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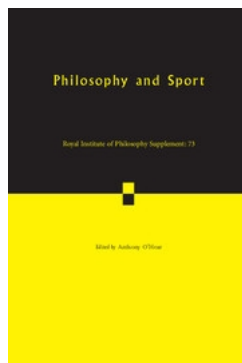
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# Materialism and the First Person

GEOFFREY MADELL

## I

Here are some sentences from Fred Dretske's book *Naturalising the Mind*:

For a materialist there are no facts that are accessible to only one person... If the subjective life of another being, what it is like to be that creature, seems inaccessible, this must be because we fail to understand what we are talking about when we talk about its subjective states. If S feels some way, and its feeling some way is a material state, how can it be impossible for us to know how S feels? Though each of us has direct information about our own experiences, there is no privileged access. If you know where to look, you can get the same information I have about the character of my experiences. This is a result of thinking about the mind in naturalistic terms. Subjectivity becomes part of the objective order. For materialists, this is as it should be.<sup>1</sup>

I think Dretske is right: for the materialist, there can be no such thing as privileged access. But the denial of privileged access looks wildly implausible. A being incapable of feeling pain can have access to all the physical facts relating to pain, but not have the faintest idea what pain feels like; and so for all sensations. No amount of knowledge of the physical facts will allow one to understand what the experience feels like, a fact that has become known as 'the explanatory gap'. What I want to look at is an approach shared by a number of materialists which argues that knowledge which is essentially perspectival, first-personal, and of that which is inaccessible to the observer, can be accommodated in a materialist position. This is an approach which is shared by Michael Tye, William Lycan, Owen Flanagan, Brian Loar, Scott Sturgeon, and others. The essence of it goes like this:

Fred, in Frank Jackson's well-known story, has superfine colour discrimination.<sup>2</sup> He distinguishes between two shades of red where

<sup>1</sup> F. Dretske, *Naturalising the Mind* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997), 65.

<sup>2</sup> See F. Jackson, 'Epiphenomenal Qualia', reprinted in W. G. Lycan (ed.), *Mind and Cognition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 470–2.

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the rest of us only see one shade. We can see that there is some physical basis for this, both in Fred's cranium and in the red part of the colour spectrum. But we have no idea what Fred's experience is like. Why not? Because, Flanagan points out, we are not connected up either internally or to the outside world as Fred is (though he doesn't actually mention Fred by name).<sup>3</sup> If introspection is a form of self-scanning, as Lycan claims, then the explanatory gap, the lack of tracings and explanations of the sort demanded, is just what you would expect. I know my own pain by introspection, and no one else can know the same fact by being in the same functional state. Only I can scan my own internal states.<sup>4</sup> Tye also sees the essential point to be that phenomenally conscious states are 'perspectivally subjective in the following way: each phenomenal state *S*, is such that fully comprehending *S* as it is essentially in itself, requires adopting one particular point of view or perspective namely that provided by undergoing *S*'. A phenomenal concept such as *RED* 'is exercised when one becomes aware by introspection of what it is like to experience red'<sup>5</sup>; and: 'no amount of a priori reflection on phenomenal concepts alone will reveal phenomenal-physical connections, even of a contingent type'.<sup>6</sup>

According to this approach, then, the phenomenal character of experience, the 'explanatory gap' presented by the evident failure of physical description and explanation to account for that phenomenal character, and the fact that this character is something to which the subject has privileged and private access, are all matters to be accounted for by the perspectival nature of phenomenal concepts. 'The inexplicable nature of qualia-based subjectivity', says Scott Sturgeon, 'is best explained by epistemic features for our qualitative concepts. Nothing ontologically funny is required... From the fact that no explanation is possible for qualia-based subjectivity *it simply does not follow* that the properties captured by our qualitative concepts are distinct from those captured by other concepts'.<sup>7</sup>

Lycan connects all this explicitly with the irreducibility of first person reference. 'My mental reference to a first-order

<sup>3</sup> O. Flanagan, *Consciousness Reconsidered* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), 91, 116.

<sup>4</sup> W. G. Lycan, *Consciousness and Experience* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), 54–68.

<sup>5</sup> M. Tye, 'Phenomenal Consciousness: The Explanatory Gap as a Cognitive Illusion', *Mind* **108**, No. 432 (October 1999), 710.

<sup>6</sup> Tye, 713.

<sup>7</sup> S. Sturgeon, 'The Epistemic View of Subjectivity', *Journal of Philosophy* **91**, No. 5 (May 1994), 235.

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psychological state of my own is a tokening of a semantically primitive Mentalese lexeme. My mental word is functionally nothing like any of the complex expressions of English that in fact refer to the same (neural) state of affairs... And since no one else can use that mental word... to designate that state of affairs, of course no one can explain... why that state of affairs feels like [*that* or *semantha*] to me. Introspection involves a very special mode of presentation, primitive and private' (Lycan's brackets).<sup>8</sup>

The subjectivity of experience, and, in particular, the fact that no physical description can explain the phenomenal character of sensation, is thus taken to be fully accounted for by the perspectival nature of phenomenal concepts, and by the nature of self-monitoring and self reference.

### II

I think this position is totally untenable. There is, I shall argue, no way in which phenomenal, or perspectival, or first-person awareness can be accommodated in a materialist framework. Materialists do not understand what first-person knowledge is, and they do not understand what the first person is.

Before I continue, let me point out that the position outlined is one of 'robust' physicalism, as Tye calls it. That is, we are wholly composed of physical elements whose nature is pretty well known. There are no mysterious inscrutable properties of the physical, nor any mystery about the connection between the mental and the physical; and we don't have to wait on some fundamental revolution in our understanding of the physical. We are, Lycan tells us, rather large collections of small physical objects.<sup>9</sup>

The first question we must ask is prompted by Dretske's comment. How is it possible to accommodate a private realm, inaccessible to the observer, in a wholly material world? Whatever the physical is, there can surely be no aspect of it which is in principle closed to public scrutiny. If its feeling like *that* to me is something in principle inaccessible to public scrutiny, then it can't be physical, or so one would suppose. To suggest otherwise leaves one without an understanding of what it could mean to call anything physical.

What has gone wrong here? Part of it, I suggest, is a disposition to suppose that the question reduces to one about ownership. My

<sup>8</sup> Lycan, 64.

<sup>9</sup> Lycan, 45.

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mode of access to the posited neural states is *self*-scrutiny, or *self*-monitoring. No one else can have *that* mode of access to the posited neural state. But then, no one else can have my smiles or frowns, or undergo my death. So, Tye tells us, 'The fact that you cannot undergo my pains... [is] no more mysterious... than the fact that you cannot undergo my death'.<sup>10</sup>

But this cannot be the answer. The issue is not about necessary ownership, nor even about necessary ownership of a mode of access, but about privileged access. My frowns, smiles or death are items in the public world. My phenomenal states are not.

That my scrutiny or monitoring of some posited state is *self*-monitoring goes no way towards accounting for the necessary privacy of what is being monitored. The refrigerator monitors its own temperature, but no one supposes that what it monitors is necessarily private to that refrigerator, that it has privileged access to its own temperature, even though nothing else can monitor that refrigerator's temperature in the way that that refrigerator does. There is nothing about self-monitoring, or about what is thus monitored, that is necessarily hidden from the observer. What needs to be explained is how a self-monitoring, admittedly vastly more complex than that of the refrigerator, can be such as to result in, or have as an aspect, something in principle inaccessible to the observer. That looks to be simply incompatible with physicalism, as Dretske observed.

But the need for an explanation of the required sort can never be satisfied. No reflection on the physical facts, no matter how detailed and comprehensive, can reveal why, when some putative neural state is the object of self-scrutiny, it feels as it does, or even why it should feel any way at all. And this is fully admitted by proponents of the position under discussion. As Tye says, 'each phenomenal state *S*, is such that fully comprehending *S* as it is essentially in itself, requires adopting one particular point of view or perspective namely that provided by undergoing *S*'.<sup>11</sup> And, as Lycan points out, no one can explain why that state of affairs feels like *that* to me.

Since no description or inspection of the physical facts will explain why any neural state feels like *that*, we clearly have an 'explanatory gap'. But the gap cannot be dismissed as something that does not count against materialism, or almost counting in its favour, as Lycan claims, nor as a 'cognitive illusion', as Tye claims.

<sup>10</sup> M. Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), 92.

<sup>11</sup> Tye, 'Phenomenal Consciousness', 708.

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It is fatal to materialism. It cannot be enough simply to point to the claimed special nature of phenomenal concepts as essentially perspectival. The notions of perspective, of self-scanning or monitoring cannot support the implication that such scanning focuses on something intrinsically hidden from the observer, as I have pointed out. Until it is explained how what looks like Cartesian privacy can be reconciled with materialism (and I see no prospect of that), simply referring us to 'the special, perspectival, nature of phenomenal concepts' is of no use at all.

### III

Most of the discussion of the so-called explanatory gap has focused on a rather different aspect: the claimed identity between the phenomenal and the physical. A full understanding of the micro-structure of water allows one to infer that where that micro-structure is realized, the relevant surface properties are also realized. But no understanding of neural states will allow one to infer that where neural state *N* is realized, so also will phenomenal state *P*. So the claimed necessary identity between the physical and the phenomenal looks to be brute, 'metaphysical' necessity, which critics such as David Chalmers claim to be quite unacceptable.<sup>12</sup>

I think Chalmers is right to reject the notion of brute metaphysical necessity. A standard claim is that the necessary identity of water with H<sub>2</sub>O is a posteriori, metaphysical necessity. Well, so be it, but that gives no credence to the claim that neural state *N* is identical with phenomenal state *P* as a matter of metaphysical necessity. That water is H<sub>2</sub>O is discovered a posteriori, but the identity is fully revealed. There is no such discovery in the case of the claimed identity between neural and phenomenal state; we discover only a correlation. And, as I noted earlier, in the case of water, understanding the micro-structure enables one to infer the presence of the relevant, watery surface properties. By contrast, no inference from physical to phenomenal properties is possible. Recourse to the paradigm of the necessary identity of water with H<sub>2</sub>O is therefore of no avail. The claimed necessary identity of physical and phenomenal state looks as brute as can possibly be, an impression strengthened by the fact that proponents of the materialist view in question all allow, to a greater or lesser extent, the possibility of

<sup>12</sup> See D. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 136–43.

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inverted qualia, changed qualia, and absent qualia, though these possibilities are deemed merely 'epistemic', on a par with the possibility of water being something other than H<sub>2</sub>O. The impression is given, therefore, that it is simply arbitrary that phenomenal state *P* is identical with neural state *N*, and there's nothing one can do to make this any more intelligible.

### IV

Some materialists, understandably blanching at this outcome, suggest that escape from it is to be found in acknowledging the intentionality of sensations. We could, Lycan says, hold to the line that, although inverted spectra are not only imaginable and 'conceivable' in every psychological sense, but logically possible as well, they are no more metaphysically possible than is the distinctness of water from H<sub>2</sub>O. This tough line is defensible, and may well be correct, but, he says, it is not *fun*.<sup>13</sup> The emphasis from this point is on the intentionality of qualia, their representative nature. Qualitative differences between sensations, it is claimed, do not outrun intentional differences, the 'colours' involved in visual experiences being just the physical colours of represented physical objects. And a recent review of a book of Tye's articles also suggests that the way to avoid the conclusion that the identity of phenomenal and physical states can only appear arbitrary is to accept that 'what is definitive of phenomenal character *F* is its transparent presentation of the colour property *C*—redness, say—of macroscopic things in the world'.<sup>14</sup>

But this suggestion provides no escape for the materialist. First of all, if it really is the case that 'qualitative differences do not outrun intentional differences', then it is difficult to see why anyone should have thought that there is a problem of an explanatory gap between the physical and the phenomenal at all. If phenomenal states are transparent presentations of some physical reality, directly representative of that reality, how could there be such a gap? As Lycan points out, a proper description of the micro-properties of water fully explains the visible properties of water; that's to say, the visual impression does seem to be a direct or transparent presentation of the physical reality. And, even more simply, an object is described as square and so big, and, lo and behold, that is what my visual

<sup>13</sup> Lycan, 79.

<sup>14</sup> See B. Brewer's review of M. Tye's *Consciousness, Colour and Content* in *Mind* 110, No. 439 (July 2001), 871.

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impression presents. But, as in fact Lycan himself reminds us, 'vision is a radically atypical and unrepresentative sense modality'.<sup>15</sup>

It is atypical because it is not possible to construe the sense of taste and smell as intentional or representative in anything like the way that visual impressions might be so construed. My visual impression of the object is a presentation of the object as correctly described. But it really makes no sense to say that my sensation of taste or smell matches the physical description of the object, or some aspect of the object. No description of any physical property can reveal why it tastes or smells as it does, or why it should have any taste or smell at all. The best that those who press the 'intentionality of sensation' line can do is to point to a causal link between molecular properties and smell or taste sensations—obvious enough, but really giving no ground for talk about smell or taste sensations as intentional or representative. Visual impressions are, if you like, directly recognitional: direct apprehensions of the object seen. If phenomenal experiences such as taste and smell are directly recognitional, as Loar, for example, claims phenomenal properties as a whole to be,<sup>16</sup> they nevertheless give very little idea of the physical properties supposedly directly recognized. My visual impression gives me the information that there is a large, square object in front of me. By contrast, my experience of the taste of a malt whisky gives me only the information that I'm having a certain experience of taste; even that it's the taste of malt whisky is information not conveyed by the experience of the taste. Overall, there is no escape from the problem poised by the explanatory gap for the materialist by pressing the idea that sensations are intentional or representative. In particular, there is no escape from the charge that it looks to be just arbitrary, something not further explicable, that neural state *N* is identical with phenomenal state *P*.

Perry suggests that the Molyneux problem offers support for the materialist. Someone who is blind and able only to feel the shape of objects, would not be able to deduce a priori that the object he feels will present a certain visual shape.<sup>17</sup> Both in the Molyneux case and in the case of the identity between the physical and the phenomenal, therefore, we have identities which cannot be determined a priori.

But the suggested parallel does not help the physicalist. First, the person who gains his sight now has two sensations, and there is no

<sup>15</sup> Lycan, 114–5.

<sup>16</sup> B. Loar, 'Phenomenal States', *Philosophical Perceptives*, 4 (Atascadero, California: Ridgeview, 1990), 81–108.

<sup>17</sup> J. Perry, *Knowledge, Possibility and Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001), 205–6.



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question that *these* are not identical, as Perry allows. It is the object sensed in these two ways which is one and the same identical object. The physicalist, by contrast, claims that the sensation is identical with the physical set-up. Second, whatever the recently sighted person may say, it is clear that he, like us, will come to see that a thing felt as square must look square. But we can never understand why the physical set-up has got to feel as it does. That remains sheer, brute 'metaphysical' necessity. We cannot escape from this by insisting that the apparent duality consists only in there being two ways of knowing the same physical reality. Whether the connection is a priori or not, the Molyneux case does not present us with an explanatory gap. A full description of the object's shape will explain why it looks as it does, shapewise. No description of the physical facts, indeed no scrutiny of the physical reality itself, will reveal why it tastes or smells as it does.

### V

I have argued that the notion that the subjectivity of the mental, and one's privileged, first-personal access to the nature of one's phenomenal states, can be accounted for as an implication of the perspectival nature of such knowledge, and in a way which is perfectly compatible with materialism, is quite untenable. I repeat that the claim that some aspect of knowledge is intrinsically private is an amazing one for materialists to be seen to defend. I now want to argue that the notion of perspectival, or first-personal, knowledge is in any case one that the materialist quite fails to understand. The materialist cannot account for first-person knowledge because they cannot account for the first person. There can, therefore, be no such thing as perspectival knowledge in a materialist world.

Self-regarding attitudes, Lycan says, differ functionally from other attitudes directed upon the very same state of affairs, though they have the same truth conditions, that state of affairs itself. I know that *I myself* weigh 12 stone while you may know only that GM weighs 12 stone, but it is, on Lycan's view, the same fact that we both know. There is no extra fact that is known or believed by me. Anyone besides me can use the word 'I' to designate themselves, and anyone else can use some word to designate me, but no one else can do both (only I can use 'I' to designate G.M.) If I refer to a mental state of my own, no one else can use the same, first-personal, term to designate the same state of affairs, and so no one can

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explain why that state of affairs feels like *that* to me. Introspection involves a very special mode of presentation, primitive and private.

Note, first, that while in the example about weight it does indeed seem to be the same fact that we both know when I know that I am 12 stone and you may know that GM is 12 stone, in the case of first-person reference to sensation there is something that only I can know, viz., that the state in question feels like *that*. The innocuous point about self-reference cannot account for this aspect, one which, as I've said, the materialist ought to find disturbing.

But that is only a preliminary point. The more substantial point is that the irreducibility of first-person reference, or representations '*de se*', is not the innocuous feature Lycan and others suppose it to be. True, only I can use 'I' to designate GM; self-regarding attitudes are irreducible. But it cannot be supposed that the possibility of self-reference is something requiring no explanation.

Nagel famously argued that a complete description of the physical world leaves a vital bit of information unaccounted for: which of the billions of persons described is *me*. It seems to me a delusion to suppose that this point can be turned aside simply by reminding us that self-regarding attitudes are irreducible. On the contrary, the very possibility of self-regarding attitudes stands in need of explanation. And that explanation must provide an answer to Nagel's point, not simply something that attempts to turn it aside.

I do not think that the materialist can provide an answer to Nagel's point. It's pretty clear on reflection that the materialist's conception of perspective, and hence of perspectival knowledge, must be akin to the notion of a computer's perspective on its own workings, or even the refrigerator's monitoring of its own temperature. We, like them, it is supposed, are assemblies of physical elements, and each of us has an individual perspective both on the world and on our own internal states. There are about six billion humanoid 'rather large collections of small physical objects' (which is what we are in Lycan's view) in the world. The great majority of them indulge in self-monitoring of their internal states, just as refrigerators do, though in a rather more complex manner, and also in giving utterance to a first person word: 'I', or some equivalent. There must be a question for the materialist: what is for some seemingly arbitrary one of these collections of small physical objects to be *me*. It is utterly unclear what sort of answer the materialist could give to this question. That each of them engages in self-monitoring and self-reference offers not a hint of an answer.

David Chalmers gets on to this point, suggesting that 'the indexical fact [that some person is *me*, some point of view *mine*] may have

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to be accepted as “primitive”<sup>18</sup>. But then he claims that this unexplained fact is ‘thin’ compared with the ‘facts about consciousness in all its full glory’, and that admitting it would require less revision of our materialist world view than would admitting irreducible facts about conscious experience. I don’t agree. *All* conscious experiences are irreducibly mine or not mine. This is not some ‘thin’ fact. Unless the materialist can make sense of this their strategy for accommodating qualia and phenomenal experience within a materialist framework collapses. Talk of such knowledge or awareness being ‘perspectival’ will be of no avail unless materialism can explain what it is for some apparently arbitrary perspective to be mine. Or rather, talk of ‘perspectival’ knowledge will be of no avail for materialists unless they can explain how the indexical fact that some particular perspective is *mine*, some particular assembly of physical elements is *me*, can be accepted as a primitive, irreducible or non-derivative fact. It seems pretty clear that materialism can offer no such explanation. For the materialist, any decent computer or indeed any decent refrigerator has a perspective on its own internal states, and any camera has a perspective on the world. But nothing akin to that sort of perspective can be irreducibly mine or not mine.

It is, therefore, a total misreading of Nagel’s concern to suppose that it can be turned aside as pointing to no more than the irreducibility of first person to third person reference, and to regard this latter as an innocuous ‘conceptual’ point. Of course first-person reference is so irreducible, but this isn’t a self-standing ‘conceptual’ point, having no ontological implications. Our possession of the first-person concept stands in need of some sort of explanation. Materialists cannot simply help themselves to it.

At one point Lycan imagines that he has become amnesiac or the like. Lots of evidence is collected and presented to Lycan about who he is, but, Lycan says, it’s all third-person-descriptive. No one else can *explain why* W.G.L. or the person who is *F,G...* is *me*. Yet these persons are in fact both me. But the materialist *does* have to explain, if not *why* G.M. is me (which is surely not the relevant question), at least what it can *mean* for some small segment of the physical world, the G.M.-part, to be me. And there is no explanation to be offered.

## VI

So far, I have argued that materialists attempts to accommodate phenomenal knowledge are totally unsuccessful. The startling claim

<sup>18</sup> Chalmers, 85.

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is made that the notion of self-monitoring, or perspectival nature of phenomenal concepts, offers an account of why no one can explain why neural state *N* feels as it does; and so Cartesian privacy is reconciled to materialism. But no such reconciliation is possible, as Dretske saw. Further, the 'explanatory gap' between the physical and the phenomenal demands that the claimed identity between them is a matter of brute 'metaphysical' necessity, in a way which is a utterly remote from the usual paradigm of metaphysical or a posteriori necessity, that of the identity of water with H<sub>2</sub>O. And recourse to the supposed representative nature or intentionality of sensations won't help, since sensations are not, in my view, intentional at all. Lastly, the whole structure of argument rests on the claim that subjective knowledge is perspectival, or pro-nominal (Lycan's word) or first-personal. But the notion of perspectival or first-person, knowledge rests on acceptance of a primitive indexical fact, the irreducible fact that one perspective is mine, one person is me. And that is not compatible with the objective standpoint of materialism.

More broadly, materialists cannot simply help themselves to concepts such as those of phenomenal knowledge, perspectival knowledge and pro-nominal or first-personal awareness and then claim that those features which seem to offer a threat to materialism are merely conceptual or epistemic, and have no ontological implications.

## VII

I have been considering the failure of materialism to account for phenomenal knowledge, a failure, in fact, to understand or account for the first-person perspective. I now want to consider another way in which this failure shows itself, and that is in the failure to grasp what it is to ascribe emotion, either to oneself or to others.

Understanding the ascription of emotion is first-personal understanding, or so it seems to me. Ascribing emotions to others is, in the first instance, a matter of bringing the template of one's emotional experience to the behaviour of others. What it cannot be, I think, is a matter of discerning that the behaviour of another realizes some pattern of physical events, no matter how high-grade we take that pattern to be.

In Dennett's discussion on this sort of issue, we find him suggesting that there is after all some 'real pattern' which is common to, for example, all the possible finger motions and vocal chord

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vibrations, which together constitute the indefinitely many different ways a stockbroker might have taken to place an order for 500 shares in General Motors.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, there is some very high-grade physical pattern which is common to all the games of chess which, let's say, have been played to a conclusion. We don't simply have a vast number of different movements, with no pattern to be discerned. There is a pattern to be discerned. It's not a visible pattern, rather it's a high-grade, 'intellectual' pattern. But it's there, realized in the physical world. What's more, both the pattern common to all cases of buying 500 shares in General Motors and the pattern common to all games of chess played to a finish might be discerned without recourse to intentional notions—without, that is, any reference to the possible intentions and desires of any agent. In fact, we can dispense with Dennett's 'intentional stance' altogether, so far as examples of this sort are concerned.

But emotional understanding, the ascription of emotion to others, cannot be like this. There is no physical pattern common to every possible expression of indignation, or behaving to express gratitude or out of remorse, or to every possible case of taking oneself to be humiliated and seeking revenge. There is, of course, some real pattern here, but it's not a physical pattern. The pattern is simply that every instance can be seen as an expression of indignation, remorse, or whatever. And to discern that pattern requires first-personal experience of the relevant state of conscious, knowledge of what it is to be indignant, to feel grateful, or full of remorse.

It's a common claim that psychological categories are irreducible to physical categories. They certainly are, but materialists commonly suggest that the reason for this is that the states in question can be multiply realized. The notion of a thermostatically-controlled water heater can be variously realized, Papineau tells us; and so can psychological categories.<sup>20</sup> Well, no. There clearly is something physically common to all thermostatic water heaters: they all boil water and cut off when the job is done; and that's a physical similarity.<sup>21</sup> There's no such physical similarity in the case of

<sup>19</sup> D. Dennett, 'True Believers', in his *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987), 26.

<sup>20</sup> D. Papineau, 'Irreducibility and Teleology', in D. Charles and K. Lennon (eds), *Reduction, Explanation and Realism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 60–4.

<sup>21</sup> Papineau actually says that there is nothing physically in common to all thermostats *apart from* their all turning the heater off when the water gets hot enough. That crucial qualification undermines the suggested parallel with psychological concepts.

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expressions of emotion. In any case, to accept the idea of multiple realizability is to accept that this or that token of physical elements and events is an actual realization of the concept—of thermostatic water heater, or whatever. But I don't have the faintest idea what it could mean to say that my indignation at the treatment of a friend is realized as some particularly complex pattern among 'small physical objects'. Emotional understanding is a species of first-personal understanding of states of consciousness. It is not a matter of detecting some pattern of physical events, no matter how complex or 'high-grade', either in oneself or in others.

### VIII

I want now to consider a different, though clearly related, line of argument. Adrian Cussins some years ago raised the following issue. The materialist seems to be committed to the claim that many stretches of human behaviour are capable of being explained in two different ways. To take one example (not in fact Cussins'): There is an explanation couched in terms of ordinary psychological or intentional notions which explains why someone, receiving an invitation to a dinner, is reluctant to accept because he learns that one of the guests is to be X and X has behaved badly towards him in the past. But on the other hand he has cause to be grateful to the person who is giving the dinner, and doesn't want to disappoint him. The decision is tricky, but eventually he decides to go, and turns up at the appointed hour. There is also an explanation of just the same sequence of behaviour couched in the terms of neurophysiology. Each explanation is quite independent of the other, but each explanation is a complete and sufficient explanation of the stretch of human behaviour in question. Isn't it a miraculous coincidence that one and the same stretch of behaviour is capable of two quite independent but equally sufficient explanations?

Cussins' response is that this is not a miraculous coincidence at all. He says, '*It is the nature of human cognition that that is how things are.* It is because humans have the cognitive nature that they have that their physiology meshes with folk psychology; that the two march in step' (Cussins' italics).<sup>22</sup> And so, we are to suppose, the explanation of one's behaviour in terms of being motivated by emotions such as a resentment and gratitude, an explanation which, I

<sup>22</sup> A. Cussins, 'The Limitations of Pluralism', in *Reduction, Explanation and Realism*, p. 198.

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have argued, rests on first-personal understanding, is paralleled by a sufficient explanation in terms of neurophysiology. That, Cussins claims, is not a miraculous coincidence at all.

But it is. It would indeed be a miraculous coincidence if the behaviour of one we see to be motivated by, say, resentment, jealousy, the desire for revenge, on the one hand, or by feelings of gratitude was capable of being sufficiently explained in neurophysiological terms, terms which make no reference to intentional states of consciousness at all. We *know* that the behaviour of the individual in question makes sense *only* as motivated by resentment, jealousy, or the desire for revenge. What could account for this view that there might be no problem here?

Almost certainly, it is the model of the mind as a computer. Taking a well-known example of Dennett's, we might be disposed to argue that the behaviour of a chess-playing computer can indeed be given two equally sufficient explanations, one in terms of the physical design of the computer including its software, and the other in terms of intentional states. We can take the 'intentional stance' in relation to the computer. Each explanation is sufficient, and quite independent of the other. Two sequences of events can therefore be explained in two utterly different ways, the one 'physical' the other intentional, and of course that is not a miraculous coincidence at all.

But to take this as a paradigm for the explanation of human behaviour would be a serious mistake. It is one thing to be able to construct a symbol-crunching machine like a chess-playing computer and go on to point out that its behaviour can be explained and predicted in two utterly different ways, but quite another thing to suggest that the behaviour of an individual moved to act from jealousy or gratitude could be explained in a way which makes no reference to jealousy or gratitude, or to any other thought or emotion. To act from gratitude is to be prompted to act by a conscious state of emotion. It is to act in a way which, one would have thought, can only be seen as an expression of gratitude; that is, it is to act in a way such that the sole explanation of that behaviour is by reference to the emotion of gratitude. The suggestion that the intentional explanation is just one of two possible explanations of the behaviour, and one that might be temporarily set aside in favour of an explanation in terms of a neurophysiological account, looks quite unacceptable. Talk of 'embodied cognition' will not advance matters here; it can only raise the question, what exactly is being cognized? In the chess example, the answer is unproblematical; symbols, and the rules for manipulating them. But in the case

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in question, the answer can only be: that one has been the recipient of a benefit for which one is grateful, or of a slight which one resents. I suggest that no sense can be given to the claim that such cognition is embodied or realized in some particular configuration of physical elements. Here and elsewhere the computational model of mind goes sadly awry.

In fact the example Cussins himself chooses to illustrate the point raises exactly the problem I have just outlined. A mother holds her child close to the edge of the canyon so that the child can see the view; neurophysiology offers a complete alternative explanation which makes no reference to intentional states. And, Cussins claims, it is not at all miraculous that these two predictions march in step. Really? The trouble is that reference to such factors as the mother's concern and love for her child seems essential to the prediction and explanation of her behaviour, and it is quite unclear, therefore, how any purely physical explanation can be a sufficient account of what goes on.

The conclusion to be drawn from this case is the same as that which emerged from the discussion of Dennett's claim about 'real patterns'. If the intentional and the physical explanation march in step, that indicates that what is picked out by the intentional explanation is a functional/physical pattern, a pattern which could well have been discerned without recourse to intentional explanation at all. First-person understanding is something, therefore, that might be dispensed with. But to explain someone's behaviour as arising from a desire to humiliate someone, or to express gratitude to someone, or as issuing from remorse, is to explain that behaviour as a realization of a pattern which is *not* one that can be picked out from any physical viewpoint, and for the discernment of which first-personal experience and understanding is indeed indispensable. That is to say, different expressions of the desire to humiliate someone, or to express gratitude to someone, will certainly have something in common, but what they have in common will not be a physical pattern, no matter how high-grade. There is no such pattern, and a corollary of this is that the explanation of the individual token of (say) acting to humiliate someone cannot run parallel to a complete non-intentional explanation in physics or neurophysiology. And this point in turn is a corollary of the basic point that the claim that (say) one's feeling of indignation or gratitude is token-identical with an assembly or configuration of physical elements remains, in spite of all efforts to make sense of such claims, an unintelligible one.



IX

To deny the possibility of the intentional explanation of human behaviour running in parallel with a sufficient explanation in the physical sciences is, of course, to reject the principle of causal closure. So be it. Materialism fails not only to account for our knowledge of phenomenal states, but also to account for behaviour motivated by intentional, often emotional, states of consciousness.

In spite of this, the dominant view seems to be that our common-sense psychological explanation is not incompatible with materialism, and many find it inconceivable that this might be otherwise. Kim, for example, says, 'I don't see principled obstacles to a functional account of intentionality. Let me just say here that it seems to me inconceivable that a possible world exists that is an exact physical duplicate of this world but lacking wholly in intentionality'.<sup>23</sup> There are two points to be made about this claim. First, simply to claim that it is inconceivable that there is such a world falls way short of establishing that there are no 'principled obstacles to a functional account of intentionality'. In fact, the fundamental obstacle remains: we have no way of understanding how one's indignation, pride, joy, or whatever, could be realized as the behaviour of an assembly of physical particles. Until we have this, we cannot treat the suggested impossibility of a physical duplicate of this world which lacks intentionality as giving any support to a functionalist/materialist account of the mental.

My second point is that the claim that an exact physical duplicate of this world which lacks intentionality is impossible can be accommodated in a way which offers no support to a functionalist physicalism at all. An interactionist dualist could easily agree with this claim.<sup>24</sup> There cannot, for the dualist, be a duplicate world which lacks intentionality, since in removing intentionality from the world we are removing conscious states which are often causally responsible for behaviour. A physical duplicate of this world which lacks intentionality would require that many physical events in that world have no cause; for it is a world from which the mental cause of many items of behaviour has been removed. Clearly, these mental causes cannot be replaced by physical causes, for that would mean that this world is no longer a physical duplicate of ours. I therefore make no

<sup>23</sup> J. Kim, *Mind in a Physical World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998), 101.

<sup>24</sup> Kim actually allows that abandoning physicalism in favour of substantial dualism is a serious option, and one that will entail the rejection of mind-body supervenience. See Kim, *op. cit.*, 119.

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use of, and in fact reject, the notion of a zombie, defined as David Chalmers does as a creature physically just like you or me but entirely lacking in consciousness. This speculation plays a large part in Chalmers thinking. In fact, it is epiphenomenalism under another name, though Chalmers is a bit shy about recognizing that. Anyway, it seems to me an untenable notion.

### X

Materialism, I have argued, is undermined by its failure to understand the first-perspective in a number of ways. It cannot make sense of first-person knowledge of sensations; it cannot make sense of the fact that one perspective is *mine*, that one particular person is *me*. And it can have no understanding of the determination of behaviour by intentional states of consciousness (emotions, e.g.), an understanding which rests on a grasp of the first-personal perspective. These latter considerations, of course, point in the direction of interactionist dualism. There may be some sort of monistic account of the person (though I know of no attempt to give one which strikes me as remotely plausible), but it seems to me certain that 'robust physicalism' cannot provide such an account.