[88] This conditional is always in place; see §2 above.

[89] [3] and [17] conjoined make up the position I called ‘realistic physicalism’, or ‘**RP**’, in RMP.

In RMP I also subscribe to the more difficult and panpsychist view that physical reality essentially and constitutively involves experiential reality — the view that any portion of physical reality essentially involves<sup>90</sup> experiential reality — although I do not need to for most of my purposes:

*(Weak) Panpsychism*

[19] All physical being involves experiential being (given that physicalism is true).

I will call the conjunction of these last two theses

*(Weak) Panpsychist Physicalism*

[18] All experiential being is physical being (given the truth of physicalism)

[19] All physical being involves experiential being.

Note that [19] invites a stronger restatement as the converse of [18] as follows:

*Pure Panpsychism*

[20] All physical being is experiential being.

[20] is plainly a stronger version of panpsychism than [19], which still allows for the existence of non-experiential physical being, as [20] does not, at least given standard logic,<sup>91</sup> and if we go down to the level of ultimates, both are plainly stronger than

*Micropsychism*

[21] At least some ultimates are experience-involving

which was discussed in RMP (pp. 24–5). Micropsychism may in turn be restated more robustly, in line with [20], as follows:

*Micropsychism*

[22] At least some ultimates are (wholly a matter of) experiential being.

I noted in RMP (p. 25) that micropsychism seems more secure than panpsychism, but went on to assume for argument — as I will here — that panpsychism is likely to be true if micropsychism is. Let me dignify the basis for this assumption with a title

[90] A word chosen for its vagueness. Stapp is right that I am not interested in any argument for this that appeals to the rôle of the observer in quantum-mechanical physics.

[91] Many panpsychists would I think say that pure panpsychism is the only kind there is.

*The Homogeneity Thesis*

[23] All physical reality is (at bottom) the same kind of stuff.

This goes further than, e.g., Coleman's suggestion that 'it goes with our conception of, for example, sub-atomic particles that, *if* they can constitute brains, then any suitably arranged set of them will do',<sup>92</sup> because some of the ultimates recognized in the standard model of physics — e.g. neutrinos — are not fitted to be constituents of brains, as Seager points out (p. 137), and Coleman's formulation duly takes account of this. [23], by contrast, explicitly endorses the strong view that *any* physical stuff could in principle be arranged or situated so as to be a constituent of a brain.<sup>93</sup>

I am still using the word 'physical', but it is plain that it reaches breaking point in [20], at least in modern ears (as noted by Macpherson and McGinn, among others), because it now no longer rules out the possibility that there is no non-experiential being at all.<sup>94</sup> And this makes it sensible to put on the record the result of replacing 'physical' by 'non-experiential' in [6]:

*The Non-experientiality Thesis*

[24] There is non-experiential being.

More generally, it is time to consider dropping the word 'physical' altogether, as qualifying our stuff monism, and rewriting [19], [20] and [23] as

[25] *Weak Panpsychism*

All (concrete) being involves experiential being

[26] *Pure Panpsychism*

All being is experiential being

[27] *The Homogeneity Thesis*

All reality is (at bottom) the same kind of stuff.

[92] p. 48; I take it that Coleman would allow the substitution of 'ultimate' for 'sub-atomic particle'.

[93] Jeremy Butterfield tells me (private communication) that all particles in the standard model are excitations in a quantum field, 'as a wave is an excitation of the sea', and that 'since quantum fields are mathematically very special, there is a fundamental commonality' to them. Against that, he notes that there are of course various fields recognized in today's physics (eg quark, electron, neutrino) and that it remains unclear whether tomorrow's physics will find them all to be aspects of one field.

[94] See e.g. RMP p. 8, M1994, p. 74, M2003a, p. 52. Note that the pure panpsychist use of the word 'physical' didn't bother Eddington and Russell at all, although they were in McGinn's terms 'in flagrant violation of common usage' (p. 91); as also, no doubt, was Whitehead.

[25] is compatible with [24], if, that is, it is coherent to suppose that all being could involve both experiential and non-experiential being. But [26], of course — pure panpsychism — is not.<sup>95</sup> Plainly we cannot replace ‘physical’ with ‘non-experiential’ in [20], and couple it with its converse to get

[0!] *The Experiential = Non-experiential Thesis*  
 All non-experiential reality is experiential reality  
 All experiential reality is non-experiential reality

— not unless Graham Priest can help us out with his ‘dialethic’ logic. And this is a very good measure of the problem that faces us.<sup>96</sup>

Pure panpsychism as just characterized in [26], the revision of [20], is accepted by Coleman and Skrbina, among others (the word ‘physical’ having been discarded), and the fundamental challenge for all serious and realistic participants in the current mind-body debate who wish to reject [26], and therefore hold out for [24], the irreducible existence of non-experiential reality, is to show how this can be done. This is, and always has been, the heart — the real heart — of the mind-body problem. A number of the contributors to this book assume that I am in RMP committed to [24], and so to impure panpsychism at best (many of McGinn’s objections depend on this assumption, and also on a non-Cartesian metaphysics of object and property that I reject), and it is true that I mostly work with the assumption that [24] is true, because it is almost universally accepted, and so best kept in play when beginning to put the case for panpsychism. From M1994 on, however, I draw attention to the fact that it is an assumption, and I make this point repeatedly in RMP in order to keep it clear that it is an assumption that must be in doubt (see for example pp. 7, 8, 9 n., 17–18, 24, 26). I think, in fact, that the non-experiential can be retained only if it is literally identical with the experiential in some Spinozan way. If that is as impossible as it sounds, then it is impossible.

The adjective ‘realistic’, as applied to ‘physicalism’, may be reasonably thought to require not only that one acknowledge the irreducible existence of experiential reality but also that one acknowledge the

[95] Note that pure panpsychism is not idealism. I avoid the word ‘idealism’ because conventional idealism — the claim that reality consists entirely of ideas or experiences — is blatantly incoherent (given [4]) in assuming [a] that the subject of experience is in some way ontologically over and above its experiences and [b] that the subject of experience is not itself a mere idea. One might put this by saying that it is a very bad name for nearly all the positions — e.g. Berkeley’s immaterialist position — that it is usually used to denote. This issue arises in Seager’s paper; see also M1994 ch. 5, ‘Mentalism, Idealism, and Immaterialism’ and M2003b.

[96] Priest 2006; see also his article ‘Dialethism’ in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

irreducible existence of non-experiential reality. I am going to argue that the second requirement cannot in the end have the same degree of force as the first, but I will for the moment continue to understand the ‘realistic’ in ‘realistic physicalism’ (and in ‘realistic monism’) in this way.

### 12. The Basic Framework [2]

Although I reject the Cartesian intuition, I accept something related to it, something that we may surely take to be a necessary truth (but see below): that experiential reality, considered just as such, cannot be non-experiential reality, considered just as such, and conversely that non-experiential reality, considered just as such, cannot be experiential reality, considered just as such.

*The Experiential ≠ Non-experiential Thesis*

[28] Experiential reality cannot be non-experiential reality

[29] Non-experiential reality cannot be experiential reality

The ‘considered just as such’ may need a little attention, and it may be that *the whole ‘mind-body’ problem lies in whatever it is that needs attention*, but the claim as it stands — I will call it ‘the [E ≠ NE] thesis’ for short — is just an instance of the necessary truth that if something is *F* then it cannot also be *not-F* although it may possibly be *G*, *H*, *J*, and so on. Descartes appealed to this truth when every one of the seven sets of published objections to his *Meditations* asked him to prove conclusively that the physical or corporeal, call it *G*, could not possibly be experiential or mental, call it *F*. For he argued, precisely, that for this *F* and *G*, *F* entailed *not-G*.

Someone may say that human beings are real and have experiential properties and also and at the same time have non-experiential properties, and are in this sense both *F* and *not-F*. This, of course, is not ruled out by the [E ≠ NE] thesis (any more than a Strawsonian acknowledgement of the primitiveness of our ordinary concept of a person is), for the [E ≠ NE] thesis claims only that experiential being itself cannot also be (wholly) non-experiential being.<sup>97</sup>

It may help to be more emphatic in the following way:

[97] This objection provides a further small instance of why it is wise to avoid using the word ‘property’ at all, when discussing the mind-body problem, so far as it is humanly possible to do so.

*The [E ≠ NE] thesis*

[28] Experiential reality cannot be wholly non-experiential reality

[29] Wholly non-experiential reality cannot be experiential reality.

That, at least, seems reasonably safe.<sup>98</sup>

Consider next the key claim that there is indeed both experiential reality and non-experiential reality

*The Fundamental Duality Thesis*<sup>99</sup>

[3] There is experiential reality

[24] There is non-experiential reality.<sup>100</sup>

The Fundamental Duality thesis has of course been rejected, both by certain sorts of mentalists or (misnamed — see n. 96) ‘idealists’, and by materialists who are eliminativists with respect to experience (whether overtly or covertly), and it seems prudent to say (to repeat) now that if it cannot in the end go unchallenged then it is of course the non-experiential, not the experiential, that will have to yield, because [3], the existence of the experiential, is beyond doubt. This is why I’ve always felt obliged to be formally agnostic about the existence of non-experiential reality, even as I have always assumed its existence for purposes of argument in taking it to be an essential feature of anything that can reasonably be called ‘physicalism’ (see §2 above).

The key question, now, given the key claim, i.e. the Fundamental Duality thesis, is this: Is the Fundamental Duality thesis combinable with a generally monist position? This is, I think, the key question for almost all of us, and the best hope for the combination is perhaps some kind of Spinozistic dual-aspect or dual-attribute view of things.

I will come to this. The next thing I want to lay down is related to the [E ≠ NE] thesis, although most think that it is not so secure. This is the claim, argued for in RMP, that experiential reality cannot ‘come from’ or ‘emerge from’ physical reality that is in itself wholly non-experiential (and conversely).

*The No-Radical-Emergence Thesis*

[30] Experiential reality cannot possibly emerge from wholly and utterly non-experiential reality

[98] So too wholly experiential reality cannot be non-experiential reality, and conversely.

[99] I am taking it that a *duality* (or plurality) thesis is not automatically a *dualistic* (or pluralistic) thesis, and hoping for Spinozan support.

[100] [24] is not the same as [6], the Physicality thesis, with which [3] was originally contrasted, and the transition is important.



[31] Non-experiential reality cannot possibly emerge from wholly and utterly experiential reality

I argued for this claim — exercised this intuition — in RMP, and here I am just unblushingly owning up to it. It aligns me (and e.g. Coleman) quite closely with those, like Jackson, who are now called ‘*a priori* physicalists’, and I am not going to defend it further in this paper.<sup>101</sup> On the face of it, it is plainly different from the [E ≠ NE] thesis, but I think that denying it requires one in effect to reject the [E ≠ NE] thesis — a higher price, I suppose, than any emergentist would wish to pay — although there are many more or less frilly notions of emergence in the air that make it seem that this is not so.

It may be that it is right, in the end, to reject the [E ≠ NE] thesis. But if this is so it is so for reasons that render any Radical Emergence thesis entirely unnecessary.

I am nearly finished with metaphysical theses, but I should now add

*The Mindless Matter Thesis*

[32] All physical reality is — in itself, in its fundamental nature — non-experiential reality

which I called ‘N-E’ in RMP (p. 11) and reject.<sup>102</sup> Some, I know, are unable to renounce [32] (which may be expressed in linguistic mode as the idea that it is true by definition of ‘physical’ that physical reality is non-experiential reality), although it is a view to which physics in its abstractness gives no support. I mention it here in order to point out that one need not feel a conflict between the [E ≠ NE] thesis ([28] and [29]) and Panpsychist Physicalism ([18] and [19]) unless one also endorses [32] the Mindless Matter thesis.

Finally: on p. 9 above I explicitly assumed [i] that ‘there is a plurality of ultimates (whether or not there is a plurality of types of ultimates)’ and [ii] that ‘everything physical (everything physical that there is or could be)’ is constituted out of ultimates of the sort we actually have in our universe. I took [ii] to entail [iii] that everything’s being as it is at any given time just is the ultimates being as they are at that time, this being a simple matter of identity, although I did not explicitly say this. To that extent I endorsed the thesis that I will follow Coleman in calling ‘smallism’, taking it to be part of the

[101] Against Stoljar’s doubts, for example, or Lycan’s. McGinn is right that it is only given this claim (and the Homogeneity thesis) that I can say that ‘physicalism entails panpsychism’ (p. 93); that was my rhetorical choice.

[102] One can wonder about the exact force of ‘in itself’ and ‘fundamental’, and something is said about this in RMP. Here I’m using a broad brush.

conditional or *ad hominem* physicalism (p. 186) that forms my basic platform. Smallism, in Coleman's words, states that 'all facts are determined by the facts about the smallest things, those existing at the lowest "level" of ontology' (p. 40), and can be expressed equally well as follows:

*Smallism*

[33] All facts are (fully) determined by facts about ultimates

or, distinguishing 'ultimate facts' (i.e. facts about ultimates) from 'non-ultimate facts' (i.e. facts about non-ultimates)

*Smallism*

[33] All non-ultimate facts are (fully) determined by ultimate facts.

The word 'determine', however, is slippery,<sup>103</sup> and while I want to record smallism explicitly here as an extra thesis, and am untroubled by any commitment to the truth of determinism that it may bring with it,<sup>104</sup> I am not sure that I endorse it if the determination in question amounts to anything more than the determination that is necessarily involved in constitutive identity (if X wholly constitutes Y, if X is constitutively identical with Y, then X of course 'determines' Y). To say that all facts are determined by facts about ultimates is (at least) to say that if you fix all the ultimate facts then you fix all the non-ultimate facts. It also, however, suggests that the converse is not also the case, and although perfectly good sense can be given to this asymmetry claim (it is a one-way 'supervenience' or 'multiple realizability' claim) it is not as if there is some kind of metaphysically real *determinative flow* going from the ultimate facts to the non-ultimate facts. The actually existing ultimate facts do not *do* anything to the actually existing non-ultimate facts in any sense in which the converse is not also the case; and in fact neither kind of fact does anything to the other. They are, in reality, the same thing: there is, as Descartes would say, no real distinction between them, only a 'distinction of reason' or conceptual distinction (p. 203). One might try to convey this impressionistically by saying that if one fixed all the *non*-ultimate facts that actually are the case now, and fixed them exactly as they actually are, in all the full richness of their being, one would (of

[103] The trouble is that it has both a metaphysical and an epistemological use and, in the hands of some philosophers (especially empiricists), slides disastrously from one to the other.

[104] Especially given 't Hooft's recent work. This, however, is not a central issue (it should always be borne in mind that the thesis of determinism is — provably — both unverifiable and unfalsifiable).

course) equally have fixed all the ultimate facts. This is trivial as stated: my aim is to convey that the asymmetry as applied to what actually exists ‘outside our thought’ is at bottom just a matter of difference — and fineness — of description. I think that a truly enormous amount of confusion has been created in philosophy by treating these conceptual distinctions as if they were real distinctions.

### 13. Fundamental-Duality Monism

So far I have listed thirty-one theses — a mix of necessary truths, intuitions and more or less natural assumptions that stand in assorted relations of entailment, mutual exclusion and logical independence. My hope is that they will allow me to say more clearly what it would be to be a genuine realistic monist.

On p. 226 I rejected the Cartesian intuition that experiential reality cannot be physical (extended) reality and that physical (extended) reality cannot be experiential reality. But this, by now, is just a matter of words, a matter of how one uses the word ‘physical’. It’s time to drop the word ‘physical’ once and for all, as McGinn recommends (p. 92), and speak instead of non-experiential reality. After all, and as Stoljar says, when my opponents use the term ‘physical’ ‘they mean, near enough, “non-experiential”’ (p. 175).

So [6], the thesis that there is physical reality, gives way to [24], the thesis that there is non-experiential reality, and [7], the only-experiential-and-physical thesis that all reality is experiential or physical, gives way to

*The Only-Experiential-and-Non-experiential Thesis*

[34] All reality is either experiential or non-experiential.

The Cartesian intuition ([15] and [16]) accordingly becomes the

*The [E ≠ NE] thesis*

[28] Experiential reality cannot be (wholly) non-experiential reality

[29] (Wholly) non-experiential reality cannot be experiential reality

and all those whom I have castigated for accepting the Cartesian intuition — like Dennett, and, in this book, as I understand them, Lycan, Rey, Rosenthal, and Smart (I am uncertain about Jackson) — turn out to be quite right in insisting on what after all appears to be an unassailable necessary truth. They go wrong, given that they are stuff-monists who accept the [E ≠ NE] thesis, only in taking the existence of

non-experiential reality for granted. It seems utterly reasonable for them to do so, of course, but it forces them to reject the existence of experiential reality — real experiential reality — altogether, and that is more unreasonable than anything is reasonable.

The argument can be laid out as follows:

- [i] There is only one fundamental kind of reality (premiss =[1], stuff monism)
- [ii] There is reality of the non-experiential fundamental kind (premiss =[24])
- [iii] All reality is non-experiential (lemma from [i] and [ii])<sup>105</sup>
- [iv] Non-experiential reality can't also be experiential reality (premiss =[29])
- [v] There is no experiential reality (conclusion from [iii])

But since [v] is knowably false, the only genuinely realistic option for monists, given the [E ≠ NE] thesis, and [34], the Only-Experiential-and-Non-experiential thesis, is to reject non-experiential reality altogether and embrace pure panpsychism.

- [i] There is only one fundamental kind of reality (premiss =[1])
- [ii] There is reality of the experiential fundamental kind (premiss =[3]; obvious)
- [iii] All reality is experiential (lemma from [i] and [ii])
- [iv] Experiential reality can't also be non-experiential reality (premiss =[28])
- [v] There is no non-experiential reality (conclusion from [iii]).

This seems, of course, an intolerable result. But the only thing left to do, given the certainty of [3], is to give up [1], stuff monism, and to become a stuff dualist, i.e. a good old fashioned substance dualist.

Well, this is an old and well oiled merry-go-round. The question is whether one can get off it. I am still trying to defend what I am still calling 'realistic monism', if only to find out whether or not it is coherent, now that the word 'non-experiential' has been substituted for 'physical'.

The result of this substitution is that realistic monism ([8]) has become the thesis that there is only one kind of stuff, that it has both experiential reality and non-experiential reality, and that there is no other kind of reality. The term 'realistic' in 'realistic monism' has also outlived its usefulness, however, and I propose now to call this position, not 'realistic monism', but

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[105] I take a lemma to be an intermediate conclusion.

*Fundamental-Duality Monism*

[35] There is only one fundamental kind of stuff. It (all of it) has both experiential reality and non-experiential reality. There is no other kind of reality.<sup>106</sup>

It is a virtue of this name that it puts the intrinsic difficulty of the position so clearly on view. The word ‘realistic’ needs to be put aside because although it can be used unrestrictedly when used to indicate full acceptance of the reality of the experiential, it cannot in the end be used equally unrestrictedly to indicate full acceptance of the reality of the non-experiential. There is a sense in which it is always realistic to believe the truth, but the truth, quantum-mechanical or otherwise, has a tendency to go beyond what we find it realistic to believe, and if it turns out that nothing can somehow be both experiential and non-experiential in the way that fundamental-duality monism requires, then, given the above terms, it is no longer realistic for a stuff monist to believe in the non-experiential, and panpsychism is unavoidable. This cannot happen the other way round.

Descartes was well aware of the position I am calling ‘fundamental-duality monism’. It is after all the position that was called ‘materialism’ or ‘physicalism’ for hundreds of years,<sup>107</sup> and he was of course well aware of the materialist position.<sup>108</sup> The only reason that it needs a new name now is because the meaning of the words ‘materialism’ and ‘physicalism’ has been utterly changed in the last fifty or sixty years. Up to this point I’ve tried to cope with this change by talking of ‘real materialism’ and ‘real physicalism’, but the terms ‘materialism’ and ‘physicalism’ are I think too far gone in the present-day philosophical ear. This is why I now opt, however clumsily, for ‘fundamental-duality monism’.

Descartes was aware of this position, as just remarked, and he was also aware, much more generally, of the possibility that one might, faced with two *seemingly* very different kinds of properties, ultimately conclude that there was in fact only one stuff or substance in question. He makes this clear when replying to Hobbes in the passage quoted on p. 214:

[106] [8] is the product of [1], [3], [6], and [7]. [35] simply replaces ‘physical’ with ‘non-experiential’, i.e. [6] with [24] and [7] with [34].

[107] Prior to the twentieth century, *all* materialists or physicalists were real physicalists in my terms, in fully acknowledging the existence of experiential reality.

[108] It was popular in Rome at the time, interestingly, and was canvassed as a possibility in all seven sets of objections. And then, of course, there was Hobbes.

... we do not come to know a substance immediately, through being aware of the substance itself; we come to know it only through its being the subject of certain acts [or accidents]. Hence it is perfectly reasonable, and indeed sanctioned by usage, for us to use different *names* for substances which we recognize as being the subjects of quite different acts or accidents, and ... *to leave until later the examination of whether these different names signify different things or one and the same thing*' (1641, p. 124; my emphasis).

The idea is that we have two apparently fundamentally different kinds of properties, *F* properties and *G* properties. These are our data. We posit some thing or substance *a* as the thing that has *F* properties and we posit some thing or substance *b* as the thing that has *G* properties, and we leave open till later the question whether *a* and *b* are different things or substances or the same single thing or substance.

Our position as enquirers today is exactly the same as Descartes's.<sup>109</sup> We make the fundamental-duality assumption, as he does: we take it that there are two very different kinds of being, experiential and non-experiential. The question for us, as it was for him, is whether or not these two seemingly very different kinds of being can possibly be ways of being of something that we can have good reason to think of in a stuff-monist way as the *same* something, both when it has experiential being and when it has non-experiential being. Descartes concluded that we could not in the end do this, that thinking and extension are just too different, that stuff dualism — i.e. substance dualism in his sense — is correct, although he retained, at the very least, an open mind on this question (as argued in §8).

The choice, in any case, *given* the fundamental-duality assumption, is, as always, between stuff dualism and fundamental-duality monism. The question, for most of us, is how to avoid stuff dualism. The challenge, for committed monists attached to the non-experiential, is to avoid pure panpsychism.

If we try to express fundamental-duality monism using the terms of the arguments set out on page 235 we get the following set of statements:

- [i] There is only one fundamental kind of reality ([1])
- [ii] There is reality of the experiential fundamental kind ([3])
- [iii] There is reality of the non-experiential fundamental kind ([24])

[109] Except that we now have a rich and mysterious conception of the physical that is intuitively far less hostile to the idea that the physical might somehow be experiential than Descartes's conception of the physical as simply the extended. See M2003a, p. 66.

- [iv] Experiential reality can't also be non-experiential reality  
 ([28])  
 [v] Non-experiential reality can't also be experiential reality  
 ([29])

and this gives the measure of our problem. [ii] and [iii] are incompatible with [i] given [iv] and [v], but [i] is presumably definitive of stuff monism, [ii] and [iii] are non-negotiable, and [iv] and [v] jointly constitute the [E ≠ NE] thesis, which appears to be a necessary truth of the first water. Neutral monism offers a quick solution by treating [ii] and [iii], experiential and non-experiential reality, as non-fundamental relative to the fundamental kind of reality referred to in [i], but we have already ruled out neutral monism, because we can't downgrade [ii], we can only downgrade [iii] — which leads to panpsychism.<sup>110</sup>

At this point in the paper we cross a bar. What follows is 'without prejudice' in the technical sense, because I haven't had time to think it through, and don't know enough.

#### 14. Spinoza

When I first stated the [E ≠ NE] thesis on p. 230

experiential reality, considered just as such, cannot be non-experiential reality, considered just as such, and conversely that non-experiential reality, considered just as such, cannot be experiential reality, considered just as such

I said that it could be taken simply as an instance of the necessary truth that if something is *F* then it cannot also be *not-F* (although it may be *G, H, J, ...*). I added that the 'considered just as such' might need a little attention, and that the whole mind-body problem might lie coiled up in whatever it is that needs attention. This is what we now come to. Can we defend fundamental-duality monism in any form, or is it at bottom a contradiction in terms? (And if it is a contradiction in terms, is that the end of it?)

We might start by asking what 'fundamental' means, but perhaps this is superfluous, for whatever exactly it means, fundamental-duality monism seems to be ruled out for someone who, like myself, agrees with Descartes in rejecting conventional substance/property metaphysics. Why? Because it requires in effect that one be a

[110] Whatever '*a posteriori*' physicalists think they're doing, they can't plausibly reject [ii]. More generally, the *a posteriori* physicalist project of dissolving the metaphysical issue into an epistemological issue seems doomed. See further pp. 263–5 below.

‘property dualist’ (about fundamental, intrinsic properties or attributes) and at the same time a stuff or substance monist. Such a position is generally taken to be at least coherent, but it is plainly incoherent given the (correct) Cartesian view of the substance/property relation; for there is, as Descartes rightly says, no real distinction between a substance and its properties. So if there are two fundamental properties neither of which can in any sense be the other (in the distinctly forbidding *F/non-F* sort of way) then there must be two substances: for there is no real distinction between substances and their properties.<sup>111</sup>

We owe an enormous debt to Descartes for making this so clear to everyone in his time (I don’t know why it has since become so unclear), if only because one of the people to whom he made it so clear was Spinoza, who, speaking of ‘substances, or what is the same, their attributes’ fully agreed with Descartes that there is no real distinction between substance and attribute (between a thing and its properties).<sup>112</sup> Spinoza, for all that, made it his task to be a monist (a thing monist as well as a stuff monist, but I will put that aside), in spite of everything Descartes had said,<sup>113</sup> and I had enough of a sense of Spinoza’s project by the time I started this paper in July 2006 — fresh from re-reading Descartes and Clarke and suitably predisposed by various premonitions *de longue date*<sup>114</sup> — to reason as follows:

None of us is as clever as Spinoza. So if there is any chance that anyone is going to succeed in being any kind of monist without being a pure panpsychist it is Spinoza. So if one wants to avoid pure panpsychism — and one may not — one should look for a Spinozistic solution.

I knew very little about Spinoza, but two weeks later an advance review copy of Nadler’s admirable book *Spinoza’s Ethics*, to which I am considerably indebted, fell happily under my hand.

Spinoza does not deny the [E ≠ NE] thesis insofar as it is indeed a necessary truth, but he does deny the Cartesian intuition that [15] experiential reality cannot possibly be physical/extended reality and

[111] This argument could be disputed, but I am happy to leave it undefended here.

[112] 1677, p. 411 (1p4d); see Nadler 2006, pp. 57–8. Note that when Spinoza says that ‘substance’ and ‘attribute’ are two names for the same thing, just as ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are two names for the same person (in the Bible), he is not treating ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ as pure proper names. Jacob was so called ‘because he had seized his brother’s heel’ (1663, p. 196 (letter 9)) — the name derives from the Hebrew for ‘heel’ — while ‘Israel’ means ‘he who has wrestled God’.

[113] Although not in a way entirely unanticipated by Descartes, who missed nothing.

[114] See e.g. M1994, pp. 97–8.



that [16] physical/extended reality cannot possibly be experiential reality. He holds that

a mode of thought [e.g. a hope or sensation] and a mode of extension [e.g. a concrete entity with shape, size, position, motion, and so on] are but one and the same thing expressed in different ways (Nadler 2006, p. 144)

The difficulty, of course, is contained in the word ‘expressed’, but the claim is otherwise clear, and it is, as addressed to Descartes, a claim close to the heart of those today who call themselves ‘*a posteriori* physicalists’:

even if two attributes may be conceived to be really distinct (i.e., one may be conceived without the aid of the other), we cannot infer from that that they are two beings or two different substances.<sup>115</sup>

Nadler continues his gloss of Spinoza as follows:

the human mind and the human body are not two ontologically distinct things. They are two different expressions — incommensurable and independent expressions, to be sure — of one and the same thing

and then quotes Spinoza himself:

The mind and the body are one and the same individual, which is conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension (Nadler 2006, p. 144, Spinoza 1677, p. 467 (2p21)).

Now this quotation will immediately lead many to think that Spinoza is after all a neutral monist of some variety who is treating thought and extension in some subjectivist fashion as merely appearances of some more fundamental phenomenon that is in itself neither thought nor extension. It seems plain, however, that this is not his position, although the point needs careful expression (see e.g. Nadler 2006, p. 127ff). His position is not *neither-nor* (i.e. *ultimately* neither-nor),

[115] Spinoza 1677, p. 416 (1p10s). Having recently learnt the terms ‘*a priori* physicalists’ and ‘*a posteriori* physicalists’ I think both may fit the RMP position, though it may be better called ‘*a priori* and *a posteriori* monism’. The Jacksonian a priorism lies in the rejection of any sort of radical emergence (compare Jackson, p. 63). The a posteriorism appears (once Spinozan ESFD monism — see the next page — has been put aside) in the idea that the radical difference between experiential and non-experiential is mere seeming, a distinction of mind (a ‘conceptual distinction’ in the very largest sense of Descartes’s term), rather than an irreducible ontological reality (a ‘real distinction’ in Descartes’s terms, a distinction in the things themselves). It differs from all standard versions of a posteriorism, as represented here by (e.g.) Carruthers and Schechter and Papineau, because it is held alongside the view, discussed further in §15, that we are acquainted with the essential nature of experience, at least in certain respects, in having experience as we do.

but *both-and* (*ultimately* both-and). Thought and extension both really exist and are both really the same thing.<sup>116</sup>

We can continue to take this thesis as I have been taking it, as a rejection of the Cartesian intuition ([15] and [16]) that none the less respects the  $[E \neq NE]$  thesis. If, however, we suppose that Spinoza took it for granted that the physical, the extended, had at least some irreducibly non-experiential aspect — and this, from now on, is thoroughly speculative — we can put things more dramatically by saying that it is the  $[E \neq NE]$  thesis itself that is being rejected. The view now up for inspection is in fact equal-status monism, which I introduced in §3, and which can be restated more briefly as follows:

reality is irreducibly experiential and non-experiential and substantially single. The experiential and non-experiential coexist in such a way that neither can be said to be based in or realized by or in any way asymmetrically dependent on the other; or if there is any sense in which one can reasonably be said to be dependent on the other, then this sense applies equally both ways

and further adjusted in what I am now taking to be a Spinozistical fashion as follows:

*Equal-Status Fundamental-Duality monism*

[36] Reality is substantially single. All reality is experiential and all reality is non-experiential. Experiential and non-experiential being exist in such a way that neither can be said to be based in or realized by or in any way asymmetrically dependent on the other (etc.)

I will call this ‘ESFD monism’ for short. I think it is what many people really want, although they are likely to deny it, because it is the only option short of pure panpsychism and radical eliminativism.<sup>117</sup> Note

[116] It may be said that a proposed solution to the present problem along these lines cannot be anything more than ‘Spinozistical’, because it retains [34], the strictly dualistic ‘only-two’ thesis that all reality is either experiential or non-experiential, and this is something that Spinoza explicitly rejected, for he took it that reality involved all possible ways of being, and that it therefore had not two, but an ‘infinite’ number of ways of being. This objection is too fast, however, given that experiential and non-experiential are as a matter of logic exhaustive of the field of possibilities. For even if there is a way of counting fundamental kinds of being given which there is an ‘infinite’ number of them, it seems that they must all classify as either as either experiential or non-experiential. It may be replied that we have now reached a point where even these certainties must be doubted, but I am going to rely on this one, whatever its calibre before God (as it were), if only for my remaining purposes of argument.

[117] It is the only option given [27], the Homogeneity Thesis that all physical reality is at bottom the same stuff, and [30], the No-Radical-Emergence Thesis that experiential reality cannot possibly emerge from wholly and utterly non-experiential reality.

the explicit addition of ‘all’ in ‘all reality is experiential and all reality is non-experiential’.

The question is whether experiential being and non-experiential being can fail to be identical, given ESFD monism. Spinoza’s answer (given the present supposition) is that they are indeed in some metaphysically immoveable sense identical, but that maintaining this is compatible with maintaining some sort of real fundamental duality and not falling back into some sort of ‘neutral monism’ that finds only one fundamental way of being, call it X-being, and reduces the experiential and the non-experiential to mere subjective aspects or appearances of X-being.<sup>118</sup>

This is clearly an answer of the right calibre, an answer with the right degree of difficulty and excitement. It amounts to an abandonment of the [E ≠ NE] thesis as it stands, and returns a firm No to the question put to dualists<sup>119</sup> on p. 209:

Are the two forms of reality (now characterized simply as *experiential* and *non-experiential*, rather than as *experiential* and *physical*, or *experiential* and *extended*) essentially mutually exclusive in such a way that the being (the concrete realization) of one of them cannot be the same thing as the being (the concrete realization) of the other?<sup>120</sup>

I think that it has to be right, in some version, if any form of ESFD monism is true. If it is incompatible with fundamental principles of thought and language, then (if ESFD monism is true) this is just one more proof of the limitations of human understanding.<sup>121</sup> We know — we have copious proof, both in science and in philosophy — that many of our ways of thinking of reality are quite hopelessly inade-

[118] I am putting aside Spinoza’s view that being has all possible attributes, not just thought and extension.

[119] It doesn’t matter whether they call themselves ‘property dualists’ or ‘substance dualists’.

[120] Macpherson may well be right that the position I work with in RMP counts as a property dualist position, given the ordinary understanding of property dualism. My acceptance of this position (the position that supposes there to be irreducibly non-experiential being) is always provisional, however, and I end up rejecting it with Eddington in 1928 (Skrbina points out on p. 154 that Eddington had already rejected it in 1920, and did so again in 1939). What Macpherson’s argument shows, I think, is that the mainstream terminology (in particular the uncritical use of the substance/property distinction, so useful in many areas, so disastrous in this area) has substantive philosophical consequences, and makes the expression of fundamentally important metaphysical positions seem quirky or implausible.

[121] The proposed metaphysical identity is certainly not harder to take than the metaphysical identity between an experience E, the (thin) subject of E, and the content of E (internalistically construed) that I argue for in M2003b — although this may be no recommendation.

quate to reality as it is in itself,<sup>122</sup> and the perceived difficulty of the mind-body problem — vividly marked by the fact that it has led some people to make the silliest claim ever made in the history of humanity — is just one more proof (if indeed ESFD monism is true).

That said, let me say again that I agree with all pre-twentieth-century psychologists and philosophers and almost all twentieth-century and almost all living philosophers that the reality of the experiential is not in doubt, and that we can and do know the intrinsic nature of the experiential, at least in certain respects, simply in having it (see further §16 below). It follows that if the identity claim is not compatible with the fundamental duality then it is the non-experiential, not the experiential, that must give way.

Giving way would not involve any sort of conventional reductive ‘idealism’ with respect to the non-experiential (see n. 96). It would be, rather, the Eddingtonian (Russellian) view, best represented by Coleman in this book, that the energy-stuff that makes up the whole of reality is itself something that is experiential in every respect.<sup>123</sup> The universe consists of experience (and hence also subjects of experience — but this is in the end a conceptual distinction, not a real distinction) arrayed in a certain way. This experience must not for a moment be conceived as some sort of ‘mere experiential content’, where this is in some way passively conceived. Experience — experientiality, the experiential — is itself something intrinsically active, energetic, as Descartes also supposed (see pp. 204, 210). One must not slip into thinking that the *experientiality* of experience, considered strictly, is just a matter of experiential content conceived as somehow just inertly ontologically given, and go on to infer that there must as a matter of metaphysical necessity be something more to experience than its experientiality — some sort of energy substratum that is not itself strictly speaking experience. The inference is valid, but the premiss is unsound. Energy is experientiality; that is its intrinsic nature.

The metaphysic, stated brutally (contrary to Descartes’s advice — see p. 205), is this. All that exists is substance (substance properly conceived, ‘substance/attribute’ substance). Or, in plural form, all that exist are substances (properly conceived, ‘substance/attribute’ substances). All subjects (insofar as they are properly conceived as

[122] I defend the entirely respectable and effectively indispensable notion of ‘as it is in itself’ in Strawson 2002, §2 (revised version, Strawson forthcoming c).

[123] It seems plain that the priority must be accorded to Eddington, at least on the local (i.e. early twentieth-century) stage; see Skrbina (p. 154). Lockwood (1981, 1989, 1992) is the best recent exponent of Russell, for whose views see e.g. Russell 1927a, 1927b, 1948, 1956, all of which were quoted in M2003a.

plural) are substances. All substances (insofar as they are properly conceived as plural) are subjects. Equally, all substance is experientiality. Equally, all substance is energy, for substance is essentially active. The fundamental definition of ‘substance’ is not Aristotle’s or Descartes’s, but Leibniz’s: to be a substance is *to act*.<sup>124</sup> Various further conclusions can be drawn from these claims.

‘The universe consists of experience arrayed in a certain way.’ Plainly this view involves no logical contradiction. It solves, albeit in a very general way, the greatest problem in physics (the problem of the existence of experience). It is not ruled out by anything in current physics (as has been known for a long time). It may also be said to be particularly hospitable to the correct account of the rôle of experience in present-day physics stressed by Stapp — whatever exactly that account is.<sup>125</sup>

It may now be objected that *space — extension* — cannot then really be anything like we ordinarily suppose it to be. But we have known this for a long time, and the pressure that has been exerted on anything resembling the ordinary idea of space by recent developments in science goes way beyond the quite extraordinary pressure that has already been put on it by its absorption into the spacetime of Einstein’s theory of relativity.<sup>126</sup> ‘Space’, we may say, is a natural-kind term. It refers to a certain concrete reality, and we cannot have any confidence that we know its nature, considered as a concrete reality, over and above whatever we can know about its mathematical characteristics or ‘abstract dimensionality’ (M2003a, pp. 58–9). If we assume, as we surely must, that the concrete real has dimensionality of some sort, we may say the following: existing conceptions of space or spacetime are conceptions of the nature of the dimensionality of the concrete real that fit with existing conceptions of the nature of the concrete real as non-experientially propertied physical stuff. To suppose instead that the nature of the concrete real is experientiality is to suppose accordingly that the nature of the dimensionality of the

[124] I am going to talk freely of substances, although in the final analysis I share Nagarjuna’s doubts about the notion.

[125] I take it that the information transfers treated of in quantum mechanics do not necessarily involve the experience of experimenters, and so on, although they do indeed involve experience — they are a matter of experience — given micropsychist or unrestricted panpsychism. See pp. 270–1 below.

[126] See e.g. M2003a, pp. 57–60. See also, more excitingly, Greene 2004, ch. 16. In M2003a I am still clinging in the face of Lockwood’s and Eddington’s scepticism to the idea I have since abandoned: the idea that we can be confident that we get something fundamental right about the intrinsic and non-structural nature of space when we hold up our hands in a Moorean fashion and consider, not them, but the space between them.

concrete real is something that fits with the nature of the concrete real conceived of as experientiality.<sup>127</sup>

Similar things may be said about the phenomenon of causation. For what is ‘physical causation’, the only sort we acknowledge insofar as we call ourselves ‘physicalists’, meaning ‘real physicalists’? It is an old point that there is a fundamental sense in which we do not know its intrinsic nature, although we know it exists. All we know of causation is regular succession, constant conjunction, as Hume said — something that does not (as he insisted) capture its intrinsic nature at all.<sup>128</sup> Even if it is allowed that we may also know something of its nature in experiencing pushes and pulls, and so on,<sup>129</sup> there remains a clear sense in which we do not thereby know its intrinsic nature.

This is why panpsychists may if they choose call the laws of physics — taken to be the actual principles of working that inform the whole of concrete reality, rather than any conceptual or linguistic items — ‘the laws of experience’, or (equivalently) replace ‘physics’ by ‘phenomenonics’, or ‘psychics’. They will not in so doing change a jot or tittle of the laws of physics as currently rendered by the science of physics, for physics is psychics, in the sense that experience is (as Eddington and Russell supposed) its whole concrete subject matter. So far as our laws are concerned, conceived of as linguistic items, the panpsychist hypothesis is merely a hypothesis about the nature of the things referred to by the referring terms in those linguistic items.

These issues are of great importance in a full discussion, but it is enough for my present purpose just to log them.<sup>130</sup> Certainly no worthwhile objection to ESFD monism or pure panpsychism can be based on appeal to the notion of space, or that of causation. For many in the current debate the main task, in fact, is to get to the point where it becomes apparent that the issues under discussion here are indeed the central issues. Those who are prepared to take panpsychism seriously, on the other hand, must not get so carried away that they no longer have the resources to account for simple facts like the facts of

[127] This line of thought has affinities, perhaps, with Newton’s speculation that space is God’s ‘sensorium’. We may treat this God as Spinoza’s God, an entity that has nothing to do with established religion (other, perhaps, than the Romantics’ ‘Religion of Nature’).

[128] Although his definitions of cause are the best possible, they are, he says, ‘imperfect’. The trouble is that ‘we cannot remedy this inconvenience, or attain any more perfect definition, which may point out that circumstance in the cause, which [actually] gives it a connexion with its effect’ (1748, 7.29). Hume was not misunderstood on this point for some time (not until the nineteenth century, as far as I know).

[129] See e.g. Anscombe 1971, P.F. Strawson 1985.

[130] I have said elsewhere (in M2003a) the little that I feel competent to say about space, and that I now doubt.

reproduction and evolution, whose undeniability I will as a naturalist (a panpsychist naturalist) take as my benchmark, with the crucial proviso that their undeniability *does not legitimize anything like our ordinary conception of space*.

The dialectical situation, in conclusion, is as follows. Assuming [27], the Homogeneity thesis that all reality is at bottom the same kind of stuff (pp. 231–2), and the No-Radical-Emergence thesis (p. 228), which I have not further defended in this paper—except to say that I suspect that to reject it is in the end to reject the [E ≠ NE] thesis, a move that immediately renders any Radical Emergence thesis superfluous—, we must as monists choose between two things: radical eliminativism and pure panpsychism.<sup>131</sup> Radical eliminativism is ruled out for all those who approach the mind–body problem in a serious fashion. That leaves pure panpsychism. The only alternative is to abandon the [E ≠ NE] thesis and embrace some form of ESFD monism. Since many judge that ESFD monism is not in the end coherent, on the grounds that it involves abandoning the law of non-contradiction, they are left with nothing but pure panpsychism, or at least micropsychism. So be it. For my part, I am fond of ESFD monism. I think it may very well be a truth beyond our understanding, and I am not prepared to dismiss it in this way.<sup>132</sup> For now, though, I will now focus mainly on pure panpsychism of the specifically smallest, micro-psychist variety, and on the difficulties that arise from the view that the macro-experiential arises from (‘emerges from’, in the legitimate sense of the term, see p. 27) the micro-experiential. I will drop the word ‘pure’ for the most part, and it will be plain that I am not always talking about pure panpsychism, e.g. when discussing the views of others.

### 15. Panpsychism and the ‘Compounding of Consciousness’

RMP is a schematic and exploratory paper, and gives no precise definition of panpsychism, as remarked by several contributors to this book (see e.g. Stapp, pp. 163–4). Now, however, the focus is on pure panpsychism — arguably the only respectable kind of panpsychism — and the basic idea, at least, is easy to state. For pure panpsychism

[131] Abandoning [27] allows one to dilute pure panpsychism to micropsychism.

[132] What we need, Nagel says (using ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ where I use ‘experiential’ and ‘non-experiential’), is a ‘psychological Einstein’ who will build on the work of a ‘psychological Maxwell’ and show ‘that the mental and the physical are really the same’ (1986, p. 53)... Alternatively, we can think that Spinoza (as interpreted here) is right even though we don’t think that a psychological Einstein will ever come along.

has only one kind of thing in its fundamental ontology: subjects of experience in the ‘thin’ sense expounded in §4, subjects of experience each of which is at the same time an experience, an experiencing, i.e. literally identical with an experience or experiencing.<sup>133</sup>

When I speak of subjects of experience, then, I mean only ‘thin’ subjects. I propose to call them ‘sesmets’, for reasons that are not relevant here.<sup>134</sup> I take it that there is a fundamental sense in which there is more than one of them at any given time (this corresponds to assumption [1] in RMP, p. 9), and I also take it that while some pluralities of sesmets constitute further numerically distinct sesmets, others do not. I take it, in other words, that not every plurality of sesmets constitutes a further sesmet, without claiming to know this with certainty.<sup>135</sup>

The term ‘ultimate’ may be taken as before (RMP, p. 9) to correspond to terms like ‘particle’ ‘string’, ‘loop’, ‘simple’, ‘preon’ (whether simple or ‘braided’), ‘field quantum’. We may then say that all ultimates are sesmets (for sesmets are the only things that exist), and that many many sesmets are ultimates. It may be, in the end, that the best notion of an ultimate will include things that count as composite relative to the apparent plurality of field quanta, strings, and so on, for it is not obvious that ‘ultimate’ must entail ‘simple or non-composite’, although we standardly assume that ultimates are non-composite, and often take it to be true by definition.<sup>136</sup> It may be, in other words, that certain sesmets — certain experiential<sup>137</sup> field quanta — may be truly ultimate, in some metaphysically fundamental sense,<sup>138</sup> even if they are analysable as composite for certain purposes; and in that case we will be able to say not only that all ultimates are sesmets, but also that all sesmets are ultimates (if such proposals feel logically unacceptable, bear in mind that they are just the kind of thing that physics encourages). Alternatively, to the same effect, it may be that the correct notion of an ultimate is simply the one that has the consequence

[133] This second feature flows from the Subject Thesis ([4] and [5], p. 224) and a true Cartesian-Spinozan metaphysics of object and property (one may also say that substance is all that exists, and all substances are subjects). I argue for the strict metaphysical identity of subject and experience in M2003b, as remarked in note 121.

[134] The acronym stands for ‘subject of experience that is a single mental thing’; see Strawson 1999b.

[135] One no longer has any right to be impressed by ‘spatial separation’ (whatever the ultimate nature of space), and we are taught that particles light years apart may be ‘entangled’ in such a way as to put their real or ontological distinctness in question (especially once we have a correct metaphysics of object and property).

[136] van Inwagen uses the count noun ‘simple’ where I use ‘ultimate’.

[137] The word is redundant.

[138] It is of course also a physically respectable sense, given a complete physics.



not only that all ultimates are sesmets but also that all sesmets are ultimates — whatever other intuitions we have about the large and the small, the composite and the non-composite. The plurality of ‘particles’ or field quanta may not always be what it seems — a point anticipated, in effect, by the later William James.

However this may be, I take it that I now have to face what I will call the *Composition Problem*:<sup>139</sup> the problem of how pluralities of sesmets can jointly compose or constitute distinct and ‘larger’ single sesmets; the problem of how ‘microsesmets’, e.g. electron sesmets or string sesmets, can possibly compose single macrosesmets, e.g. human sesmets. It is a problem faced by any ‘smallest’ (p. 233) panpsychist, and I note its difficulty, and James’s well known formulation of it, in RMP (p. 26). In this book it is forcefully pressed by Goff and Carruthers and Schecter, among others.

In 1890 James argued that Composition was impossible, and that its impossibility was fatal to any plausible (hence smallest) panpsychism — even while appearing to hold, in the same chapter, that some version of panpsychism must none the less be right, so that Composition could not really be impossible. In the 1900s he worked himself closer to the view he had condemned as impossible — it is as if he knew from the start that Composition could not really be impossible, but could not see how — and by the time of his Oxford Hibbert lectures, published in 1909 as *A Pluralistic Universe*, he is comfortable with a not-rigidly-particulate, field-quanta-friendly form of Composition, as Skrbina observes — partly on the cheerful Fechnerian ground that ‘we know it’s actual, so it must be possible’. He still doesn’t ‘logically see how a collective experience of any grade whatever can be treated as logically identical with a lot of distributive experiences’ (p. 204), and so finds himself ‘compelled to *give up the logic*, fairly, squarely, and irrevocably’ that rules it out (Skrbina, p. 156, quoting James 1909, p. 212). Once again I think there is support for this in physics, but the point remains the same even if this is not so: given smallism, we have to accept some form of the view ‘that states of consciousness, so-called, can separate and combine themselves freely, and keep their own identity unchanged while forming parts of simultaneous fields of experience of wider scope’.<sup>140</sup>

[139] Compare van Inwagen 1990.

[140] James 1909, p. 181. It is not clear that we have to suppose that ‘smaller’ states of consciousness remain qualitatively unchanged when becoming parts of ‘larger’ ones — if, that is, our conception of their numerical identity conditions is such as to allow them to persist through qualitative change.

In *A Pluralistic Universe*, and in particular in the remarkable chapter ‘The Compounding of Consciousness’, James is often concerned with the Problem of Composition as it arises on the largest scale: the problem, pressing for many of the gravely bearded philosophers of his time, of how many minds with diverse contents, e.g. human minds, can all somehow be parts of the single mind of the universe.<sup>141</sup> He is, however, very clear on the point that this is just one possible case of the phenomenon that concerns him — which is, as he says, the entirely general phenomenon of ‘collective experiences ... claiming identity with their constituent parts, yet experiencing things quite differently from these latter’ (pp. 203–4) — , and my concern is only with a smaller-scale case. It is only with the question of how a human experience as one knows it in one’s own person can possibly be somehow composed of many micro-scale experiences/subjects of experience. The problem lies at the heart of smallest panpsychism, and no one is saying it is easy, least of all James:

Sincerely and patiently as I could, I struggled with the problem for years, covering hundreds of sheets of paper with notes and memoranda and discussions with myself over the difficulty. How can many consciousness be at the same time one consciousness? How can one and the same identical fact experience itself so diversely?... I found myself in an *impasse*....<sup>142</sup>

Goff addresses just this question, and begins by quoting James’s 1890 argument:

Take a hundred of them [feelings], shuffle them and pack them as close together as you can (whatever that may mean); still each remains the same feeling it always was, shut in its own skin, windowless, ignorant of what the other feelings are and mean. There would be a hundred-and-first feeling there, if, when a group or series of such feelings were set up, a consciousness *belonging to the group as such* should

[141] This problem also arises, of course, for Spinoza. I say ‘the mind of the universe’, rather than ‘God’, or (more respectably than ‘God’) ‘Brahman’, because I’m not sure that either Spinoza or William James believes in God in any sense in which Dennett does not also believe in God. I’m sure I don’t. Spinoza and James have much harder naturalistic noses than Dennett, and I follow them. What distinguishes us and many others, including most of the gravely bearded philosophers, from Dennett on this issue is rather that we are more struck by — philosophically concerned with — the unignorable idea of the universe considered as a whole. Dennett sometimes suggests that when people like myself issue such denials they are really smuggling in some kind of mysticism under cover of a pretence of atheistic naturalistic orthodoxy. He cannot be argued out of this position, because it is infeasible, but he is of course quite wrong, and mysticism as he understands it is a tame thing compared with current physics and cosmology.

[142] James 1909, pp. 207–8. It is sad that James’s later work appears so flaky, on first reading, to those like myself who have been brought up in the analytic tradition — so that they do not persist with it. These things take time.

emerge. And this 101st feeling would be a totally new fact; the 100 feelings might, by a curious physical law, be a signal for its *creation*, when they came together; but they would have no substantial identity with it, nor it with them, and one could never deduce the one from the others, or (in any intelligible sense) say that they *evolved* it. (James 1890, 1.160)

Goff argues in his turn that even if Composition could happen it would be ‘unintelligible . . . , as brute and miraculous as the emergence of experiential properties from non-experiential properties, [so that] Strawson’s panpsychism is itself committed to the very kind of brute emergence which it was set up to avoid’ (p. 54).

My first reply, as in RMP, is that unintelligible experiential-from-experiential emergence is not nearly as bad as unintelligible experiential-from-non-experiential emergence.<sup>143</sup> I stand by this reply, although Goff tries to block it by turning one of my own arguments neatly against me (p. 60). It is, however, no defence against Goff’s next move. For he now simply allows for the sake of argument that Composition is possible, in order to object that it cannot be the way I need it to be even it is possible, because my basic definition of experience simply rules it out.

## 16. Revelation

I have avoided epistemological issues as far as possible, and I am going to overfly criticisms that raise epistemological questions that are for all their popularity (e.g. among *a posteriori* physicalists) irrelevant to the present discussion.<sup>144</sup> I cannot avoid them entirely, however, for I not only take the very stuff of existence — experience — to involve knowing or acquaintance; I also hold, in a passage from M2003a picked up by Goff, that

we are acquainted with reality *as it is in itself*, in certain respects, in having experience as we do . . . the having is the knowing.<sup>145</sup>

Plainly many who are not panpsychists can agree with this claim. Equally plainly, it has particular force for a panpsychist who holds that all that exists, substantially speaking, is experience (*sive* experiencers, *sive* *sesmets*).

[143] ‘Unintelligible’ means not understandable, and, in particular, not understandable by us. It does *not* mean incoherent (a crucial point when studying Hume, who uses the word regularly).

[144] See, though, pp. 263–5 below. The *a posteriori* physicalists’ main error (as Coleman intuitively, p. 47) is their focus on phenomenal *concepts* — which derives, no doubt, from their philosophy-of-language upbringing.

[145] p. 55, quoting M2003a, p. 54. This claim does not feature in RMP.

We may re-express it as the claim that in having experience we know its essential nature, and analyse this in turn into two parts:

*The General Revelation Thesis*<sup>146</sup>

[37] I am acquainted with the essential nature of experience generally considered — i.e. with whatever all possible experiences have in common just insofar as they are indeed experiences — just in having experience

and

*The Local Revelation Thesis*

[38] In the case of any particular experience, I am acquainted with the essential nature of that particular experience just in having it.

I think, though, that we may take it that [38] entails [37], and also drop the word ‘local’ from [38], restating it as

*The Revelation Thesis*

[39] In the case of any particular experience, I am acquainted with the essential nature of that experience just in having it

a thesis that I accept (subject to an imminent qualification). When, however, Goff rephrases the original claim as follows: ‘in introspecting one’s conscious experience, one perceives that metaphysical reality “*as it is in itself*”’ (p. 57), I do not accept the rephrasal, although I am quite happy with the expression ‘as it is in itself’. The first of my two problems with the rephrasal is that the original claim makes no use of the second-order notion of introspection. It is resolutely first-order. It is that ‘the having is the knowing’.<sup>147</sup> If one engages in the higher-order operation of introspecting one’s experience, then the

[146] ‘Revelation’ began as Mark Johnston’s term for the (Russellian) view that colour properties are to be understood as ‘properties [whose] whole and essential nature can be and is fully revealed in sensory ... experience given only the qualitative character that that sensory experience has’ (Strawson 1989, p. 224, commented on in Johnston 1992). Since then the use of the term has expanded, and Stoljar uses it in the mind–body debate as I do here (following him), although not in his contribution to this book. In particular, Stoljar uses it for the thesis that ‘if one has a conscious experience, then one knows the essence or nature of experience’ (2006, p. 96; this is General Revelation in the present terms), and also for the thesis that if you have an experience ‘you know *all* the essential properties of the experience’ (see e.g. 2006, p. 221; this is Full Revelation — see below — in the present terms). Goff speaks instead of ‘transparency’, a metaphor that fits well in the discussion of perception, but not here.

[147] ‘When we claim (with Russell) that to have an experience is *eo ipso* to be acquainted with certain of the intrinsic features of reality, we do not have to suppose that this acquaintance involves standing back from the experience reflectively and examining it by means of a further, distinct experience. It doesn’t. This picture is too cognitivist ... The having is the

acquaintance is no longer direct, and it is a commonplace that taking one's experience as an explicit object of knowledge precludes knowing of it as it in itself in the direct acquaintance of having it.<sup>148</sup>

The second problem is that Goff takes the original claim to amount to 'full disclosure' — to

*The Full Revelation Thesis*

[40] In the case of any particular experience, I am acquainted with the whole essential nature of the experience just in having it

— and all his main criticisms of smallest panpsychism hang on this reading. But although it is a natural reading of [39] as it stands, and a possible reading of the original version of the claim, so is

*The Partial Revelation Thesis*

[41] in the case of any particular experience, I am acquainted with the essential nature of the experience in certain respects, at least, just in having it.

The original claim, after all, is that 'we are acquainted with reality as it is in itself *in certain respects* in having experience as we do', and it is followed three lines later by the observation that this claim 'is fully compatible with the view that there may also be fundamental things we don't know about matter considered in its experiential being', where these are not just 'facts about experience in sense modalities we lack, or (e.g.) about the brightness-saturation-hue complexity of seemingly simple colour-experience, but also, perhaps, murkier facts about its composition, and also, perhaps, about the "hidden nature of consciousness" postulated by McGinn'.<sup>149</sup>

It seems, then, that I can as a 'smallest' panpsychist who endorses [41] suppose that one of the hidden facts about the nature of my experience — whose essential nature is partly revealed to me simply in my having it — is that it is somehow constituted — composed — of many

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knowing' (M2003a, p. 67). I make this time-honoured point against Papineau on pp. 263–5 below. In the recent mind–body debate it has been stressed in a different idiom by Kripke (1972) among others.

[148] A similar point is often made about the subject of experience's attempt to know itself as it is in that very act of knowing. For a doubt about whether this is really impossible, see Strawson 1999b, section X.

[149] M2003a, p. 54 and n; McGinn 1989. Experimenting, I find that the quality of *having hidden aspects* is part of what I feel I experience, when I attend to my experience rather than just having it unreflectively. It may be an illusion, or have an explanation of the sort offered by C. O. Evans (1966), and I rest nothing on it — but my experience certainly feels to me as if it is essentially something that is ontologically more than what is revealed to me in having it in the present sense of 'reveal'.

other experiences. Nothing exists other than experience, on this panpsychist view, and in having an experience I am *ipso facto* acquainted with the essential nature of my experience; but it does not follow, on this view, that I know the whole experiential nature of the event that occurs when I have that experience. Acquaintance with something need not involve exhaustive knowledge of its nature, any more than direct contact with something need involve direct contact with all of it. Nor need I have any inkling of the Laws of Experiential Composition by which the existence of many small experiential fields somehow constitutes the existence of my own phenomenologically unified experiential field. Nor do I, if smallest panpsychism is true.

Goff may object that the natural reading of the claim that ‘the having is the knowing’ is [40], the Full Revelation thesis, a thesis to which he himself subscribes. In reply let me note and put aside an unclarity about Full Revelation, and then record — with a proviso — a sense in which I do accept [40].

The unclarity has to do with the notion of attention. If it turns out that what a defender of Full Revelation takes to be fully revealed at any given time is just what is in the focus of attention at that time, then the doctrine is falsified as soon as it is allowed, seemingly most plausibly, that something can be genuinely part of the overall content of one’s awareness at a given time without being in the focus of attention at that time — in such a way that it truly exists as part of the content of one’s experience before (or whether or not) one turns one’s attention to it. It seems plain, however, that a Full Revelationist need not favour the focus of attention in this way, and can hold that the *whole* nature of the experience is indeed fully revealed just in the having of it, even though it is actually impossible for what is known and revealed by this kind of acquaintance-knowledge to be brought whole into the focus of attention.

In what sense do I accept [40]? Well, there’s a sense of the expression ‘my experience’ given which I agree that I do — necessarily — know the whole essential nature of my experience when it occurs. It cannot be otherwise, in fact, given that ‘the having is the knowing’ — given the sense in which (in James’s words) ‘as a psychic existent *feels*, so it must *be*’.<sup>150</sup> The proviso is that this acceptance of [40] must sit alongside a sense in which [40] is too strong.

I will try to clarify this. First, though, note that the phrase ‘the having is the knowing’ is becoming increasingly uncomfortable, because both ‘having’ and ‘knowing’ suggest a metaphysical separateness I

[150] 1890, 1.162, quoted by Goff (p. 54).

reject. As for ‘having’: it suggests the distinctness of possessor and possessed that I reject insofar as I take it (in M2003b) that there is in the end no real distinction between experience and experiencer; perhaps one might better say ‘the being is the knowing’. As for ‘knowing’: it suggests a distinction between the knowing subject and the thing constituted as object of knowledge by the act of knowing that I also reject as inapplicable to acquaintance-knowledge; perhaps one might better say ‘the knowing is the being’.

From ‘the being is the knowing’ and ‘the knowing is the being’ one can presumably derive ‘the knowing is the knowing’ and ‘the being is the being’ — which seem unhelpful. I like tautologies, but we can put them aside, because the present proposal is simply that one can admit a sense in which [40] is true without ruling out smallest panpsychism. One might try to put the point by saying that it does not follow, from any sense in which it is true that I know the whole essential nature of *my experience*,  $e_1$ , when it occurs, that I know the whole essential nature of *the event*,  $E_1$ , *that occurs when I have an experience* — even if it is true, as it is by panpsychist hypothesis, that  $E_1$  consists in nothing but experience, and even though the occurrence of  $e_1$  consists in the occurrence of  $E_1$ .

This is intended to sound problematic, and I will say more about it in the next section. For the moment the proposal is that for all that has been said so far,  $E_1$  may involve the existence of many ‘small’ experiences  $e_2$ – $e_n$  with which I have no ‘from-the-inside’, being-is-knowing acquaintance (necessarily so, given that they are experiences had by subjects of experience that are numerically distinct from me) even though they somehow jointly constitute my experience  $e_1$ . This bears comparison with the fact that the centre of gravity of a composite thing is distinct from the centres of gravity of all its constituents, although it is wholly constituted by them. (A centre of gravity, however, is not a real concrete item.)

Goff questions the coherence of this proposal on several grounds, and reasonably so, given that he attributes Full Revelation to me.<sup>151</sup> First, and independently of Full Revelation, he endorses the earlier James claim that 100 subjects can’t combine to make a 101st. Second, he takes it that it follows from Full Revelation that my experience can’t be ‘constituted of the experiential being of billions of micro subjects of experience’ without this fact being revealed in the content of

[151] He might also have cited M1994, p. 46: ‘experiential phenomena are those phenomena that are entirely constituted by experiences’ having the experiential character they have for those who have them as they have them’, but this (taken without qualification) is the claim I have shifted away from in M2003a.

my experience (p. 57); for nothing is hidden, given Full Revelation. Certainly nothing experiential is hidden, and experience is all there is, given panpsychism.

Third, suppose we assume for argument that such constitutive Composition is possible — that experiences can somehow compose a further numerically distinct experience even while their individuality is somehow preserved. In this case we are really no better off, Goff says, because Full Revelation dictates that constitutive Composition cannot be anything other than merely *additive*, a mere summation of the constituent experiential parts. There can be no *blending* analogous to blue and yellow blending to make green, say. For just as nothing can be hidden, nothing can be lost, in the sense in which blue and yellow are lost when they blend to make green. Nor can there be any less obvious or as one might say *chemical* principles of combination that allow complex human thoughts — about philosophy, say — to be constituted of components that in no way resemble them, in the way that smallest panpsychism must surely suppose. In fact, as Goff says, it seems that ‘the experiential being of a higher-level subject of experience [cannot be] significantly qualitatively different from the experiential being of the lower-level subjects of experience of which it is constituted’ (p. 57). My severe pain, then, BIG PAIN, can only be made out of LITTLE PAINS, at best, and not, for example, LITTLE RED-EXPERIENCES. But even this won’t work, Goff says, because ‘what it feels like to be LITTLE PAIN 1 is not part of what it feels like to be BIG PAIN. LITTLE PAIN 1 feels slightly pained, BIG PAIN does not. The phenomenal character of LITTLE PAIN 1’s experience, i.e. feeling slightly pained, is no part of the phenomenal character of BIG PAIN’s experience, i.e. feeling severely pained’ (p. 58; McGinn makes similar points). As for the constituent parts of my current thought (the thought that Hume needed to admit the respectability of transcendental arguments in his discussion of personal identity), go figure.

This is I think a devastating refutation of Full Revelation smallest panpsychism, on at least one natural understanding of it; so I am glad that I do not hold such a view. I think there are many reasons for a panpsychist to reject a Full Revelation thesis of this sort, in fact, and I will finish my main discussion in the next section by considering some of them in a little more detail.

What follows is rough, and it is written in the awareness that there must be a great deal of sophisticated discussion of these issues that I don’t know about. The interim conclusion, in any case, is that anyone who thinks that Full Revelation as just expounded is a necessary part of panpsychism must abandon smallism, even when smallism is taken



in a realistic — a later-Jamesian, quantum-field-theoryish, not crudely or brutally atomistic — way.<sup>152</sup>

### 17. Panpsychism and Duality

In the last section I claimed that my experience  $e_1$ , with which I necessarily (by definition) have direct, from-the-inside, being-is-knowing acquaintance, may be somehow constitutively composed of many ‘small’ experiences  $e_2$ - $e_n$  with which I have no such direct from-the-inside acquaintance (equally necessarily, for they are the experiences of numerically distinct subjects). This is how it must be, I think, if any realistic version of smallest panpsychism is to stand up, for we are trying to give an account of our own experience, and in having an experience we have no experience of ourselves as somehow being many subjects of experience. I cannot avoid this difficulty in the way that Coleman can (pp. 48-50), by proposing that an experience of mine may be somehow composed of many experiences whose existence does not essentially involve subjects of experience, because I not only accept [4], the Subject Thesis according to which there cannot be an experience without a subject of experience, but also the ultimate identity of experience and experiencer. I find no difference between panexperientialism and panpsychism, as remarked on p. 189.

I have used the expression ‘from-the-inside’. It is not entirely stable, but it is very natural in this context, and it offers one way of making a distinction that must be made, if realistic smallest panpsychism is to have any chance of being true. It may also lead us forward in a crucial way, because it may give us a first intimation of how panpsychist monism can allow some sort of fundamental and all-pervasive *duality* to existence (a glimmering of the possibility that ESFD monism may be intelligible after all). And this, perhaps, is just as well, for it is extremely natural to think that we cannot in the end do without some such duality.<sup>153</sup> It cannot be a betrayal of naturalistic panpsychism to require this, if naturalistic panpsychism is to have any chance of being true. (We must, as remarked, accommodate the facts of reproduction and evolution.)

A first, inadequate way to put the idea just canvassed is that while an experience, a sesmet, which is energy-stuff, necessarily has an

[152] Chalmers notes that the seeming difficulty of the problem of how experiences may constitutively compose other experiences ‘may well arise from thinking of experiential composition along the lines of physical composition, when it might well work quite differently’ (1997, p. 43).

[153] Skrbina remarks that my position is one of ‘dual-aspect monism ... an approach that dates back at least to Spinoza ... and strongly urges one toward panpsychism’ (p. 153).

‘inside’, a being-is-knowing inside, which is its essential nature, it must also, as energy-stuff, have an ‘outside’, which is no less part of its essential nature.

‘Inside’ and ‘outside’ are likely to mislead, however. It is not as if any sort of non-experiential stuff is being introduced, because there is on this view a fundamental sense in which the inside of an experience or sesmet like  $e_l$ , i.e. its experiential nature, is its whole essential nature.  $e_l$ ’s outside is not something ontologically extra.

What is it, then? Well, two main issues arise, when it comes to providing for a duality of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’: the issue of causation and the issue of constitution. With respect to causation, we may say that  $e_l$ ’s outside is just a matter of how  $e_l$  interacts with other sesmets, other parts of (experiential) energy-stuff, given its inside. With respect to constitution, we may say that it is a matter of how  $e_l$  is constituted of numerically distinct sesmets  $e_2$ – $e_n$ . At bottom these are two aspects of the same thing, the given reality.<sup>154</sup>

Mysterious, you may say; but the proposal about causation returns us to a crucial point, one that first surfaced in the discussion of Descartes (p. 204; see also pp. 210–11): experience cannot be thought of as just passive content, in any plausible (reproduction-and-evolution-allowing) panpsychism, but must always be understood to be active substance.<sup>155</sup> I think that this, too, is a difficult idea for us, and that effective grasp of it requires considerable acclimatization, but the basic smallest picture remains plain for all that. Many believe that it is legitimate to think of our actual world, conceived of as involving non-experiential substance (substance that is not experience), as in some sense composed wholly of energy, in various forms, and the present (and so far still Eddingtonian) suggestion, which is becoming increasingly familiar in philosophy, is simply that the intrinsic nature of that energy is experience, i.e. something whose essential nature is fully revealed to us, at least in part, just in our having it. Everything that exists (including of course reproduction and evolution) is left in place by the panpsychist hypothesis, then. Panpsychists can fully agree with Papineau, in the old idiom, that ‘pains are one and the same

[154] I refrain from saying that  $e_l$ ’s inside, i.e. its experiential nature, is wholly non-relational, for I take it that its experiential nature will be partly a function of its interactions with other sesmets. The effect that  $e_l$  has on  $e_{n+1}$  will indeed be wholly a function of its experiential nature, but its experiential nature may be partly a function of how it is being affected by  $e_{n+2}$ . Great complications lie here, no doubt, about which I have said nothing (Mach’s famous principle — that everything in the universe is affected by everything else — comes to mind).

[155] All substance is active, as Leibniz says (activity does not imply any sort of intentional agency).

as C-fibre firings' (p. 102), and at the same time reject his suggestion that 'straightforward physicalism is strongly backed by causal-explanatory considerations' (p. 101) in any way that gives it an advantage over panpsychism.

Perhaps the main reason why it is difficult to think of what I am calling 'experience' as a stuff or substance (apart from the prevalence of the bad picture of the object/property or substance/attribute relation) is that we have, as previously noted, a tendency to think of it as 'just' content, experiential content conceived of as something passive, content contained in a container. And it is of course perfectly workable to think of it in this way in many contexts. Here, though, it is highly obstructive, and I will try to offset the obstruction by sometimes speaking instead of *experiencing*.<sup>156</sup>

My first impulse is to add immediately that 'experiencing' in this use is not just a verbal noun denoting an activity, but a noun denoting a certain sort of substance. This, however, obscures the deeper point, which is that the activity in question is the substance in question. The same idea animates the notion of a *sesmet*, and the claim that (thin) experiencers are in the final (Cartesian) analysis identical with experiences.

With this in place, consider another line of thought that focuses on the issue of causation.

[1] Naturalistic panpsychism is true [premiss]

[2] Naturalistic panpsychism requires causation (including reproduction and evolution) [premiss]

[3] If there is to be causation, substances must affect each other<sup>157</sup> [premiss]

[4] Substances are experiencings (i.e. subjects-having-experiences, *sesmets*) [premiss]

∴ [5] Experiencings must affect each other. ([1]–[4])

[6] There is a fundamental *respect* in which experiencings are wholly 'closed' to each other, as I will say — a fundamental respect in which experiencings, conceived of as things of which it is true that the being is the knowing, are necessarily wholly disconnected from each other. One way to put this point is to say that

[156] One might match this terminology by saying that subjects are *subjectings*.

[157] Substances are all that concretely exist.

experiencings are ‘logically private’ or have, in Searle’s phrase, a ‘first-person ontology’.<sup>158</sup> [premiss]

So far, I think, so good.

[7] Things that are metaphysically wholly closed to each other in any respect cannot affect each other in that respect [premiss]

∴ [8] That in virtue of which experiencings are able to affect each other cannot be that in respect of which they are wholly closed to each other. ([6], [7])

∴ [9] There is something about experiencings other than that in respect of which they are wholly closed to each other. ([8], [5])

[10] That in virtue of which experiencings are wholly closed to each other is that in virtue of which they are correctly said to be fully revealed [premiss]

∴ [11] There is something about experiencings other than that in respect of which they are correctly said to be fully revealed. ([9], [10])

∴ [12] Full Revelation is false. ([11])

I think the argument goes wrong in [7], but I am going to leave it in place, with the unclear term ‘metaphysically wholly closed’ unexamined, because I think it may be suggestive when it comes to understanding the sense in which Full Revelation must be false if panpsychism is true. The basic idea is that all ‘first-person-ontology’ phenomena must exist in such a way that they are also ‘third-person-ontology’ phenomena, i.e. phenomena that have causal reality in the third-person-ontology reality (we know that this is how things are on our ordinary picture of the world, and there is no reason to think it should be different on the panpsychist picture). In other terms again, one might say that while there are many ‘perspectival’ realities that are indeed real realities, irreducibly real, any such perspectival reality is also and nonetheless part of a reality that is not that perspectival reality (remember that experience is all that exists, on the current view). The difficulty in this idea is perhaps no greater than the difficulty in the idea that the space depicted in a painting of an imaginary landscape is no part of the space in the world in which the museum in which the

[158] See e.g. Searle 1980. Compare James: ‘the breaches between ... thoughts ... belonging to different ... minds ... are the most absolute breaches in nature’ (1890, 1. 226).

painting hangs is located, although there is also a sense in which its whole ontological being is entirely included in the larger space.

This may or may not be helpful, but there is, on any account, causation. Where does this causation (and constitution) take place? We have to assume, in line with §14, that the dimensionality of the concrete real, although not understood by us, is something that fits with the nature of the concrete real conceived of as experientiality in the same general way as the way in which space or spacetime — which is certainly not understood by us — fits with the nature of the concrete real conceived of as good old fashioned non-experientially propertied physical stuff. The causal effect of anything on anything will have an experiential aspect, will indeed be experiential, and that is why even microsubjects — ultimate sesmets — may be said to have sensation, and may even be said to have intentionality and represent things, on many currently favoured accounts of what intentionality and representation are, rather than just having ‘bare experientiality’.<sup>159</sup> On these accounts, there is no more difficulty in the idea that ultimate sesmets have sensation and intentionality and represent things than there is in the idea that one particle exerts attractive or repulsive force on another — for these are in fact the same thing. Obviously the intentionality will not be explicit conceptual intentionality. Nevertheless the experiential state that is particle *a*’s registering of the repulsive force of particle *b* may be said to be of or about particle *b*; not only on any theory of ‘intentionality’ according to which intentionality does not require experience or consciousness, but also on many theories of intentionality, according to which intentionality does require experience.<sup>160</sup>

Might we in the end have to posit a universe-wide sesmet in order to posit the existence of many sesmets existing in a dimension that allows for their interaction? I’ve been assuming that the answer is No, but I would not be much troubled if it were Yes, first because a universe-wide sesmet would have no more to do with dogmatic religion than the view that there is a single universe, second because of a methodological principle integral to serious naturalism: if one finds oneself pushed towards an apparently extraordinary hypothesis like panpsychism, when one is trying to account for the given natural facts, of which the first and most fundamental is and will always be the fact

[159] On this issue see e.g. Coleman (p. 50), Lycan (p. 70), Simons (p. 150), and McGinn (pp. 96–7).

[160] In Strawson 2004, revised in forthcoming b, I consider particles’ claim to have intentionality in a context in which I put aside panpsychism. Note that I’m happy to attribute ‘animation’ to ultimates in Wilson’s sense (pp. 181–2).

of experience, one should bear in mind the certainly equal and arguably much greater extraordinariness of many of the hypotheses seriously entertained, and in some cases well supported, in present-day physics and cosmology.

All this needs, to put it mildly, development. The basic proposal is that ultimates — *sesmets* — *experiencings* — can be as they are to themselves, and their being as they are to themselves can be what they are, intrinsically, compatibly with their having causal effects on other *sesmets* and compatibly with their playing a part in constituting other numerically distinct *sesmets* (*sesmets* that are not only numerically but also qualitatively distinct). They have the effects or constituting rôles they have wholly in virtue of their experiential being, which is all the being they have (note the tension with the argument set out on pp. 258–9), and yet when one *sesmet* or *experiencing* affects another, in accordance with the Laws of Experiential Nature, whatever they are, or goes to constitute another, in accordance with those Laws of Experiential Nature that are Laws of Experiential Composition, the second obviously will not have access to the from-the-inside nature of the first in the way in which only the first can. Nor is there any more reason to think that the second will take on the experiential character of the first, in some direct way, than there is to think that a positively charged particle will in some direct way take on the character of a negatively charged particle with which it is in interaction — a point independent of the fact that the second of these two phenomena is, on the current view, an instance of the first. In this sense experiential realities may be said to *function* as non-experiential but experience-causing realities for other experiential realities, and to *function* as non-experiential but experience-constituting realities for other experiential realities. Again, it may be said that although there is no non-experiential being absolutely speaking, there is non-experiential being relatively or relationally speaking.

If this is so, [40] — Full Revelation — is false, at least as interpreted here. If the cost of maintaining Full Revelation is retreat into a world without causation, reproduction and evolution, it is too high.<sup>161</sup> If we try to hold onto causation (panpsychist, experiential causation) along with Full Revelation, it looks as if we may have to take on the consequence that Full Revelation must involve full revelation of the causal powers of any *sesmet*, full revelation of the very nature of causation, indeed, of a sort that renders it fully intelligible to that *sesmet*. It

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[161] Perhaps this is one reason why Leibniz, whose fundamental ontology is panpsychist, came to the view that there is no causal interaction between his monads.

seems, though, that a theory is refuted rather than supported if it has any such consequence. It is plain that the kind of acquaintance-knowledge that we have of experience just in having it simply does not contain this kind of causal knowledge, even though it is, in being direct acquaintance-knowledge of the actual living of occurrent lived experience, far more than just knowledge of passive experiential content.

If, then, one holds, as I do, that a thing's causal powers are essentially and literally constitutive of its nature, one can conclude that Full Revelation must be false if panpsychism is true.<sup>162</sup> If it follows directly from the conception of experience as active substance that Full Revelation is false, then, once again, Full Revelation is false; for reality is not inert, so if reality is experience-stuff, then experience-stuff is not inert. If the falsity of Full Revelation means that I have to give up my earlier characterization of experience as 'the qualitative character that experiences have for those who have them as they have them, where this qualitative character is considered wholly independently of everything else' (M2003a, p. 50), so be it; consider it given up.

This may seem like uncontrolled speculation. But it is not entirely uncontrolled, and it is not unwarranted, because I am not defending a thesis that is already crazy and that is now pushing me into further craziness. The dialectical situation is rather this. A hard (and genuinely naturalistic) nose for reality obliges one to endorse some sort of panpsychism long before any wild speculation has taken place. Given that one then knows that some sort of panpsychism must be true, speculation as to how it could be true is fully licensed, and strongly to be encouraged. 'The truth ... must be strange' in this area, as Russell once said (1912, p. 19), and we have to do our best to understand how what must be true could be true. So when Goff says (p. 60) that I have nothing to offer on the question of how macroexperientiality emerges from microexperientiality, only 'faith that *it must happen somehow*', I enthusiastically agree — and find the James of *A Pluralistic Universe* by my side. The only argument for the claim that macroexperientiality emerges from microexperientiality argument is transcendental, and it depends on the assumption that smallism is true, an assumption that can, as Coleman says, be questioned.

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[162] It is a point for another time that *there is no real distinction, only a conceptual distinction, between a thing's categorical properties and its dispositional properties*. This point combines with the point that there is no real distinction between an object and its properties (§8 above) to lay the foundation of a decent metaphysics, insofar as it is possible to have one while retaining anything like the conventional notions of object and property.

### 18. A Few Further Responses

I have already replied to many of the points made by the other contributors to this book, especially Goff and Coleman, and the endorsement of the Cartesian view of the relation between objects and properties in §§7–9 is in effect, and as noted, a reply to Macpherson. I am particularly grateful to these three philosophers, the youngest contributors to this book. I have many further detailed replies, but space for only a few. There is obviously no correlation between my appreciation of a paper and the length of my response to it, if only because the more I agree the less I am likely to have to say in reply. In this spirit I salute Skrbina and thank him for putting me onto the earlier expression of Eddington's view and for prompting me to read William James's *A Pluralistic Universe*; and also Seager, whose case against ontological 'relationalism' I fully endorse.

I argued earlier, against the *a posteriori* materialists, that when it comes to our knowledge of the nature of our experience, the kind of knowledge that is fundamentally in question is a strictly first-order matter. The having (the being) is the knowing, and our acquaintance with it most certainly does not involve standing back from the experience reflectively and examining it by means of a further, distinct experience. I take it that this point voids many of Papineau's criticisms, for he focuses on the second-order phenomenon of what he calls 'phenomenal thought', such as 'think[ing] about the experience of seeing something red', and the third-order phenomenon of 'reflect[ing] introspectively on phenomenal thoughts' (p. 104). His highly intellectualistic conception of the mind also leads him to express doubt about the very idea of direct acquaintance; he thinks that it 'assumes some mode of thought where objects become completely transparent to the mind', and suspects it to be inspired by a visual model of peer[ing] in at some immaculately illuminated scene' (p. 102). This, however, is a vivid description of exactly what it is not, and of what it is not inspired by, for it is entirely non-perceptual. It is in fact (as Aristotle and Locke well knew) nothing more than the phenomenon of 'what-it's-likeness'.<sup>163</sup>

*A posteriori* physicalists, Carruthers and Schecter as well as Papineau, will demand further explanation of this acquaintance-knowing, but the right response to this demand is, once again, Louis Armstrong's: 'If you gotta ask, you ain't never going to know'. And the power of this response lies in the fact that of course they do know:

[163] On Aristotle see in particular Caston 2002, a wonderful piece of work. On Locke see e.g. Strawson forthcoming d, §7.



the fact that they are still asking shows that they have been led astray by theory.

It is perhaps the focus on phenomenal *concepts*, rather than on the fact of direct experiential acquaintance, that is the central error of the philosophy-of-language grounded *a posteriori* physicalist approach (as remarked in note c144). Papineau makes this apparent when he says, with characteristic honesty, ‘I don’t recognize any way in which the mind “captures” something, apart from simply referring to it’ (p. 106). This is enough to secure the *a posteriori* physicalists in their position, but the reply is simple. This is not how one ‘captures’ — knows, is acquainted with — the experience of red or pain — or free fall or chili or nausea — when one has it.<sup>164</sup> Coleman gives a sympathetic presentation of the *a posteriori* physicalists’ case even as he rejects it (pp. 45-7) and ends by noting that it is their ‘*phenomenal concepts strategy*’ that needs arguing against. Exactly so. But it is not as if anything more needs to be done, because the simple reply just given is devastatingly sufficient for the task. To say any more is to fog things over.

The *a posteriori* physicalists will deny this. They will stonewall and accuse me of doing the same. That’s fine by me, because I’m stonewalling on a stone wall: the fact of experience, the fact that we are acquainted with the essential nature of experience, at least in certain respects, simply in having it, because the having is the being acquainted, as Descartes observed in his Second Meditation (1641, p. 19).

This is an infallibility claim, no less, and infallibility claims are often thought to be beyond the pale. So perhaps philosophers who accept the acquaintance view can allow that we don’t have any kind of perfect infallibility in the matter (although it is unclear how we could fail to), insisting merely that we are in fact always nearly right, if not necessarily absolutely right, about the essential nature of our experience, at least in certain respects, just in having it. Certainly they can agree that all infallibility claims are immediately voided as soon as one starts to conceive knowing in a more cognitive way as the taking of something as object of intellectual attention, moving to the second-order, or the third-order, and starting to *think* about our experience, and about our thoughts about our experience. To do this,

[164] ‘Capture’ is my word, but I do not use it well, and Papineau is right to express doubts about my talk of *terms* fully capturing the nature of things. What I mean is that *we* (not terms or theories) can mentally ‘capture’, i.e. grasp, the essence of things in certain respects, e.g. in having experience as we do. Papineau shows that he understands my intent when he talks in the quotation just given of ‘the mind’ rather than a term capturing something.

however, is to step back — disconnect — from the real mind-body problem.<sup>165</sup>

All very well — but now the *a posteriori* physicalists (and indeed everyone else) can make against me a move that I make myself when I conjoin claims of the following sort

[a] our fundamental thought categories fail to get the world right when we think about the relation between an object and its properties

[b] we can as philosophers nevertheless just about see how things are

or when I talk airily of the need for ‘cultivation of a shift in intuitions, acquisition of the ability to sustain a different *continuo* in place in the background of thought’ (M2003b, p. 302). ‘Look’, they say, ‘the same applies to your claim that we know the essential nature of reality in certain respects in having experience, because the having is the knowing. We are all deeply and indeed helplessly committed to this conviction, but we can nevertheless sufficiently see how it may yet be false — how we may be completely wrong about the nature of experience even in the very having of it.’

I have three replies. The first is the reply to Dennett in RMP (pp. 5–6, nn. 6 and 7). The second has also been sufficiently laid out; it is that there is no good motivation for this move, and in particular that it receives precisely *no* support from the success and beauty and ‘causal-explanatory power’ of the physical sciences (contrary to Papineau and McGinn, among others). The third is ‘Fine, we’re at the end of argument. I’m happy where I am, if you’re happy where you are you should stay there’. For my aim as a pupil of Epictetus is not to convince anyone of anything, only to try to state the truth as far as I can. Note, though, that the fact that a form of argument is reversible doesn’t show that the considerations it adduces have no more force one way than another. Rather it shows that neither side can use it to argue the other out of their position. The most they can hope to do is jolt the other side’s intuitions by the way in which they use it.

This formal vulnerability in my position — the fact that one of my styles of argument can be turned against me — does not trouble me. Nor does the fact that I am vulnerable in the same sort of way when I

[165] I can sense the feeling of confidence that many will have that this is an easy objection to meet, something that they don’t really have to think about, because I am familiar with the analytical-philosophy problematic that underwrites this confidence (a merely sociological remark).

claim that the deep reason why people come to endorse the notion of the radical or brute emergence of the experiential from the non-experiential is that it ‘marks a position that seemingly has to exist’ given their prior commitments. Surely, Goff says, ‘we could say the same about Strawson’s hypothesis that macro-experiential being emerges from micro-experiential being’ (p. 60) — his point being that I have to say this given other things I am committed to. True; and the same can be said about my attempt to argue that radical emergence is impossible, by proposing (for example) that it is as impossible as the emergence of the spatial from the non-spatial. My case for the impossibility of radical emergence is, as I stress in RMP, the exercise and articulation of an intuition, an attempt to open up a scene of thought. I am not seeking to disturb the *a posteriori* physicalists’ fortifications, I am outside their walls with no wish to get in.

Smart recruits Occam against me, Occam with his razor. But whatever Occam prompts us to do, he cannot have us cut away the only thing we know for certain to exist — experience —, and the strictest reading of his famous dictum that entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity<sup>166</sup> leads straight to the view that experience is the *only* thing that exists, a view that one can break out of only if some form of Kantian transcendental argument of the following form

- [1] Experience exists
- [2] Experience cannot possibly exist unless X exists
- [3] Therefore X exists

is valid, where X is something that is, knowably, ontologically distinct from experience. It is true that a transcendental argument of this sort can establish the existence of a subject of experience, and it is very natural to think that a subject of experience must be ontologically distinct from any experience itself; in which case we can at least establish that something other than experience exists, in spite of Occam’s razor. However, even the view that the subject of an experience must be ontologically distinct from the experience itself is open to doubt, given one natural understanding of the notion of a subject of experience — the ‘thin’ understanding employed in this paper — and I reject it. And even if it were correct, the transcendental argument for the existence of a subject of experience would not permit us to establish the existence of anything like a physical world as ordinarily understood — nor even a world with intrinsically non-experiential

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[166] When one theorizes, one should not commit oneself to the existence of anything more than one has to.

features.<sup>167</sup> If that is something you feel you need to do, the best argument is that rare thing, Lockean humour.<sup>168</sup>

I am as much of an identity theorist as Smart, in fact — I would say I am more so —, but an identity theory is an identity theory, and to say that experiential states are brain states of certain sorts (something we may take to be true of all macro-experiential states, at least on this earth) is to say just that: that our experiential states, the only thing we know for certain to exist, are certain sorts of brain states. By the same token, of course, it is to say that brain states of these sorts just are experiential states. As Sprigge remarks — in another book I have been fortunate to be led to in writing these replies — ‘anything going for the identity theory is evidence for the truth of panpsychism, as was realized long ago by philosophers such as Josiah Royce’.<sup>169</sup> To identify X with Y is not to say that X does not exist. You can’t apply Occam’s razor and cut away X (experiential states) without also cutting away Y (brain states); for X is Y.

So while I have great respect, even fondness, for Smart’s position, I find that the Occam he appeals to rules against him and in my favour (not that I rest anything on this). It is certainly not Smart’s fault, but I think it is a shame, that his justly famous 1959 paper so eclipsed Feigl’s 1958 paper, which was also once widely known. For Feigl never put the reality of experience in doubt.<sup>170</sup>

Rosenthal points out something I hadn’t noticed — that my argument in RMP is in part a simple reversal of Smart’s. For just as Smart takes the general nature of the physical as given and proposes a ‘topic-neutral’ of experiential phenomena that leaves it open whether or not experiential phenomena are physical phenomena, so I take the general nature of the experiential as given and propose a ‘topic-neutral’ account of physical phenomena that leaves it open whether physical phenomena are experiential. We are both then free to invoke ‘mind-body correlations together with Ockham’s razor [to] show that

[167] Kant’s ‘Refutation of Idealism’ won’t do the trick.

[168] ‘If any one say, a dream may do the same thing, and all these ideas may be produced in us, without any external objects, he may please to dream that I make him this answer...’ (1689, p. 537 (4.2.14)). See also p. 634 (4.11.8): ‘And if our dreamer pleases to try, whether the glowing heat of a glass furnace be barely a wandering imagination in a drowsy man’s fancy, by putting his hand into it, he may perhaps be wakened into a certainty greater than he could wish, that it is something more...’.

[169] Sprigge 1983, p. 102.

[170] Feigl’s paper was somewhat ill expressed in terms of ‘raw feels’ (a notion inherited, perhaps, from Carnap). For a concise and sympathetic criticism of Feigl’s use of ‘raw feels’ that at the same time draws out the respect in which Feigl’s instincts were right — and panpsychist — see Sprigge 1983, pp. 100–4.

experiences are physical' (p. 123), or as I would put it, although the difference is only one of emphasis (for identity is identity), to show that the physical is experiential.

An important part of Rosenthal's position is that non-conscious perceptual states can be said to have 'qualitative character' (to be 'experiential' in my sense). I'm happy to concede this for argument, and I agree with him that it 'allows for useful theoretical ways to identify and taxonomize mental qualities independently of the way individuals are conscious of them' (p. 118). But I don't believe that it would provide a way in to non-first-person knowledge of the nature of qualitative character. For although I also agree that we could determine that 'two individuals have the same mental qualities' from the third-personal point of view, I deny that this supports the claim that we could thereby know what those qualities were like, qualitatively speaking. For although we could determine the qualitative mental sameness of two persons — if, for example, we could know that they were atom-for-atom identical — we still would not know what those qualities were (unless of course we were one of them).

There is a striking symmetry about Rosenthal's and my positions, for even as he rejects my claim that we have merely structural knowledge of the intrinsic nature of the non-experiential,<sup>171</sup> he offers what is to my ears a purely structural (state-space) account of the intrinsic nature of the experiential. What is for him the keystone of his position — in one expression, it is the claim that 'your mental quality of red and mine are automatically the same if our abilities to discern physical color properties are the same' (p. 126) — is for me a *reductio* of it, comparable to saying that any two spatial entities that are topologically identical must have identical shapes (it is arguably a special case of such a claim, once the reference to spatiality is removed). And Rosenthal could of course make the converse move against me! Perhaps our positions are from a topic-neutral point of view the same! To that extent, we are both right about one thing — that the truth can't lie somewhere in between.

Georges Rey and I have always disagreed about experience. We enjoy this. Always he has always told me — the first time in a down-pour in Aix-en-Provence — that there is no non-question-begging argument for the existence of experience. Always I have replied that it

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[171] On the grounds that we have knowledge of properties like mass, spin, and charge (p. 123). On my view, we no more have knowledge of the intrinsic, non-mathematically expressible nature of these properties than we do of the intrinsic nature of space. (Can we at least be said to have some irreducibly non-structural knowledge of the nature of *force*? Not in any way that shows it to be intrinsically non-experiential rather than experiential.)

is question-begging to request a non-question-begging argument for its existence, and have requested his non-question-begging argument for the existence of non-experiential reality. ‘You’re prepared to go directly against ordinary opinion in rejecting the possibility of radical free will’, he has always said, ‘so why do you think the rejection of ordinary opinion is absolutely ruled out in the case of experience?’ I have never had anything to reply except that the cases are of a completely different order, and that if he can’t see that then I don’t know what more to say. Now, though, I am tempted to add that panpsychism also goes wildly against common sense, although not as wildly as his eliminative reductionism (for that is the ultimate wildness), and that I’m still in the radical club.

Lycan correctly reports my view that ‘(1) The nature of (real) experience cannot be specified in wholly non-experiential terms’, and grants that my conclusion — that those who seek to reduce the experiential to the non-experiential are denying the existence of the experiential — might ‘follow if (1) were analytic. But [he says] (1) is not analytic; it is a highly contentious philosophical claim.’ It does not follow, though, from the fact that a claim is contentious, that it is not analytic,<sup>172</sup> and I find on reflection that I am happy to say that (1) can be counted as analytic for present purposes, or at least as a necessary truth. More moderately: it is at least as much a necessary truth as the claim that one could not fully reveal the nature of colour-experience to someone using only means that did not in any way involve their having any sort of colour-experience. If Lycan wishes to hold to the view that (1) is not a necessary truth, then I think he must at least concede that its converse, (2) the nature of the non-experiential cannot be specified in wholly experiential terms, is not analytic or any sort of necessary truth. With this in place we could cut the cards and reconsider our mutual positions.

Jackson’s paper is a shaft of sun in a dark place, but the shaft is too thin. I resonate with the intuitions that lie behind his *a priori* entailment approach (given the way in which I reject radical or brute emergence); my difficulty with his paper in this form is simply that I am not clear what he means by ‘consciousness’, or what he has in mind when he talks of arrangements of non-experiential items ‘causing’ or ‘generating’ consciousness (experience). So I am tantalized, and want more.

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[172] I’m tempted to say that it is analytic — inescapably contained in the notions of infinity and concrete existence — that there cannot be an actual concrete infinity of things.

I like Simons's stylish and helpful paper very much, and am pleased that he thinks that the argument in RMP actually works, once the case against radical emergence is granted. I should, though, say that panpsychism as I understand and characterize it has nothing to do with 'the idea of electrons making decisions about how to spin, nuclei harbouring intentions to split, or photons with existential Angst' (p. 146), any more than it has anything to do with tables and chairs being subjects of experience (RMP, p. 26); and when Simons writes 'I hope it is clear that adopting panpsychism is of the same order of desperation as denying experience or accepting dualism, because to all appearances there is nothing like experience down among the quarks and leptons' (p. 148) I cannot agree that the 'because' clause does the work he needs it to do — apart from the other reasons that exist for denying the charge of desperation.

Stapp makes some excellent and correct debating points, but I think his central criticism fails. After observing, rightly, that by 'physicSalism' I mean in effect present-day physics, he points out that present-day physics involves ineliminable reference to experience in involving reference to the conscious choices and feedback experiences of scientific experimenters. He concludes that I am wrong to say that what I call 'real physicalism cannot have anything to do with physicaSalism unless it is supposed — obviously falsely — that the terms of physics can fully capture the nature or essence of experience' (p. 4); for actual present-day physics does indeed include such terms.

There is much to be said here in reply, and my use of 'fully capture' (p. 4) is indeed unsatisfactory (as Papineau shows, pp. 100 ff.), but I will make only three small points. First, even if this is right, the real problem — the mind-body problem — remains: it just needs reformulation. Second, I take it that the object of physics existed in full before there were any scientific experimenters, in such a way that a full description of its nature could in principle be given independently of any reference to the experiences of scientific experimenters. Third, I also take it that although collapse of the wave function involves a certain sort of transfer of *information*, this need not involve any sort of consciousness or experience of the scientific-experimenter kind, i.e. human-style experience (although it will indeed involve some sort of conscious experience, according to panpsychism).

I have touched on McGinn's paper at several points. Here I will say only that my hair did get very long at the end of the 1960s (see his p. 93), and that I am glad he thinks that panpsychism is — for all the faults he finds in it — 'one of the loveliest and most tempting view of reality ever devised' (ibid). I have already claimed (p. 229) that a

correct, Cartesian attitude to the relation between objects and substances and their properties and attributes undercuts many of his detailed objections, and I would like to respond to his fearless proposal of ‘*extended panpsychism*: experience exists at every point in the spatial universe, whether occupied by matter or not’ (p. 97) by fearlessly accepting it as a serious hypothesis, with two provisos. First, I take ‘spatial’ to be a natural-kind term for whatever the intrinsic dimensionality of reality is. Second, I delete the words ‘whether occupied by matter or not’, to leave just ‘experience exists at every point in the spatial universe’, on the scientifically well-attested ground that there is (as Descartes had already intuited) really no such thing as ‘empty space’. I forgive McGinn his jokes at the expense of panpsychism, especially now that I have learnt from Wilson that Lucretius had the same impulse over two thousand years ago (p. 177), and he was surely not the first, given the wit of the Greeks.

Central to the present position since M1994 (‘Agnostic materialism’) has been the Lockean claim that we are profoundly ignorant of the nature of the physical.<sup>173</sup> Macpherson thinks my terminology obscures the Lockean connection and that I don’t explicitly recognize it, but I have always done so, and do so again in RMP.<sup>174</sup> It is in any case a claim massively backed by physics, and I’ll call it *Ignorance*.<sup>175</sup> One thing that follows from Ignorance is that we can’t know that ‘Australian’ zombies are possible even if we allow that whatever is conceivable is possible (Australian zombies are perfect physical duplicates of experiencing human beings that are wholly experienceless beings).<sup>176</sup> Daniel Stoljar agrees, and wonders why I call them ‘Australian’. The answer is that I felt that they needed to be distinguished from their more important and long-established cousins, ‘classical’ zombies, who are ‘*outwardly and behaviourally* indistinguishable from human beings while having unknown (possibly non-biological) insides and [are] accordingly of considerable interest to functionalists and behaviourists’ (M2003a, p. 84 n. 115); for it

[173] Two key passages in Locke’s *Essay* are 2.23.28-32 and 4.3.6 — one of philosophy’s greatest paragraphs (1689, pp. 311-14 and 539-43).

[174] p. 8. See e.g. M1994, p. 102, M1999a, p. 31, M2003a, pp. 63, 65.

[175] Locke, of course, argues that we are equally ignorant of the nature of the substance of the mind; what he has principally in mind is that it may for all we know be wholly material. One cannot properly understand Locke on substance without a good knowledge of the debate centred round Descartes, as I have recently discovered, and Locke’s correspondence with Stillingfleet shows, I think, that Macpherson is wrong to hold (p. 79) that Locke thinks that ‘no combination of physical properties can produce mentality’ (see Locke 1696-9, pp. 459-62, M2003a, p. 82, n. 84).

[176] The point is made in M1999a, pp. 28-9, more fully in M2003a, p. 72, and in RMP, p. 22 n.



seemed that a whole generation was growing up unaware of the existence of classical zombies. I called them ‘Australian’ in spite of the fact that I disapprove of them, because they seemed particularly popular on that continent.<sup>177</sup>

Another closely connected thing that I take to follow from Ignorance, as Stoljar notes, is that we do not know enough about the nature of the physical to know that it cannot itself be experiential. Well and good, and again Stoljar agrees. But he then points out, quite correctly, that I also claim that we do know enough to know (4) that the experiential cannot emerge from the wholly and utterly non-experiential. And (4) is plainly inconsistent with Ignorance.

True. I am not a radical Ignorantist. With Socrates, Locke, and, happily, most of the rest of the First XI, I subscribe to Ignorance in general, both in RMP and elsewhere, but within that frame I try to make the case for the intuition that the experiential cannot emerge from the wholly and utterly non-experiential as vigorously as I can, even as I stress that the case for the intuition cannot ultimately rest on argument from generally agreed principles.<sup>178</sup> If someone says that one of the things that follows from Ignorance is that there may be non-experiential facts, unknown to us, that will serve to ‘yield’ experiential facts, I will not be able to prove that that’s not so, but I will not be greatly troubled, for until more is said it amounts to simply dismissing of the considerations brought in favour of the intuition that the experiential cannot emerge from the non-experiential, and is I think close to saying

[177] I write as a long-standing ‘honorary Australian philosopher’ (appointed by Frank Jackson, Michael Smith, and Philip Pettit in the last century). Since writing his commentary, Stoljar (private communication) has traced Australian zombies to the ‘imitation man’ in Keith Campbell’s 1970 book *Body and Mind*, and thinks the epithet may after all be appropriate.

[178] After saying that the property of being intrinsically suitable for constituting experience cannot be possessed by ‘wholly, utterly, through-and-through non-experiential phenomena’ I comment: ‘This is the unargued intuition again. Bear in mind that the intuition that the non-experiential could not emerge from the wholly experiential is exactly parallel and unargued’ (p. 21). Coleman picks up on this last sentence, claiming that this argument from parity is disingenuous (p. 46). Experiential-from-non-experiential emergence may be impossible, he says, but at least it fits the standard model for emergence in being a case of ‘higher-level’ phenomena emerging from ‘lower-level’ phenomena. Non-experiential-from-experiential emergence, by contrast, would, he says, be a bizarre case of lower-level phenomena emerging from higher-level phenomena. This objection is based on a misunderstanding, however. In being explicitly couched in terms of emergence, the challenge to those who reject the intuition that the experiential could not possibly emerge from the wholly non-experiential takes for granted the standard model of emergence (the idea that emergence is a matter of ‘higher-level’ phenomena emerging from ‘lower-level’ phenomena). The challenge is, precisely, that those philosophers who think it possible that the (real) experiential could emerge from the non-experiential must think it equally possible that the non-experiential could *emerge* from the experiential.

(albeit with an added, dynamical flavour) that not-P might entail P. Now one might get away even with this last claim, I think, but only if one endorsed the Spinozan, ESFD-monist view that P and not-P are at bottom the same thing, and Stoljar, of course, does not hold this view. Nor would it help him even if he did, for then — an important point — he would no longer need (or be able) to claim that there was any kind of experiential-from-non-experiential *emergence*.

In sum, I think that the assertion of radical Ignorance is not an adequate or interesting response. The radical Ignorantist position is consistent, infeasible, safe, but it opts out of the real difficulty — if, that is, its exponents really are real realists about the experiential. If they're *not* really real realists about the experiential — and certainly none of those who think that experiential properties could literally be functional properties, however realized, are real realists about the experiential — they haven't yet got to the real difficulty.

I did not know that I was an 'Anaxagorean panpsychist' until Wilson told me so (p. 177), but it is plain that I am, in rejecting the radical emergence of the experiential from the wholly non-experiential. Her elegant paper does not, however, convince me that Spinoza and Leibniz are not fundamentally on my side, in their central metaphysical commitments, at least when it comes to the matter of panpsychism. As for Spinoza, I disagree with Wilson's suggestion that 'Spinoza is ... best read as an ordinary physicalist who thinks that human and animal minds depend on their brains' (p. 179), for I cannot see how Spinoza could accept any such use of the notion of dependence. It seems to me, furthermore, that everything Wilson cites in support of taking him to be some sort of ordinary physicalist on pp. 178–9 is equally compatible with taking him to be some sort of ESFD monist (an Equal-Status Fundamental-Duality panpsychist monist, see p. 241), and that the view that he is some sort of ESFD monist is better supported on other grounds. I know, though, that this needs a great deal of further discussion.

Wilson thinks that it is harder to show that I cannot claim Leibniz as an ally, because, as she says, he does quite clearly hold that 'everything that is a real, individual thing, and not an entity by convention, has experiences' (p. 180). To that extent he is clearly a panpsychist. However, these metaphysically simple real individual things, these 'monads', are not physical, on Leibniz's view, if only because 'everything the natural scientist encounters in the physical world ... is [on Leibniz's view] complex and divisible', and it follows, Wilson says, that I cannot assimilate them to my 'ultimate physical constituents' (ibid). She goes on to say that my appeal for alliance fails in another

way, because the monads 'are supposed to give rise to the phenomenal world of extended bodies, and Strawson says that the emergence of extension from nonextension is incoherent' (ibid).

The first point is plainly right; I can't assimilate Leibniz's monads directly to my ultimates. But this is not because I call my ultimates 'physical', whereas his monads are by definition non-physical; for my stretched use of 'physical' covers whatever is 'real and concrete (p. 8) and therefore comfortably encompasses his monads.<sup>179</sup> The real problem, I think, is that his monads do not interact causally in any way, while my ultimates do. This is a big difference. It's true that allies don't have to have identical views, only common interests, and I claim Leibniz as an ally only in a general way. I also have a strong suspicion that a physics-informed study of the respect in which the universe is a single entity might take us a very long way towards assimilating Leibniz's notion of non-causal 'pre-established harmony' to whatever in that study survived of the notion of cause. The fact remains that the causal/non-causal difference is, on the face of it, a big one.

I reject Wilson's second point because I don't think that the way in which monads are supposed to give rise to the phenomenal world of extended bodies, in Leibniz's scheme, is a real case of the emergence of extension from the unextended. It is not, as I understand it, the emergence of real extension from the unextended, because Leibniz's 'phenomenal world of extended bodies' is just that, a phenomenal world, a *phenomenon bene fundatum*, to be sure, in Leibniz's terminology, but not fundamentally real, that is, not fundamentally real in the sense that monads are fundamentally real. I cannot support this claim with quotation, though, and the larger lesson I draw from Wilson, very willingly, is that I had better read Leibniz, some of whose other views I suspect I am simply recapitulating.<sup>180</sup>

## 19. Conclusion

There is, I feel sure, a fundamental sense in which monism is true, a fundamental sense in which there is only one kind of stuff in the universe. Plainly, though, we don't fully understand the nature of this stuff, and I don't suppose we ever will — even if we can develop a way of apprehending things that transcends discursive forms of thought.

[179] Plainly my use of 'physical' is confusing, in spite of my explicit provision. I had a specific rhetorical purpose in using it in the way I did in my argument for Ignorance, but I do better now to give it up, and do so in this paper.

[180] A lesson powerfully reinforced by reading Garber's 2005 paper 'Leibniz and Idealism'.

The existence of the mind-body problem is the best evidence we have that our understanding will fall short. I think we can see how things might be in a general way (i.e. some version of panpsychism) but on the whole I am happy to stick my neck out into the future and agree with Emile Du Bois Reymond that in this matter *ignoramus et ignorabimus*: we don't know and we won't know, we are ignorant and will remain so.

There are mathematical propositions that are provably unprovable, and metaphysical propositions also ('Determinism is true', 'Determinism is false'). There are metaphysical propositions whose ununderstandability-by-us can be compellingly argued for, and there are many scientific propositions whose truth is well attested although they too remain in a clear sense ununderstandable by us. So be it — understandability-by-us is no more a condition on metaphysical truth than it is on truth in physics, nor is it any more a condition on reasonable acceptance of propositions in metaphysics than it is on propositions in physics. There are many propositions, about wave-particle duality, for example, or quantum entanglement, or superposition, with which we have made our peace although we cannot claim to have any real sense of understanding of the phenomena in question. We need to cultivate the same attitude in metaphysics, even while we continue to press for greater understanding.

For each of us, perhaps, the sense of the difficulty of the mind-body problem has a special spin. Certain conundra mark the heart of our incomprehension in a particularly vivid way — they are the 'first-rank symptoms' of our affliction. I have always felt this about the so-called 'problem of mental causation', and this has determined my sense of what it would be to reach a decent stopping point in the mind-body problem. It would be to contemplate a fabulously detailed and exhaustive specification in neurological or particle-physics terms of the causation involved in a line of thought or a practical decision, and to feel no force in the objection that the availability of this specification showed that the mental was epiphenomenal or causally inefficacious. It would be to feel this because one no longer had any intuitive sense of a radical conflict between the physics/neurology explanation and a mental explanation along the following lines. 'She wanted to get to London in good time to give her paper. She wondered whether to go by train or by car. She knew that the fast trains take about two hours, and then suddenly remembered the new Congestion Charge restrictions on driving in Central London ... etc.'

I think I've made it. It's some time since I stopped having any intuitive difficulty with the idea that this red-experience, this thing

with whose essential nature I am in certain respects fully acquainted just in having it, is just (just is) this patch of complex neural activity, and this sense of there being no great intuitive difficulty has spread from cases like that of having red-experience to more complex cases, cases of perceptual experience, for example, or cases of consciously entertaining and comprehending propositions like ‘nobody could have had different parents’, or indeed any of the propositions expressed in this paper.

One of the keys, I am sure, is to see that there is a fundamental component to the business of consciously entertaining and comprehending propositions that is just a matter of ‘qualitative-experiential character’ in every sense in which an experience of red is just a matter of qualitative-experiential character,<sup>181</sup> so that once one has no great intuitive difficulty in the idea that this red-experience is just a patch of complex neural activity one is well on the way to finding no great intuitive difficulty in the idea that this conscious comprehending of this thought is just a patch of complex neural activity, even it still seems that much more puzzling. It takes time, though.<sup>182</sup>

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[181] I develop the point in M1994, e.g. pp. 5–13, 182–3, Strawson 2005, pp. 47–53 and forthcoming b.

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