

PART I DUALISTIC ONTOLOGY OF THE HUMAN PERSONS

A GENERAL APPROACH

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Classical Dualism Modernized_A Proposal

1. What is psycho-physical dualism? What defines an opinion or theory as (psycho-physically) *dualistic*? – It entails the thesis that some mental *entity* is wholly nonphysical. (In what follows, the word “physical” – by itself, without modifier – will be used in the sense of “at least partly physical”, “nonphysical”, therefore, in the sense of “not at least partly physical”, in other words, in the sense of “wholly nonphysical”.)

2. What defines an opinion or theory as *event-dualistic*, *property-dualistic*, *substance-dualistic*? – It entails the thesis that some mental *event*, *property*, *substance* is (wholly) nonphysical.

3. *The neo-Cartesian argument for substance dualism*: (a) It is possible that my consciousness and I, the subject of that consciousness, exist in just the (consciousness-intrinsic) way in which we in fact exist without anything physical existing. (b) If I am physical, then I am necessarily physical. *Therefore* (from (a) and (b)): (c) I am not physical. (d) I am a conscious causally

active individual that is wholly present at any moment at which it exists, in other words: I am a conscious causally active individual that does not have any temporal parts. *Therefore* (from (c) and (d)): (e) I am a nonphysical substance. (Note that I do not believe that independent existence is necessary for substancehood; for if independent existence were necessary for substancehood, then this would leave us with far too few substances – perhaps with no more than *one* substance: Spinoza’s “Deus sive Natura”.)

4. The neo-Cartesian argument for substance dualism pursues the strategy of showing that the physical is *not necessary* for consciousness. Another argument for dualism, which I would like to call “the Chalmers-argument for dualism” (after David Chalmers who proposed arguments somewhat similar to it) pursues the strategy of showing that the physical is *not sufficient* for consciousness: (a’) It is possible that the physical world exists in just the (physical) way it in fact exists without my consciousness existing. (b’) But if my consciousness is physical and exists, then it is not possible that the physical world exists in just the way it in fact exists without my consciousness existing. *Therefore* (from (a’) and (b’)): (c’) My consciousness is not physical or does not exist. (d’) My consciousness exists. *Therefore* (from (c’) and (d’)): (e’) My consciousness is not physical.

5. Like the Chalmers-argument, the neo-Cartesian argument is an *a priori* argument. But can its conclusion also be confirmed in an *a posteriori* way? – It can be, since there is a role for nonphysical substances to play within the economy of biological evolution. If there is macrophysical indetermination in the world and if not all of this indetermination is ultimately decided one way or another by pure chance, then there is room for consciousness-guided decision makers in the world, connected to living organisms due to the emergence of nervous systems, and directed by evolution, by natural selection, to make such choices among the alternatives left open by macrophysical indetermination as are favorable to the survival of their organisms.

6. The nonphysical nature of these consciousness-guided decision makers is a consequence of the fact that it is not possible to reduce macro- or microphysical indetermination – i.e., to decide cases of physical indetermination, one way or another – by an input of further physical determination. Given that physics is complete, such further input would violate the law of the preservation of energy. There remains, therefore, only chance or nonphysical agency to decide cases of physical indetermination. It is unjustified – it would be sheer dogmatism – to conclude a priori that it always must be chance that decides cases of physical indetermination.

7. A wholly nonphysical conscious agent that is connected to a living organism, a living body, may yet have purely physical properties. Such properties are *had* by such an agent in virtue of being, in the first instance, properties of the agent's body. There is nothing untoward in this at all. It is like saying that I am flying to Boston, when, in the most literal interpretation, only the plane I am travelling with is flying to Boston. It is true that a wholly nonphysical conscious agent does not have purely physical properties in the most direct way possible, but it is not true that such an agent does not really have those properties, or has them only metaphorically speaking.

8. A wholly nonphysical conscious agent can have purely physical properties; it can also exert *causation on the purely physical*. Deciding cases of macrophysical indetermination as one sees fit in conscious view of certain purposes – doing so, no doubt, *by means of* deciding cases of microphysical indetermination (but without conscious intention: merely instrumentally) – is, precisely, an exerting of causation on *the purely physical*: the outcome is the realization of a certain physical event.

9. But how could this be possible? Much can be said about this, and much have I said about it. All that one must allow a wholly nonphysical agent if it is to have some causal influence of its own on the purely physical is the ability to select and to decide matters in the realm of alternative physical possibilities – *truly* to do so.

that is, to do so in a way that is ontologically relevant, which means: to do so in a way that is neither overdeterminative nor epiphenomenal. This implies: exercising the ability to select and to decide matters in the realm of alternative physical possibilities must be *up to the agent*; otherwise, something other than the agent would be the ultimate source of the causal influence ostensibly exerted by the agent on the purely physical.

10. If somebody insists that he does not understand how such things could be possible, he may do so; after all he is only admitting an inability. The illegitimate step is to conclude that something is impossible from the fact that one does not understand how it could be possible. In fact there are many things which are such that we do not understand how they can be possible, without our doubting in any way that they *are* possible, because we firmly believe that they are *actual*. For example, I, for my part, do not understand how it can be possible that a gravitational force is attached to matter; but I do not doubt that this is possible, since I do not doubt that it is actually the case. If I argued that it cannot be that a gravitational force is attached to matter because I do not understand how this could be possible, I would not get much applause. Why, I wonder, do people get applauded who conclude that a causal influence of the purely nonphysical on the purely physical is impossible because they do not understand how it could be possible?

11. If wholly nonphysical agent-causation that molds, to some extent, the purely physical realm *were* indeed something of which the possibility is impossible for us to understand, it yet would be – would *have to be* – an actuality for us. For there are persuasive arguments to the conclusion that we are wholly nonphysical substances, and certainly we cannot help considering ourselves as agents in the purely physical realm, doers of purely physical deeds, for which we are, sometimes, fully responsible. We also consider most other people in this light, and, in fact, we are ourselves considered by most other people in this light. But our full responsibility, even *mere* responsibility, for something that happens in the purely physical realm – the responsibility we

believe in – can only be had if wholly nonphysical agent-causation molds to some extent the purely physical realm.

12. The general question is how a purely nonphysical subject with its purely nonphysical consciousness is related to *its organism*, it being nothing other than the soul of that organism. Here is a fact: what impairs the nervous system of an organism – in particular, its brain – impairs the subject of this organism, usually in both of its functions: as subject of conscious experience, and as subject of conscious action. We all know the horrible consequences of Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease. Thus, there is indeed a location – or more accurately speaking: a field of emergence – in the physical body for the nonphysical soul. This is the nervous system.

13. The nonphysical soul of an organism is, on the one hand, the product of the organism’s nervous system and, within the limits of the natural order, absolutely dependent on that system for its existence. But on the other hand, the main *raison d’être* of the nervous system, once it reaches a certain degree of complexity, is precisely to bring forth the nonphysical soul of the organism, which *serves* the organism as a conscious, at least rudimentarily rational center of decision making, increasing the organism’s chances of survival (and therewith also the chances of survival of the organism’s species).

14. This is the function of the soul in the natural order, its biological function. But I add that for some souls there may be more in store than just the natural order.

15. That the natural function of the soul is this: to be a nonphysical organ of the organism, contributing substantially to the organism’s survival, is strikingly shown by the fact that what the soul naturally desires and takes pleasure in is – not always, but usually (there is no perfect fit in biological evolution) – *good* for the organism; whereas what the soul naturally shuns and takes displeasure in is – not always, but usually – *bad* for the organism. People who make an epiphenomenon out of consciousness and declare that the subject of consciousness, if it exists at all, is a

totally ineffective ghost in a machine that runs all by itself, have no satisfactory explanation for this striking fact.

16. The relationship of organism and soul has a causal side, which, in turn, has two sides: *foundational causality*: this is what the organism does *for* – and sometimes: *to* – the soul, and *directional causality*: this is what the soul does *for* – and sometimes: *to* – the organism. However, this two-sided causality is not the only link between the two.

17. The organism that a conscious soul emerges from is also the first and nearest *intentional object* of it, embedded in its consciousness in such a way that the soul (or, in other words, the subject of experience and agency) experiences itself as being virtually *in* – virtually *inhabiting* – the organism it emerges from.

18. In addition to perceptual and sensory aspects, the soul's "intimacy of intentionality" with its organism also has emotional and volitional aspects. The organism is the natural first object of *care* for its soul – and this not merely in the soul's experience, not epiphenomenally, but, as I have argued, *effectively*.

19. More than a brief proposal for modernizing classical dualism can be found in my publications on the philosophy of mind. These publications are (in chronological order):

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