Contemporary Debates In Philosophy

Second Edition

Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Mind

Edited by

Brian P. McLaughlin and Jonathan Cohen

WILEY Blackwell

Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Mind

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We dedicate this volume to Judy H. McLaughlin
and Liza Perkins-Cohen.

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Introduction to the Second Edition

Jonathan Cohen

The first (2007) edition of *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Mind* has aged surprisingly well (surely better than its editors). We had set our topics for that edition by looking for issues that were both controversial and fundamental in the dual senses that "(i) the resolution of these topics has implications of other issues inside and outside philosophy of mind, and (ii) past rounds of debate have revealed these topics as underlying broader disagreements" (Cohen, 2007, xii). The three clusters of such topics we settled on were mental content, physicalism about the mental, and the place of consciousness in nature. We believed then and continue to believe that the contributions in the first edition are excellent interventions on these topics: they usefully frame relevant philosophical disputes, advocate powerfully for their respective positions, and provide a clear, comprehensible entry to the vast literatures they concern. We've both used the first edition in the classroom and believe it is an effective and interesting way to introduce students to contemporary issues in the philosophy of mind.

We have attempted to add value in this second edition of the volume by including debates on similarly controversial and fundamental topics that have assumed new prominence in the philosophy of mind literature.

The first concerns the phenomenal character of perceptual experience. When you have a perceptual experience of the particular gorilla before you (as one does), your conscious mental state has a phenomenal character: there is something it is like for you to undergo it, a way that it subjectively seems to you. What is the best metaphysical account of such experiential states and their phenomenal character? Chapters 21–23 offer rival answers to this question.

In Chapter 21, Craig French and Ian Phillips defend the "naive realist" view that perceptually experiencing the gorilla involves standing in a primitive relation of perceptual acquaintance to the distal beast. On their view, perceiving the gorilla (unlike undergoing a perceptual illusion or hallucination as of a gorilla) is not a matter of being related to some mental/mind-dependent object, such as a representation of the gorilla. Rather, it is a matter of being "open," or appropriately related, to the gorilla itself—which means that a gorilla must be present in the local environment in order for you to be in such a state. They contend that the naive realist view is the default (hence "naïve") answer to the questions about the metaphysics of and phenomenal character of

perceptual experience, and they defend it from two important classes of threats. First, they respond to traditional philosophical objections to the effect that naive realism lacks resources to account for hallucinatory and illusory experience. Second, they contend, pace its critics, that naive realism is fully compatible with contemporary vision science in both general tenor and specific detail.

In Chapter 22, Adam Pautz defends a "representationalist" view on which the phenomenal character of perceptual experience is constituted by the way in which perception represents the world. Thus, in contrast to naïve realism, representationalism understands your perceptual experience of the gorilla not directly in terms of a relation you bear to the distal animal, but in terms of your representing it. Crucially, this is possible even when, as it might happen in cases of perceptual error, there is no gorilla present in the local environment; therefore this view extends smoothly between cases of veridical perception, hallucination, and illusion. Pautz argues that representationalism is superior to naïve realism because the phenomenal character of experience seems to reflect significant and systematic contributions of the mind itself (he calls this thesis "internal dependence"), and so seems not to be as fully determined by the character of the mind-independent world as the naïve realist contends.

In Chapter 23, Susanna Schellenberg proposes to dissolve the dispute between naïve realists and representationalists by setting the study of perception within her favored "capacitist" framework. According to her capacitism, perception is, in the first instance, a deployment of repeatable capacities to discriminate and single out environmental particulars (objects, events, and property instances). She contends that, when understood this way, instances of perceiving will automatically be associated with representational content—viz., the content that the environment contains the particulars it is the function of the deployed capacities to discriminate and single out, thereby sustaining the commitments of representationalism. However, she also holds that the relevant capacities, and so the instances of perceiving that are the deployments of such capacities, are themselves individuated by the particulars they function to discriminate and single out. Hence, she maintains, this view will allow that perception is constitutively a matter of being related to environmental particulars, and so vindicates at least one key commitment of naïve realism. She concludes that we can compatibly endorse versions of both representationalism and naïve realism (albeit not more "austere" versions of these views), and that by embracing capacitism about perception we can enjoy the benefits of both.

A second new debate addresses the role of particulars in perceptual representational content. One can, of course, accept that perceptual experience has representational content without committing to more hotly debated claims (of the sort under dispute in Chapters 21–23) such as the idea that perceiving consists in entertaining such contents, or that such contents provide the best explanation of phenomenal character. If we allow that perceptual experience has representational content, we can ask: is that content object-dependent—i.e., tied essentially to the particulars perceived? For example, suppose again that you perceive a particular gorilla before you. Does your perceptual state represent that this particular gorilla (this very one) is before you? Or does it, rather, represent the general/existential/abstract content that there is a hairy, gorilla-shaped thing before you? One way to bring out the contrast between the particularist and existential conceptions of perceptual content is to compare our initial case of perceiving a gorilla against a second case, in which one perceives a qualitatively identical but numerically distinct gorilla, and a third case, in which one perceives nothing but

hallucinates a qualitatively identical gorilla. The particularist about perceptual content holds that, because there is no shared particular gorilla between any pair of these cases, perceptual content varies between them as well. In contrast, the existentialist holds that all three cases involve representation of the very same (general) content, even though that content turns out to be satisfied by different particulars in the first case and the second, and by no particular in the third.

Christopher Hill begins Chapter 24 by offering two arguments to support existentialism. First, he argues that we want our notion of perceptual content to be one that admits sharing of content by qualitatively identical cases of perception and hallucination (say, the first and the third cases considered above), and he notes that existentialist but not particularist contents are up to this task. Second, he contends that existentialism, but not particularism, is compatible with the widely accepted teleosemantic view that representational contents are best understood in terms of lawful covariation with ecologically relevant environmental conditions. He then goes on to defend existentialism from objections before explaining how the view can best be elaborated to account for perceptual awareness of particulars, and just how we should understand the particulars that are the primary objects of visual awareness.

In Chapter 25, Heather Logue argues for a pluralist position on which perceptual experiences have both existential (she prefers "abstract") and particular contents. Her argument for this view is straightforward: she claims that both abstract and particularist contents have their own genuine theoretical benefits, and therefore that there are reasons to retain both types of content. On the one hand, she argues that appealing to abstract contents makes available an attractively simple account of the content of both (i) hallucinations and (ii) experiences in which we misperceive one object as two. In so far as an account of content applicable to such cases provides us with the tools for understanding the epistemic and action-guiding roles of such experiences, this can be a significant explanatory advantage. On the other hand, she also argues that particularist contents provide a simpler account of how perceptual beliefs about particular objects are rationalized. Her advice is that we should avoid choosing between these ostensibly competing benefits by adopting a pluralist view that sustains both.

Our third new debate takes up the relation between perception and cognition. In Chapter 26, E. J. Green contrasts a conception of the perception/cognition distinction based on representational format with one grounded in architecture. According to the first, perceptual representations are iconic (/depictive/imaginal) in format, while cognitive representations have a format that is discursive (/language-like). According to the second, perception differs from cognition in terms of the range of information each computes over —roughly, that cognitive processing is significantly more flexible, and perceptual processing is significantly more delimited, in the range of parameters over which each carries out its computations. Green argues against the format view and for the architectural view of the distinction. As against the format view, he urges that there are counterexamples in both directions: perceptual representations that are discursive rather than iconic, and cognitive representations that are iconic rather than discursive. This leads him to propose an architectural conception of the distinction on which perceptual process types "are constrained to compute over and output a restricted range of dimensions or variables", while cognitive process types are not dimensionally restricted in this way.

In Chapter 27, Ned Block takes up a more focussed version of the controversy about the perception/cognition distinction involving the contrast between perceptual and

cognitive object representations ("object files"), and argues that there is an important difference in format between perception and cognition. He offers a range of evidence to show that perceptual object representations always enjoy a thoroughly iconic format, while cognitive object representations in working memory are conceptual and partly discursive (though he allows that they may incorporate iconic materials, or "remnants," that are outputs of earlier perceptual stages). And, indeed, he contends that apparent counterexamples to this generalization turn on failing to distinguish the format of the whole from that of its remnants. Block goes on to argue that perceptual and cognitive (working memory) object representations differ in important psychological respects (even when the latter incorporate perceptual remnants). This leads him to the conclusion that, though the term "object file" is ordinarily used indifferently for object representations in both perception and cognition, these two sorts of entities are so different that we would be better off dispensing with the term.

Our fourth new debate concerns the status of pain as a natural kind. In Chapter 28, Jennifer Corns argues that while the category of pain serves our everyday explanatory needs, it is inadequate for the purposes of scientific explanation and prediction, hence that references to pain should be eliminated from scientific generalizations. She begins her case for this "scientific eliminativism" about pain by arguing that the class of pains is wildly heterogeneous, or "promiscuous," in function, biological pathway, mechanism, and qualitative character. Moreover, she claims, each token pain is realized by an idiosyncratic convergence of complex mechanistic activity, such that while it might initially appear that framing generalizations in terms of pain serves our scientific explanatory and predictive purposes, those purposes are in fact better served by generalizations framed in terms of non-pain kinds. She concludes that, while individual token pains are real, and the category of pain is usefully referenced for everyday purposes, pain does not earn its keep as a natural kind for the purposes of figuring in scientifically useful projectible generalizations.

In Chapter 29, Matthew Fulkerson pushes back against Corns's scientific eliminativism about pain. He urges that widely held contemporary (realist, anti-essentialist, explanatorily grounded) conceptions of natural kindhood make room for categories with the extensive heterogeneity and complexity manifest in the case of pain. He argues that, since, "even in the most fundamental sciences, putative natural kinds are almost always messy, complex categories with fluid borders, exceptions, and cross-cutting interactions", the presence of such pathologies with respect to the category of pains is irrelevant to the question of its kindhood. Moreover, he contends that pains (and pain types) share sufficiently many explanatorily interesting properties that these categories support explanatorily useful projectible generalizations. His conclusion is that, so long as we are working with a notion of natural kindhood adequate to the needs of many other explanatory domains in sciences at all levels, we have good reason to accept pain as a natural kind.

Our final new debate addresses the mental capacity of imagination. It is uncontroversial that imagination plays a crucial role in our mental lives, and that, from the point of view of everyday talk about the mind, reference to imagination is commonplace. Recently, however, a number of theorists have put forward the hypothesis that the notion of imagination is at least partly dispensable within the broadly scientific project of explaining the workings of our minds—that explanatory appeals to imagination can in many or all cases be replaced by references to a range of distinct mental capacities to which we are antecedently committed—and that, therefore, the notion of imagination is more or less explanatorily otiose.

In Chapter 30, Bence Nanay advances one version of this deflationism about imagination, according to which the explanatory role of imagination is largely (though not fully) captured by appeals to the (in his view, better established) capacity for mental imagery. Nanay takes mental imagery to consist of "representations of sensory information without a direct external source". Given this understanding, he makes the case that sensory imagination is just a species of mental imagery. Of course, many have held that imagination comes in propositional/nonsensory forms as well, which might be thought to resist understanding in terms of imagery. But Nanay argues that propositional imagination is best understood as supposition of a proposition that is ordinarily elaborated by sensory imagery. Thus, he claims that imagery is a crucial element in even propositional imagination.

In Chapter 31, Amy Kind responds to several forms of deflationism about the imagination. She begins by arguing against attempts to construe imagination as a species of either supposing or conceiving. Part of her case here involves mental skills. She contends that a collapse of imagination to supposition is unsuccessful because the former is a skill while the latter is not. She argues against collapsing imagination into conceiving on the grounds that, while conceiving may be a skill, it is plausibly a different skill from imagination. She next argues against recent proposals that see imagination as continuous with the notion of belief, charging that these proposals rest on an overly restricted conception of the functional role of both mental state types. Finally, she takes on a stronger form of imagination deflationism that aims to reduce imagination to a combination of imagery and attitudinal thought, and urges that this view neither captures the full range of imaginative states nor makes sense of the unity of imagination as a mental type. She concludes, then, that imagination is a genuine mental type that earns its keep within our best attempts to explain and theorize about the mind.

At the conclusion of the introduction to the first edition of this anthology we lamented that the volume was necessarily unable to treat every important topic in our subfield. Sadly, what with modality being what it is, those necessary limitations remain in place despite additions to the second edition. Still, we hope and believe that the present volume will provide a useful introduction to a range of the central and fundamental controversies defining our subfield. We hope you will enjoy reading it as much as we've enjoyed putting it together.

Introduction to the First Edition

Jonathan Cohen

Philosophy of mind today is a sprawling behemoth whose tentacles reach into virtually every area of philosophy, as well as many subjects outside of philosophy. Of course, none of us would have it any other way. Nonetheless, this state of affairs poses obvious organizational challenges for anthology editors. Brian McLaughlin and I have attempted to meet these challenges in the present volume by focusing on ten controversial and fundamental topics in philosophy of mind. "Controversial" is clear enough: we have chosen topics about which there is not a settled consensus among philosophers. By "fundamental" we don't mean that the issues are easy or that the approaches taken toward them are introductory. Rather, we mean that (i) the resolution of these topics has implications for other issues inside and outside philosophy of mind, and (ii) past rounds of debate have revealed these topics as underlying broader disagreements. We asked leading philosophers of mind to defend one side or another on these topics. The result is what you now have in your hands.

In the remainder of this introduction I'll say something by way of explanation of the topics covered and attempt to say how the topics relate to one another.

Content

A first cluster of topics concerns the nature of mental content. To say that mental states have content is to say that they can be *about* other things: for example, my current belief that there is a coffee cup on my desk is about the coffee cup and the desk. That mental states can be about things is a striking fact about them, and one that distinguishes them from most entities in the world (e.g., atoms, rocks, tables, numbers, properties). Moreover, insofar as things other than mental states (e.g., words, some paintings, scientific models) can have content, many philosophers have followed Grice (1957) in maintaining that they do so only by deriving their content from that of the mental states of the makers or users of these other things; thus, while a painting might also be about the coffee cup, the Grice-inspired thought is that it has this content only by virtue of the content of the painter's intentions (e.g., her intention to produce a painting that is about that particular coffee cup), which are of course mental states. If this general picture is right, then mental content is more fundamental than other sorts of content.

But what sort of a thing is mental content? And how is it constituted? What makes it the case, for example, that my current thought is about a coffee cup rather than a palm tree or nothing at all? These and related questions lie at the heart of the first cluster of topics in this volume.

Our first topic in this cluster is best appreciated against the backdrop of work starting in the mid-1970s (e.g., Putnam, 1975; Burge, 1979) arguing that the content of a thought is not wholly determined by the internal state of the thinker's brain. On the contrary, these writers argued for what has come to be called *content externalism* – the view that what a thought is about is partially determined by factors outside the head of the thinker, such as the thinker's physical and social environment. In Chapter 1, Gabriel Segal argues against content externalism. More specifically, he argues that what he calls "cognitive content" – the kind of content invoked in psychological explanations and propositional attitude ascriptions – is not fixed externalistically. His claim is that, even if externalists are right that the *extensions* of public language words (e.g., "water") are determined by factors outside the thinker's brain, nonetheless the cognitive content expressed by such terms is (i) idiosyncratic to individuals (or even time-slices of individuals), and (ii) determined by factors inside their heads. If so, then cognitive content is best understood as a kind of narrow or individualist (as opposed to externalist/anti-individualist) content. Sarah Sawyer argues against this approach in Chapter 2. She argues that if cognitive contents were to float free from the shared meanings and extensions of the public language words we use to attribute contents, as Segal holds, then it would be a rare miracle if any verbal attribution ever succeeded in capturing anyone's cognitive contents. And this, she claims, would make a mystery of the utility and ubiquity of our practice of making verbal ascriptions of psychological contents to others. Ultimately, she contends, proponents of narrow content have failed to appreciate the significance, force, and scope of extant arguments for content externalism.

A second issue connected with content externalism comes up in Chapters 3 and 4, and concerns privileged access about the content of our mental states. It seems deeply plausible that our access to the content of at least some of our thoughts has some sort of epistemic privilege. For example, it seems deeply plausible that if I take myself to be thinking about water, it is truly *water* (not coffee, not a palm tree, and not some clear, tasteless liquid other than water) that is the subject of my thought. However, in recent years philosophers have argued that content externalism poses a serious threat to this plausible idea. The thought here is that if, as per externalism, the contents of my thoughts depend on factors outside my head (including contingent facts about the existence of particular elements of my physical and social environment), then I won't know what those contents are whenever I am ignorant about the relevant external factors. In Chapter 4, Michael McKinsey argues that privileged access and content externalism are indeed incompatible, and that we should respond to the incompatibility by giving up the former. Anthony Brueckner holds, in Chapter 3, that the alleged incompatibility is merely apparent. He argues that, although content externalism entails that the content of my thought depends on contingent facts about my environment, it does not entail that my *knowing* the content of my thought requires *knowing* contingent facts about my environment: consequently, Brueckner holds, it is consistent with content externalism that I can know the content of my thoughts without having knowledge of contingent facts about my environment. Their debate raises important issues about exactly how to understand the entailments content externalism has about thinkers' environments, and about how we should individuate thoughts.

The volume also contains debates on two other foundational debates about content: one about the alleged normativity of content and one about how best to think about non-conceptual content.

The debate about the normativity of content is joined in Chapters 5 and 6 by Ralph Wedgwood and Georges Rey. The issue here is whether intentional (/contentful) mental states, such as beliefs, desires, the acceptance of inferences, and so on, are constitutively tied to "normative" properties such as value, goodness, and, in particular, rationality. Such normative properties are traditionally contrasted against the "descriptive" properties one finds invoked in the natural sciences. Thus, this debate has important implications for the question of whether the standard explanatory apparatus of the natural sciences can provide a complete account of contentful mental states.

Wedgwood argues that the intentional is essentially normative. He holds that intentional states are constituted by concepts, and he argues that the best theory of concepts has them constitutively linked to the normative. In particular, Wedgwood is attracted by a two-factor theory of concepts according to which each concept is constituted by (i) its correctness condition together with (ii) "certain basic principles of rationality that specify certain ways of using the concept as rational (or specify certain other ways of using the concept as irrational)" (p. 86). Thus, for example, on this account, we might understand the concept of logical conjunction as constituted by (i) the systematic contribution made by AND to the truth conditions of the complex contents in which it appears (its correctness condition) together with (ii) a principle specifying that (*inter alia*) the inference from (P AND Q) to P is rational while the inference from P to (P AND Q) is not. Insofar as this conception of the constitution of concepts ineliminably invokes notions of rationality, it results in an essentially normative view of the intentional; but Wedgwood argues that his is the most plausible view of concepts, so we should embrace the latter result.

Rey argues against Wedgwood's view in Chapter 5, and urges that our best scientific and philosophical accounts of mentality support a non-normative ("merely" descriptive) understanding of the intentional. Among the many complaints he levels against normative theories of the intentional, Rey worries (i) that there is no serious account of just which norms characterize particular concepts; (ii) that normative accounts of concepts don't do justice to the portions of our mental lives that don't seem to be governed by rational norms at all; and (iii) that even where applicable, such accounts give at best a superficial account of our mental lives. Rey suggests that Wedgwood and other proponents of an essentially normative account of the intentional base their view largely on intuitions about which rational inferences they are disposed to make involving particular concepts; but, while allowing that these intuitions are often widely and deeply held, he echoes Quine (1951) in worrying that their wide and deep support may show only that these inferences are deeply ingrained (as opposed to concept-constitutive, as Wedgwood claims). If so, Rey points out, then such intuitions (despite being widely and deeply held) should not be taken as revealing the nature of our concepts; but if taking these intuitions to be concept-constitutive really is the source of the view that concepts are normative, then Rey's worry threatens the case for the essentially normative character of the intentional.

In Chapters 7 and 8, Jerry Fodor and Richard Heck take on the topic of nonconceptual content. Discussion of this issue has centered in part on issues about perceptual justification. Many writers have thought that the best way to understand how perception justifies belief is by attributing content to perceptual states – thus, for example, my belief that there is a coffee cup on the desk would receive its justification

from being appropriately related to a perceptual state with the very same content (that there is a coffee cup on the desk). But (a suitably generalized version of) this picture threatens to impose high cognitive demands on perception: it seems to require that our perceptual contents, in order to play any justificatory role, must be fully conceptualizeable (see Sellars, 1956, for a famous articulation of this worry). But many philosophers have felt that this demand is unreasonable – for example, because it threatens the idea of a preconceptual "given" that could justify belief, or because it threatens to rob the possibility of perceptual justification from non-human animals and human infants.

Some philosophers of mind have maintained that the best response to these threats is to credit perceptual states with a special kind of "non-conceptual content" – content whose tokening is both (i) suited to justify the conceptual content of beliefs, and (ii) not dependent on sophisticated conceptual capacities of the perceiver. The problem for theorists sympathetic to this move is to provide an informative characterization of this hypothesized non-conceptual content, and then to give reasons for believing there is any mental content satisfying that characterization.

This is where both Fodor and Heck begin in their essays for the present volume. Both accept the existence of non-conceptual content (in this sense they are both giving kinds of "yes" answers to the question "is there non-conceptual content?"); but they differ in how they understand what it is, and how to distinguish nonconceptual content from conceptual content. In his contribution, Fodor spends most of his effort massaging the philosophical question "is there non-conceptual content?" into a form that makes it susceptible to answers by empirical psychology. In particular, Fodor holds that a mental state is conceptual if and only if it is an instance of representation-as, and he takes it that such states count as bearing content in virtue of the information they carry about the world. Thus, for Fodor, the existence of nonconceptual content hinges on the evidence in favor of mental states that are contentful (in the informational sense) but not instances of representation-as. But, Fodor argues, there is ample psychological evidence of states of this kind, so we have reason to accept the existence of non-conceptual content. Heck also spends much of his essay trying to get clear on what sort of a thing nonconceptual content might be. According to Heck, it is structural features of a contentful state that make it conceptual or non-conceptual: the state will count as conceptual if it has constituent structure, and non-conceptual if not. This criterion allows Heck (unlike Fodor) to accept that instances of representation-as could be non-conceptual – namely, by lacking the right sort of constituent structure. Indeed, Heck argues that, on this way of making the distinction, the best accounts of perceptual content entail that it is non-conceptual.

Physicalism

A second, more ontological, cluster of topics taken up in this anthology concerns the relationship of mental states to the physical. Discussion of these topics is often organized around the physicalist/materialist hypothesis that everything (a fortiori, everything mental) is physical. With a few notable exceptions, contemporary philosophers of mind are generally sympathetic to some version of this hypothesis. But there is a startling lack of consensus about the details.

One way in which consensus is left behind is over the question of whether the best version of physicalism is reductive, non-reductive, or eliminativist – an issue taken up

by Paul Churchland and Louise Antony in Chapters 9 and 10. Eliminative materialism, which is defended by Churchland in Chapter 10, is the view that our mental lives can be fully characterized by the (physical) kinds of neuroscience, and that putative psychological kinds such as belief, pain, and desire should be discarded as posits of a failed and outdated explanatory framework. Antony, in contrast, sees an important scientific role for such psychological kinds. Indeed, she wants to insist on a non-reductive materialism that preserves a place for these kinds without reducing them to (/identifying them with) physical kinds. The best-worked-out version of nonreductive materialism, endorsed by Antony in Chapter 9, is the so-called functionalist view according to which mental types are understood in terms of their causal profiles; on this view, for example, a state might count as a pain if it is caused by damage to its host organism and causes "ouch" -utterances and avoidance behavior (as it might be), no matter what its physical realization. Antony argues that this kind of non-reductive materialism is not only viable, but preferable to reductive or eliminative materialism in that it better respects the reality and causal/explanatory centrality of psychological state types (Antony calls this "psychological realism"), and the distinctness of the phenomena and explanations of psychology from lower level (e.g., neuroscientific) phenomena and explanations (she calls this "the autonomy of psychology"). Churchland defends eliminative materialism in Chapter 10 by claiming that nonreductive materialism has been oversold. In particular, he urges that the most popular functionalist versions of the view have failed to meet the promises made on their behalf, while eliminativist materialism turns out to be more plausible than many have allowed.

A second way in which consensus about physicalism is left behind turns on a contrast between a priori and a posteriori versions of the thesis. It is widely accepted that if physicalism is true, then the physical determines the mental. In contrast, it is deeply controversial whether the determination of the mental by the physical is a priori or a posteriori. What is in dispute here is not the epistemic status of physicalism itself (all sides agree that if physicalism is true then it is a posteriori), but instead the epistemic status of the determination of the mental by the physical that is implied by physicalism.

In Chapter 11, Frank Jackson defends a priori physicalism on epistemological and semantic grounds. In particular, he alleges that, if a posteriori physicalism were true, then this would undercut our warrant for adopting physicalism in the first place, and would also leave ordinary users of mental predicates without an understanding of what we are saying in ascribing such predicates (e.g., pains and beliefs) to each other. In Chapter 12, Brian McLaughlin first tries to cast doubt on the a priori physicalist thesis that the totality of truths of ultimate physics (in conjunction with a certain minimality thesis) will imply a priori all the truths couched in our everyday, vernacular physical vocabulary (e.g., the truth that water freezes at 32 °F). He maintains that it is an open question whether the concepts expressed by terms in our ordinary physical vocabulary will bear the kinds of a priori links to the concepts expressed in the vocabulary of ultimate physics that would be needed to underwrite such a priori implications. He then appeals to the conceivability of certain absent and inverted qualia cases – cases that have traditionally been used against physicalism itself – to argue that the links between our phenomenal concepts and physical/functional concepts are likewise non-a-priori. He holds that the phenomenal is indeed determined by the physical since phenomenal state types are identical with (broadly) physical/ functional state types; but he contends that such type identity claims are warranted on a posteriori grounds of overall coherence

and theoretical simplicity, and that they are not a priori implied by the totality of physical truths (and the minimality thesis).

One reason that the debate about a priori physicalism is so important is that it is intimately connected with the question of how far (certain kinds of) conceivability can be taken to reveal what is possible, which in turn bears directly on the modal commitments of physicalism. For we seem to be able to conceive of our world as one in which the physical facts fail to determine the mental facts. Now, if the determination required by physicalism comes with a priori knowability, then we should presumably be able to know a priori whether there is such necessary determination or not. But we have said that a priori reflection seems to leave open the possibility that there is no determination of the mental by the physical, which is to say that it tells against the claim that such determination is a priori. Thus, if we regard physicalism as requiring a priori determination, then what we can conceive poses a prima facie threat to its truth – a threat that has been regarded as fatal by at least some prominent philosophers of mind (e.g., Chalmers, 1996). On the other hand, if we regard the determination entailed by physicalism as a posteriori determination, we won't regard the conceivability of differences in mental facts without differences in physical facts as a decisive objection to physicalism.

Another ontological dispute connected with physicalism concerns mental causation – causation by mental states. Ordinary action explanations (e.g., the explanation of why I drained the glass of water that cites my desire for liquid) bring out our pretheoretical commitment to the idea of causation by mental states. Unfortunately, it is unclear how to understand what this commitment amounts to. Part of the difficulty has its source in a more general controversy over the nature of causation (for example, between counterfactual, nomological, and productive approaches to causation). But there are difficulties particular to mental (or at least higher-level) causation as well. Perhaps the most widely discussed of these is the problem of explanatory exclusion, pressed at the end of Chapter 13 by Jaegwon Kim. Kim worries that if every physical event has a sufficient physical cause, then there is no causal work left over for the mental to do. Kim takes this to show that either the mental is without causal efficacy (mental events would then be entirely epiphenomenal) or that the mental must be reductively identified with the physical. In Chapter 14, Barry Loewer disagrees with Kim's assessment. He argues that we have the materials we need for understanding mental causation, unless we insist on a "productive" understanding of causation that he thinks is eschewed in science. Thus, he responds to Kim's exclusion concerns by arguing that it is based on mistaken metaphysical presuppositions about causation. The upshot of Loewer's chapter is that, while there may be unresolved problems about causation itself, there are no further outstanding problems about mental causation in particular.

The Place of Consciousness in Nature

The ontological debates surveyed so far are directed at issues about mental states, generally speaking. But in the last decade or so philosophy of mind has seen a renewed focus on ontological issues about consciousness in particular. Many philosophers have found consciousness to be especially resistant to explanation in physicalist terms, and this has raised profound concerns about its place in nature.

For example, some thinkers have thought that consciousness, unlike the rest of mentality, is ontologically emergent from the physical – that it is something fundamentally new and different from the physical. Thus, in Chapter 15, Martine Nida-Rümelin argues that at some point in the historical evolution of life, certain bits of matter got arranged in a way that marked a fundamental break with what had come before (viz., mere physical stuff): new individuals that are conscious came into being where none had been previously. Nida-Rümelin's motivation for this view is a sense of puzzlement that she shares with many other philosophers, and that Levine (1984) famously dubbed "the explanatory gap": it seems extremely hard to see how or why a certain complex physically organized system should enjoy any conscious phenomenology rather than none, or should enjoy the particular conscious phenomenology it does rather than some other. Some have argued that the existence of this gap reveals more about our kinds of minds and the concepts they deploy than it does about the relationship of consciousness to the physical; for these thinkers, the explanatory gap is not evidence of the ontological emergence or non-physical status of consciousness. Nida-Rümelin, however, is unimpressed by this treatment of the explanatory gap. She suggests, instead, that we should take the gap, and our natural "astonishment" about consciousness seriously – and that the best explanation of why we are astonished is that the relation between consciousness and the physical is, after all, just as deeply astonishing as emergentism says that it is.

David Braddon-Mitchell opposes this and other forms of emergentism about consciousness, in Chapter 16. As he sees it, the appeal of emergentism is the hope of securing what is attractive about both physicalism (its integration of consciousness with the physical) and dualism (its recognition of the distinctiveness of consciousness vis-à-vis the physical). Thus, the emergentist claims that consciousness is a novel, hence genuinely emergent, feature of the world (this is the dualist ingredient) that emerges from a physical basis (this is the physicalist ingredient). However, BraddonMitchell argues, the emergentist's two opposing poles of attraction ultimately make her position unstable. For if the emergentist insists on the dualist-inspired claim that consciousness is distinct from the physical, she thereby loses the ability to explain the causal relations between the base and what emerges, and consequently is stuck with an unattractive epiphenomenalism. On the other hand, if she emphasizes the connections between consciousness and the physical base from which it emerges sufficiently to avoid charges of epiphenomenalism, it will turn out that consciousness is straightforwardly physical. Thus, Braddon-Mitchell claims, there is no coherent way for emergentists to have their cake and eat it.

Questions about the place of consciousness in nature come up again in a related debate between Michael Tye and Sydney Shoemaker in Chapters 17–18. Tye and Shoemaker would agree that when you consciously see a ripe tomato, or taste a chocolate soufflé, your experience represents the world in some particular way. Moreover, picking up on the content-externalist themes discussed in connection with Chapters 1–4, both these authors would agree that the representational properties of your experience are determined at least partly by factors outside your head. What divides Tye and Shoemaker is the question whether there is a further aspect of your experience – its phenomenal character (or, as it is sometimes glossed, the what-it'slike-to-have-it aspect) – that is distinct from its representational properties and is determined entirely by factors inside the head. Shoemaker argues that there is such a further, internalist, aspect of experiences, and concludes that the representational and phenomenal

properties of experiences are distinct. Tye, in contrast, argues that the phenomenal character of an experience is identical to that experience's (externally determined) representational content. More particularly, he argues against the view that phenomenal character is entirely determined by factors inside the head, and against the view that phenomenal character is nonrepresentational.

This debate will, of course, interest anyone who wonders what an adequate characterization of conscious experience will look like. Moreover, in asking how far philosophical ideas about content can be pressed in the service of explaining consciousness, it bears on the question whether we can reduce one philosophical problem to another. This last point is especially important because, as remarked above, many philosophers have been baffled by the problem of how to integrate consciousness into a physicalist ontology; and while there has by no means been a convergence on a single physicalist theory of content, it has seemed to many that the outstanding problems about content are (at least, by comparison to those about consciousness) solvable matters of detail.

A final debate about consciousness in this volume concerns conscious awareness of our own thought – the kind of awareness we have of what we are doing when we consciously deliberate, wonder, imagine, judge, and so on. In Chapter 20, Christopher Peacocke argues that we should conceive of our awareness of our own thought as a special form of action-awareness. Peacocke takes his inspiration from the (widely held) idea that subjects have a special, non-perceptual awareness of their own physical actions (say, the action of sitting, of kicking, etc.). Building on this idea, he maintains that subjects have a special, non-perceptual awareness of their own mental actions (say, the action of deliberating, of wondering, etc.), and takes this to motivate the view that awareness of thought is a species of action-awareness. Peacocke maintains that this conception of conscious thought not only provides the right way to think about the metaphysics, phenomenology, and epistemology of an important species of awareness, but also sheds light on related questions about self-knowledge and the first person. Jesse Prinz defends a sharply contrasting picture of conscious thought in Chapter 19 that gives a far more important role to perception. As his title suggests, Prinz holds the view that all consciousness, including consciousness of our mental acts, is perceptual consciousness. He defends this view by arguing that many of the putatively non-perceptual elements of our conscious mental lives are, on the best psychological and neuroscientific accounts, plausibly construed as perceptual after all. Moreover, since the existence of perceptual consciousness is accepted by all sides, he argues that parsimony should incline us against accepting a separate, non-perceptual form of consciousness to account for awareness of our own thoughts.

Conclusion

It would be impossible for an anthology like this one to touch on every topic, or even every important topic, or even every important and hotly disputed topic, in contemporary philosophy of mind. But the debates in this volume do, I think, give a fair sense of the current state of play with respect to many of the most fundamental and controversial issues in the subject. If they whet readers' appetites for more of the subject, they will have served their purpose.

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PART I
MENTAL CONTENT