

BOOK REVIEWS

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John Perry, *Knowledge, Possibility, and Consciousness*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001. Pp. xvi, 221.

In this lucid, deep, and entertaining book (based on his 1999 Jean Nicod lectures), John Perry supposes that type-identity physicalism is antecedently plausible, and that rejecting this thesis requires good reason (this is “antecedent physicalism”). He aims to show that experience gap arguments, as given by Jackson (the knowledge argument), Kripke (the modal argument), and Chalmers (the zombie argument), fail to provide such reason, and moreover that each failure stems from an overly restrictive conception of the content of thought.

Type-identity physicalism aims to preserve certain intuitions about mind. Mental states (understood as types) have causal roles, and some mental states (“experiences”) also have phenomenal aspects. Experiences are inner states of persons, unanalyzable in terms of causal roles (in contrast with second-order functionalism, discussed below), and knowable from the first-person perspective: “According to antecedent physicalism, this state of these parts of the brain is exactly what we are aware of subjectively when we think of “this [e.g., painful] state” (67).

One intuition not preserved by type-identity physicalism is that the experiences of differently constituted creatures might have the same phenomenal aspect. Perry attempts (somewhat half-heartedly) to explain away this intuition, but he mainly rejects it because he takes the physicalist options to be, roughly, type-identity and second-order functionalism (on which a mental state is the state of being in a state playing such-and-such causal role); and he finds functionalism untenable. Perry’s taxonomy subsumes supervenience and realization physicalist accounts under the functionalist rubric (see §4.3). It’s worth noting, then, that physicalists have nonfunctionalist accounts of supervenience and realization (see, e.g., Yablo 1992) compatible with the multiple realizability of phenomenal aspects, and that most of Perry’s discussion serves these physicalists, as well.

Perry starts with Chalmers’s (1996, 94–95) zombie argument, which takes the metaphysical (or “broadly logical”) possibility of a world physically identical to ours, but without consciousness, to show that physical states do not metaphysically necessitate phenomenal aspects. Antecedent physicalists will, Perry claims, deny that such worlds are metaphysically possible: since, on their view, conscious states are causally efficacious vis-à-vis the physical, the lack of consciousness will result in physical difference. Perry’s claim is correct, given the plausible assumption that physical identity requires identity with respect to physical laws. His claim that nonphysicalists endorsing mental/physical efficacy will also deny the metaphysical possibility of zombie worlds is not correct, however, independent of an argument that physical identity requires identity

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with respect to psychophysical laws (which argument Perry does not give); hence neither is his claim that the zombie argument is primarily an argument for epiphenomenalism, not dualism. In any case, Perry allows that the zombie argument does have a physicalist target—second-order functionalism—for if zombie worlds are metaphysically possible, this arguably shows that being in any given second-order state does not entail having phenomenal experience; but, he maintains, the antecedent physicalist is immune from this objection.

My concern here is that Perry's purely defensive strategy is inappropriate. The zombie argument may be particularly worrisome for second-order functionalism, but more generally it indicates that the usual means of establishing state identities (or whatever physicalist relation is at issue) are not available for phenomenal aspects. (Similarly for Chalmers's scenario on which phenomenal aspects are "inverted" relative to ours in a physically identical world, the possibility of which Perry also denies, as incompatible with type-identity.) After all, what is supposed to ground type-identity claims? On an influential approach (Lewis 1972), these are grounded in functional/causal reductions (e.g., of water to H₂O) manifesting the sort of conceptual entailments that Chalmers's scenarios aim to show are not available for phenomenal mentality. From this perspective, the appropriate conclusion of the zombie and inverted-world arguments is precisely that the type-identity claim is unjustified.

Perry's response to Jackson's (1986) knowledge argument is better situated, dialectically speaking. As Perry sets it out, Mary is raised in a black and white room, where she learns all the physical facts about color, including

- (1) Subjective character Q_r is the subjective character of seeing red.

Mary is then released and encounters something she knows to be red, whereupon she learns

- (2) This subjective character is subjective character Q_r .

Or more colloquially,

- (3) This is what it is like to see red.

The challenge for the antecedent physicalist is to explain (or explain away) Mary's new knowledge. For if Mary already knew all the physical facts (in particular, about Q_r), any new knowledge would seem to be of a nonphysical fact, concerning a nonphysical property of Q_r .

Perry agrees that Mary knew (1), but not (2), while in her room, and that this difference reflects a difference in the content (hence truth conditions) of (1) and (2). But he thinks the antecedent physicalist can explain the differences via the "two ways" strategy of Loar (1990) and Lycan (1995), which applies Frege's explanation of informative identities (here, thoughts): one can find "A is B" informative, though "A is A" never is, when 'A' and 'B' are different ways of thinking (concepts) of the same object. In her room Mary had one (third-person) concept ('subjective experience Q_r ') of the physical state *peo*

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ple are in when seeing red; afterwards she learned that another (first-person) concept ('this subjective experience') was a way of thinking about this same physical state.

The worry about this strategy is that Mary doesn't (we may assume) have beliefs about her concepts, as such; hence the strategy appears to give the wrong account of Mary's new knowledge. In response, Perry draws an analogy to cases of informative identity involving indexical and demonstrative perspectival concepts. Consider Rudolph Lingens's thoughts:

- (4) Rudolph Lingens is in Olin Library.
- (5) I am in Olin Library.
- (6) Rudolph Lingens is Rudolph Lingens.
- (7) I am Rudolph Lingens.

(4) and (5) have the same *subject matter content* (each is true if and only if Rudolph Lingens is in Olin Library); so do (6) and (7) (each is true if and only if Rudolph Lingens is Rudolph Lingens). Making sense of how Rudolph's beliefs in (4) and (5), and in (6) and (7), could come apart, and explaining why he might think and act differently after learning (7) (the subject matter content of which he already knew), thus requires taking (5) and (7) to have *reflexive content*, which represents the perspectival way a person can think about himself. This content imposes reflexive truth conditions on the thoughts ((5) is true if and only if (5) is thought by someone in Olin Library; (7) is true if and only if (7) is thought by Rudolph Lingens). And Perry canvasses similar cases involving spatial, temporal, and second-person demonstrative perspectival concepts.

Appealing to his highly plausible, naturalistic account of how perspectival concepts interact with (and in the case of informative identities, hook up with) nonperspectival concepts in our cognitive psychology, Perry argues that such applications of the two-ways strategy do not require (a) that informativity be explained by new subject matter content, or (b) that the knower have explicit beliefs about reflexive truth conditions (e.g., about the concepts or thoughts involved). By analogy, we needn't explain Mary's new knowledge (which also involves a perspectival concept) by new subject matter content: "In Mary's case ... the need is not for nonphysical properties, but for a broader conception of the content of thought" (113).

Perry thinks Kripke's (1972/1980) modal argument also assumes an overly restricted conception of content. Kripke aims to show that the usual means of explaining away the apparent contingency of theoretical identities is not available for identities between phenomenal aspects and brain states (so that the best explanation for the apparent contingency is non-identity). Perry takes Kripke's discussion to be compatible with there being more content than subject matter content (in particular, Perry sees the reference-fixing descriptions Kripke appeals to in the course of explaining away apparent contingencies as marking a level of "criterial content"); and similarly for the framework of pri-

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mary and secondary intensions of concepts that Chalmers uses to support the possibility of zombies and invertees. But these departures from the subject matter assumption don't go far enough. If one has still more varieties of content to appeal to (reflecting how the various aspects of concepts that are in fact of the same thing—their origin, their associated criteria, their applicanda, etc.—can come apart in our cognitive psychology), the apparent contingency of mental-physical state identifications can be explained away.

Perry's response works against certain formulations of the knowledge and modal arguments. But there is a disanalogy between cases of informative identity involving indexical and second-person demonstrative concepts and those involving concepts of phenomenal aspects, and this disanalogy suggests a reformulation of these arguments against which Perry's purely defensive strategy will again be inappropriate. In the former cases, there is generally *no problem* in seeing how the perspectival and nonperspectival concepts could be of the same thing. Think of Rudolph Lingens's concepts 'I' and 'Rudolph Lingens': in the usual case, both are of a person of a certain shape and size, who is in a library, etc. Perry might reply that Lingens's self-notion needn't be embodied, or embodied in any particular way (perhaps, deluded, Lingens thinks he's an amoeba). But note that to the degree that no isomorphism can be established, the grounds for the identity are thereby undermined (Rudolph, thinking of himself as disembodied, cannot accept that he is the spatiotemporally located Rudolph Lingens, on pain of contradiction). Other perspectival and nonperspectival concepts map onto each other in less isomorphic, but ultimately comprehensible, fashions.

The case is very different with phenomenal and physical concepts, for on the face of it, the requisite isomorphisms are not in place (or at least, Perry doesn't show that they are in place). Proponents of the knowledge and modal arguments can thus accept Perry's point that a distinction in ways of thinking alone does not falsify the type-identity thesis, and then use the disanalogy just noted to claim that the best explanation of Mary's new knowledge, and of the possibilities canvassed in the modal arguments, *is* the falsity of this claim. The debate continues—but advanced by Perry's book, which manifests a truly fruitful intersection of semantics with the metaphysics of mind.

JESSICA WILSON

University of Michigan

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Hartry Field, *Truth and the Absence of Fact*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001. Pp. xvi, 401.

This volume reprints a dozen of the author's papers, most with substantial postscripts, and adds one new one. The bulk of the material is on topics in philosophy of language (truth and indeterminacy), but there are also two papers on philosophy of mathematics written after the appearance of the author's collected papers on that subject, and one on epistemology. As to the substance of Field's contributions, limitations of space preclude doing much more below than indicating the range of issues addressed, and the general orientation taken towards them. As to the style of his writing, it well exhibits the first of the two virtues, clarity and conciseness, that one looks for in philosophical prose.

The collection opens strongly with Field's first philosophical publication, "Tarski's Theory of Truth," dating from 1972. In case there is any reader unfamiliar with this classic, its main contention is that Tarski's famous truth-definition does *not* give a physicalistic account of the notion of truth, but only a physicalistic reduction of the notion of truth for a language to the notion of denotation for the primitives of the language—according to the original paper, to the notion of denotation for the *nonlogical* primitives of the language; according to the postscript, to the denotation of those *plus* that of the logical constants.

In the early 1970s, Field took this absence of a physicalistic reduction of the notion of truth to raise doubts about the legitimacy of the notion. He at that time simply did not take seriously the disquotational theory of truth advocated by Quine and others, the central idea of which is that the role of the word 'true' is not to connote some physical relation between language and the extralinguistic world, but rather to serve as an intralinguistic device usable especially for stating generalizations (for example, "Everything so-and-so says is true") that could otherwise only be suggested by a few examples and three dots. By the late 1990s, however, Field had himself become a major proponent of disquo-