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On the prospects of a Quinean ontology of events

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The metaphysics of material objects is a well-established area of study in contemporary philosophy. The literature on the metaphysics of events, on the other hand, is relatively miniscule compared to that of objects. This is rather unexpected because events are just as real as objects-- or so most of us think. Surely, there is something elusive about events. They are not tangible as objects and it is hard to precisely locate them in space and time. But most of us are not skeptics about events either. Not only the man on the street, but almost all philosophers (who had actually cared to think and write about events) are realists about them. And not only in ordinary language do we refer to events, but some of our best metaphysical theories also quantify over them. For example, causation is standardly formulated in terms of events: an event C causes another event E if and only if...

Yet it is far from uncontroversial what exactly events are. Some take events to be as coarse-grained as objects. According to Davidson and Quine, events are spatiotemporal entities to be individuated by their spatiotemporal locations: $E_1$ is the same event as $E_2$ if and only if $E_1$ and $E_2$ happen in the same space at the same time. Others take events to be as fine-grained as facts. According to Kim, events are property exemplifications of the form $(O, P, t)$ where O stands for object, P for property, and t for time: an event is constituted by an object O’s exemplifying the property P at time t. And yet according to Lewis, events are properties of spacetime regions across possible worlds: an event is the class of all spatiotemporal regions across possible worlds (including the actual one) in which the event happens.

The choice of a theory of events is not a matter to be decided independently of one's other, more general, metaphysical commitments. Hence, there are a number of important questions that must be answered first: Are events particulars or universals? Are they concrete or abstract? What is a good criterion of identity for events? Last, but not the least, what--if anything--does our ordinary event talk have to do with what events "really" are? By revealing my preferred answers to these questions, I end up endorsing the Davidson-Quine account of events, according to which events are as coarse-grained as objects. In particular, I try to fill in what I find to be a gap in the Davidson-Quine account by offering an analysis of the concept of event (in terms of that of object) by arguing that events are basically changes in the arrangement of objects in spacetime.

**Keywords:** ontology, objects, events, facts, four-dimensionalism
Is representationalism committed to color objectivism?

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Strong representationalism is the thesis that the phenomenal character of an experience is one and the same as its representational content. I want to address the Argument from Color Objectivism which is put forth to refute strong representationalism. This argument goes as follows: As strong representationalism defines an experience’s phenomenal character in terms of its representational content, it cannot construe the properties that enter the representational content in terms of subjective responses since this would provide a circular account. This seems to create a problem for strong representationalism when confronted with secondary qualities, e.g. colors, because these qualities are usually defined in terms of the kind of experiences they are apt to produce in normal observers under standard conditions. Thus, representationalists must opt for an objectivist theory of color. Usually, they do so in vindicating color physicalism which reduces colors to properties that belong to material objects and can be accounted for in wholly physical terms. However, color physicalism faces several difficulties such as metamerism, phenomenological inadequacy and missing a satisfying account for the structural features of colors. Representationalism, therefore, seems to be doomed.

In contrast, I will challenge the claim that strong representationalism is committed to an objectivist theory of color. I will argue that strong representationalists only need to adopt color objectivism if they claim that color realism is true, i.e. the view that colors are properties of mind-independent objects. But in the first place, there is no need to adhere to color realism if one wants to hold a strong representationalist view. In the second place, adopting an anti-realist conception of colors admits avoiding the circularity problem. Therefore, accepting anti-realism about colors is, I suggest, the best way for the representationalist to deal with the Argument from Color Objectivism.

Hereafter, I will examine anti-realist theories of color to see which of them are compatible with strong representationalism. I will consider three candidates: First, radical eliminativism which states that there are no color properties at all, not even un-instantiated ones. Second, literal projectivism according to which colors properties are instantiated in mental entities like sense-data or visual fields. Third, figurative projectivism which holds that colors are irreducible, simple, non-relational and intrinsic properties which are not instantiated at all, neither in material objects nor in mental entities. Their only existence is in representational contents. It will emerge that only figurative projectivism is a viable option for the proponent of strong representationalism because radical eliminativism denies the very existence of the properties that figure in the explanation of what phenomenal character is. And literal projectivism is ruled out, too, since it does not serve the representationalist’s purpose of identifying an experience’s phenomenal character with its representational content.

Keywords: Representationalism about phenomenal consciousness, phenomenal character, representational content, Argument from Color Objectivism, color projectivism
Could an artificial system be phenomenally conscious? Yes.

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In search of a theory of consciousness that explains how an artificial system could have phenomenal consciousness, I evaluate four different accounts of consciousness that are commonly known as higher-order theory of consciousness, first-order representationalist theory of consciousness, global workspace theory of consciousness and reality space theory of consciousness. I discuss that David Rosenthal’s higher-order theory of consciousness fails to provide the right type of consciousness for artificial systems, for the theory is not able to accommodate a rich, non-conceptual content of representation that is required to have phenomenal consciousness but rather, the theory seems more plausible as an account of access consciousness. On the contrary, Michael Tye’s first-order representationalism about phenomenal content gives us the rich, non-conceptual content that we want and that is poised to influence the general belief/desire system. However, Tye’s theory seems to be mistaken regarding the nature of representation, for it fails to provide an account of representation that explains how misrepresentations occur. Furthermore, Tye’s theory turns out to be incompatible with the kind of unity that we look for in an account of phenomenal consciousness. Like higher-order representationalism, global workspace theory seems more plausible as an account of access consciousness since it is not able to accommodate a genuine representation for phenomenal content that explains how an artificial system can have conceptual beliefs and desires as well as non-conceptual representations that are all capable of being mistaken. Unlike higher-order representationalism, global workspace theory succeeds in providing an account of representation that explains an essential aspect to consciousness: unity. I argue that the right account of phenomenal consciousness that artificial systems could have is the one like Bjorn Merker’s reality space theory that can accommodate genuine representations in phenomenal content when it is combined with success semantics. Success semantics gives us an account of both conceptual desires and beliefs and non-conceptual percepts and urges that are all required to have genuine representations. Furthermore, success semantics explains misrepresentation that Tye’s account has failed to explain. First, non-conceptual desires like urges can be misrepresented when they do not reinforcingly satisfy our non-conceptual beliefs. Second, non-conceptual beliefs like percepts can also be misrepresented often such as in the cases of optical illusions and hallucinations. Finally, as non-conceptual desires and beliefs directly influence the conceptual belief/desire system, they can cause misrepresentations at the conceptual level. In conclusion, I argue that for artificial systems to have phenomenal consciousness, we need representations of rich, non-conceptual content of bodily conditions, external world, motives and goals that can be mistaken and that are integrated in a way in which they are poised to influence the general belief/desire system.

Keywords: artificial systems, phenomenal consciousness, conceptual and non-conceptual representation, success semantics, belief/desire system
Metaphysical import of biological naturalism

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The aim of my presentation is to discuss the metaphysical import of Biological Naturalism. I will consider some precise claims and definitions which are to be found in Searle 1992, 2004 and 2007, in light of Jonathan Schaffer’s proposal for a metaphysics based on «a hierarchical view of reality ordered by priority in nature» (cf. Schaffer 2009). I will claim that a first sketch of Searle’s metaphysics turns out to be structured as a “weird monism”: a monocategory being of physical events includes a hierarchically ordered structure of physical-material events grounding physical-mental events. In formula: $\exists x(Px) \& \exists y(Qy) \& (Px \backslash Qy)$, where P is “to be physical-material”, Q is “to be physical-mental”, and “\" express the grounding relation as stated in Schaffer 2009. With regard to Schaffer’s account, the formula above appears to be redundant, since the relation of ground should afford us some permissivism concerning existence and therefore the existential claim about Px and Qy would be implied in the claim of ground. But Biological Naturalism seems to suggest an addiction of being at the second level. In Schaffer’s terms, there is no “bang for the buck” or “ontological free-lunch”, and no permissivism appears to be granted about the physical-mental events, since these seem to be a real addiction of being, in a way closer to Paul Audi’s account (cf. Audi 2012). As a result, a more proper way to state a minimal sketch of Biological Naturalism’s metaphysical import could be: $\exists x(Px) \& \exists y(Qy) \& (Px \backslash Qy)$, with the “thick” quantifier “$\exists$” just indicating that there is no permissivism about the considered levels of being (the sense of a “thick” quantifier I appeal to, is quite different from the one discussed in Fine 2009). To sum up: according to Biological Naturalism, mental events are real in the very same way material events are, even if they are (metaphysically) grounded in material events. I will conclude with some remarks about the features that distinguish physical-material events from physical-mental events: while the former are quantitative, non-intentional and intersubjectively available, the latter are qualitative, intentional and available only for their subject.

Keywords: Biological Naturalism, metaphysics of mind, grounding theory, Jonathan Schaffer.
References


Treating demonstrations as features of contexts
What can we gain and should we be scared of their ambiguity

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In his (2015), Recanati offers a difficulty for the traditional way of thinking about semantics of demonstratives. His conclusions take a form of a dilemma: we have to either (1) break the linguistic meaning–character unity, or (2) agree that characters do not determine contents, and make room for speaker’s referential intentions in our semantic model.

According to Recanati, what forces us into the dilemma is Brandom’s constraint (Brandom: 2008) that seems to be precluding a theory that keeps the character equated to the linguistic meaning while also not referring to the speaker’s intentions. The constraint comes down to the idea that objects that are supposed to be supplied into the contents of propositions as designata of demonstratives cannot do so by virtue of being parts of the context. That is because, if characters are to do any real work, it is them that the language users should be directed by towards the relevant parts of the context in order to be able to fill in the referents of the demonstrative expressions.

The aim of my talk is to propose a new theory of demonstratives that does not violate Brandom’s constraint and also escapes Recanati’s dilemma by treating demonstrations, rather than the objects of demonstrations, as parts of the contexts. I will also try to offer a reason for not worrying too much about the classic Wittgensteinian critique of ostension as chronically ambiguous.

Keywords: demonstratives, semantics, Brandom’s constraint, Kaplan, ostension,

References

Seeing opaque objects and seeing surfaces

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The contemporary debate in the philosophy of perception is dominated by the fundamental distinction between “direct” and “indirect” realism: traditionally, naïve realists and intentionalists are taken as examples of the first group, sense-data theorists of the second. In its general traits, the distinction does not appear problematic: while direct realists believe that perception relates us with (or makes us aware of) what we may define as “external” objects (meaning with “external” spatiotemporal, three-dimensional objects such as chairs, tables etc.), indirect realists believe that the contact with such objects is mediated by different entities (whether they are “mental” or “physical” objects, such as surfaces etc.), which are, in turn, perceived “directly”. Once we try to develop the distinction in more details, however, things get more complicated, and many attempts of definition have been proposed in the analytical debate.

In my paper, I will consider, and reject, Bermudez’ proposal (Bermudez, 2000) to differentiate between an overlooked (relevant) difference between the usual “direct/indirect” dichotomy and a second one, which he calls, following Jackson (1977), “mediate/immediate”. First, Bermudez defines the meaning of “direct” perception (and, thus of direct object of perception) by taking advantage of Snowdon’s definition in terms of the possibility of formulating a true demonstrative judgment, as “that is X” (Snowdon, 1992). Second, he considers Jackson’s distinction between “mediate” and “immediate” perception, which is usually taken as identical to the direct/indirect one (see Campbell (2004) and Snowdon (1992)). Jackson relies on the “in virtue of” relation to define what “mediate” perception means: “X is a mediate object of (visual) perception (for S at t) iff S sees x at t, and there is an y such that (x ≠ y and) S sees x in virtue of seeing y” (1977: 19-20). Then, he defines immediate perception as a perception which is not mediate.

Bermudez believes that the two distinctions should be kept separate and, thus, that a mediate object of perception (as, he claims, any ordinary three-dimensional object, which is always perceived in virtue of perceiving a part of it) can nonetheless be perceived directly.

I will claim that Bermudez is wrong because he overlooks a relevant part of Snowdon’s definition of direct perception, namely, that the truth of the demonstrative judgment must be “non-dependent” upon the truth of another, “more basic” demonstrative judgment.

After having analysed Snowdon’s concept of non-dependence (and its motivation), I will claim that, if Jackson’s definition in terms of the “in virtue of” relation is correct, the truth of any demonstrative judgment concerning three-dimensional objects will count as dependent upon the truth of a demonstrative judgment concerning part of its surface and, therefore, that the dichotomies of mediate/immediate and direct/indirect perception are not distinct. Therefore, in order to argue that three-dimensional objects are the direct object of perception, at least one of the two definitions must be rejected.

Keywords: Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Perception, Phenomenology, Direct Perception.
References


Is thinking the same thought a transitive relation?

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Thoughts are the contents of our propositional attitudes. I assess the thesis that thinking the same thought is not a transitive relation. I examine two ways of defending the non-transitivity claim: one based on the thesis that acquiring a name from A ensures that one expresses the same thoughts by means of that name as A (Fine, 2007), another based on the idea that, if two subjects successfully communicate, then they entertain the same thought (Onofri, 2016). My hypothesis is that the most plausible ways of defusing the challenges either fall back on the non-transitivity predicament or entail other equally unacceptable conclusions.

I start by defending the following three constraints on any plausible theory of thoughts:

- **Frege’s Constraint (FC):** if a completely rational thinker can simultaneously take contrasting attitudes to two thoughts T and T’ that ascribe the same property F to the same object x, then T ≠ T’.
- **Communication (COM):** In order for a speaker to have successfully communicated a thought to a hearer, that hearer must have entertained, as a result of interpreting the speaker’s utterance, the same thought as that expressed by the speaker.
- **External Link (EL):** if one derives/acquires a use of a name from somebody else's use of a name, then, all else being equal, one expresses the same thoughts with that name as the other.

I then discuss some variations of Kripke’s Paderewski cases – where one confused subject takes one name, or, alternatively, one person, as being two – and use them to show that the conjunction of FC and EL as well as the conjunction of FC and COM independently entail that some thoughts are both identical and distinct to each other – or, in other words, that thinking the same thought is not a transitive relation, to the effect that there are some subjects A, B, and C, such that A and C are thinking the same thought as B but not as each other.

In the second part of the talk, I assess some – up until now unexplored – ways of dissolving the non-transitivity challenge. The crux of the discussion will be the thesis that confused subjects – such as those in a Paderewski scenario – somehow fail to be able to successfully communicate with non-confused subjects that do not realize their confusion and/or fail to express determinate contents by the names which they are confused about. I argue that this idea, implicit in recent discussions of related cases (Cumming, 2013; Unnsteinsson, 2018), leads to conclusions that are even more counterintuitive than the non-transitivity predicament, e.g. that becoming confused about a name may (i) make one unable to successfully communicate in contexts which have prima facie no relation to the context of confusion or (ii) make one unable to express any determinate content by representations (such as one’s own name) that should not be affected by the seemingly unrelated confusion. I will finish the talk by discussing possible ways of refining these ideas.

**Keywords:** thought, communication, Frege’s puzzle, proper names
References.
Against universal explanatory gaps

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I argue against Schaffer’s claims in ‘The Ground between the Gaps’ (2017) that explanatory gaps are universal and can only be closed a posteriori. I reject Schaffer’s tripartite structure of grounding and with this open room for a priori anti-physicalist arguments in philosophy of mind.

Metaphysically, the relations between the physical and the phenomenal can be represented by using the terminology of fundamentality and grounding. *Fundamentality* implies that the universe has a fundamental and a derivative level. *Grounding* is a relation of metaphysical explanation used to describe the connection between the derivative and the fundamental level. It involves two relata: the ground and the grounded which correspond to the fundamental and the derivative levels. The fundamental facts ground the derivative, while the derivative facts are metaphysically explained by discovering their fundamental grounds.

Anti-physicalists typically reject physicalism by postulating an *explanatory gap* between physical and phenomenal concepts. By this, they mean that the a priori analysis of physical concepts never yields phenomenal knowledge, and vice-versa, the a priori analysis of phenomenal concepts never yields physical knowledge. In the literature (Lowe, 2012; Goff, 2017), the explanatory gap is understood to imply a metaphysical conclusion only if the involved concepts are *transparent* (they reveal the essences of their referents).

Contrary to the above, Schaffer (2017) postulates a tripartite structure of grounding: the ground, the grounded facts, and the grounding principles. To close an explanatory gap, we must have transparent concepts of the whole tripartite structure. The only way to obtain transparent concepts of the grounding principles is empirical. Therefore, all a priori philosophy of mind arguments against physicalism fail.

I argue that all the examples Schaffer gives to illustrate the impossibility of closing explanatory gaps without transparent concepts of the grounding principles fail. My claim is that such cases are conceivable either if misuse our concepts (or use non-transparent concepts) or if we conceive of emergence relations instead of grounding relations.

Moreover, I argue that grounding principles play no role in the closing of explanatory gaps. Grounding principles are inherently problematic since they can accommodate any postulated relation between two sets of facts and therefore close any explanatory gap in an ad hoc way. Schaffer argues that explanatory gaps are everywhere, but his goal is not to promote skepticism, but to find a way to close all explanatory gaps. He does this by postulating the grounding principles. With the grounding principles in place, we can connect any two transparent concepts even if they have nothing in common. If the concepts a priori already reveal a connection (‘H + H + O’ and ‘H2O’), then the grounding principles add no new information and are therefore redundant. If the concepts do not a priori reveal a connection (for example phenomenal and physical concepts), then the postulation of the grounding principles appears to be an ad hoc way to close the explanatory gap. It is better to allow for the presence of explanatory gaps in such cases.

**Keywords:** grounding, transparency, explanatory gap, fundamentality.
Perceiving temporal gradients

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In my presentation I will deal with the debate about temporal experience. One of the main concerns of this debate is how we perceive temporally extended phenomena in a continuous manner. For this being possible, as commonly assumed, perception must be thought of as being temporally extended. Quickly then, the question becomes whether it is perception or its content that temporally extends. However, I will discuss a related concern that has importance regardless of whether it is perception itself or only its content that extends.

While it is true that perception must be continuous for some interval, the interval cannot be too long. If you see the kitchen light as on in the morning and you see it as off in the evening, you would not say that you saw it changing to off. Put differently, continuity must be explained for seconds at best but certainly not for hours. There are usually two different explanations considered. Either one claims that perception extends for a fixed amount of time or one claims that the extension mirrors the perceived event's extension. I will argue that both options face serious problems. The first option has trouble accommodating the continuous character of events that last longer than the fixed duration of a perception. The second option faces problems because it often happens that we perceive one event as starting before we perceive the former as having stopped, just like a domino stone causes the next one to fall before itself stopped falling. And this can lead to ridiculously long perceptions, if one assumes mirroring.

In my eyes, we should think of temporal continuity as a gradient. For color gradients it is usually assumed that indiscriminability in regard to color is intransitive. Color gradients, say the transition from a light yellow to a darker yellow, have it that adjacent shades are indiscriminable but distant shades are not. I will argue that we should understand indiscriminability of temporal locations, perceived simultaneity in other words, to be intransitive, too.

Perceiving temporal gradients can happen in two ways. Usually we perceive more than one property at once and it barely happens that they all disappear at the same time. Suppose you first perceive object o as being F and G and then as being F and H. Here, you perceived o as being F simultaneously to being G and H but you did not perceive o as being simultaneously G and H. The second version appears if some stimuli succeed each other so quickly that some appear as simultaneous. An example is the rapid exposure to images when being in the movies. Here, it can happen that the first image appears simultaneous to the second, the second to the third but the first not to the third. According to my proposal, then, continuity in perception is nothing but the perception of intransitive simultaneity.

Keywords: perception, temporal experience, continuity, gradients, intransitivity
Monist language – fundamentality

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Recent work in metaphysics increasingly relies on the notion of language-fundamentality, intended to capture the idea that some languages afford objectively more perspicuous representations of reality’s metaphysical structure. Sider offers an account of language-fundamentality in terms of his primitive operator ‘structural’, roughly a generalisation of Lewisian naturalness to expressions of any grammatical category. He defines a fundamental language as a language all primitive expressions of which are structural. In this talk, I locate Sider’s view in a simple taxonomy of theories of language-fundamentality and defend an alternative position.

Say a theory is (i) atomist or monist depending, respectively, on whether expression-fundamentality is definitionally prior to language-fundamentality or vice versa; (ii) a theory is permissive or strict depending on how tight constraints on grammatical category are imposed on membership to the set of expressions whose fundamentality-status is sensitive (i.e. depends upon or partly determines) to the fundamentality-status of any language whose primitive vocabulary includes them.

I discuss two problems with Sider’s view, which my taxonomy classifies as permissive and atomist. Firstly, Sider’s view is too weak to rule out as non-fundamental languages whose primitive vocabulary, while consisting only of structural expressions, is too limited to afford an adequate expressive power. Secondly, let ∆ be a set of inter-definable expressions some of which must be structural. Oddly, the Siderian is forced to decide which among them are structural. A dilemma looms, leading either to metaphysical arbitrariness or to redundancy at the fundamental level.

I defend a version of permissive monism on the grounds that it provides a superior solution to the above problems. This view is based on a primitive (metalinguistic) unary predicate F expressing language-fundamentality, and captures expression-fundamentality through a defined binary (metalinguistic) predicate $F^e$ applying to expression-language pairs $⟨e, L⟩$ iff $F(L)$ and $e$ is primitive in $L$. I expand on the nature of metaphysical commitments expressed by claims of language-fundamentality to make my primitive clearer.

I sketch a permissive monism-based solution to the hard choices problem based on the requirement that all languages with just enough members of ∆ as primitives to make every other member definable be equally fundamental. Since for each $e \in ∆$, there is a fundamental language such that $e$ is primitive in it, arbitrariness is avoided. I further argue that this strategy avoids redundancy too, due to permissive monism’s ability of having syntactically non-isomorphic fundamental languages encode equivalent commitments about metaphysical structure.

Finally, I show how permissive monism can deal with the hard choices problem by requiring that all fundamental languages be expressively equivalent. Importantly, the same move is unattractive for the Siderian, for atomism requires that any constraint on language-fundamentality be reduced to facts about structural primitive vocabulary. The Siderian’s best shot at a reduction of the expressive equivalence condition is making the definition of language-fundamentality into a biconditional: a language is fundamental iff all and only its primitive expressions are structural. This definition brings about a host of worrying consequences, including an increase in theoretical costs of choosing the no-arbitrariness horn (Sider’s favourite) of the hard choices problem.
Can neutral monism be collapsed into a form of mental monism?

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The debate on consciousness hinges heavily upon explaining the existence and relationship of mental and material properties. It unfolds over two main camps: dualism and monism. I focus on the latter. Monism is the view that fundamental reality is all of one kind, and it is traditionally construed as either mental or material. Material monism posits material properties as fundamental, whereas mental monism posits mental properties as fundamental. Both struggle to account for the existence of the non-fundamental type of property, namely mental and material properties respectively.

In this talk I defend a third type of monism: neutral monism.

Prompted by Chalmers’ 1996 *The Conscious Mind*, alongside views such as Russellian monism and panpsychism, neutral monism has recently attracted considerable attention for its potential to revise our conception of mental and material properties and therefore produce a more adequate account of consciousness.

Neutral monism is the view that fundamental reality is neutral, neither mental nor material, and that mental and material properties arise from the underlying neutral base. It aims to capture the idea that mental and material properties are not reducible to one another, but both equally related to the neutral base. The crucial question for the neutral monist is: how do mental and material properties arise from the underlying neutral base?

I argue that mental and material properties arise as a result of an agent casting different epistemic perspectives upon the neutral base and, specifically, I defend the view from the challenge of mental monism.

The challenge of mental monism is rooted in the idea that the act of casting an epistemic perspective is characterised by mental properties and that, therefore, the existence of material properties is dependent upon the more fundamental mental properties. If this is correct, then positing a neutral base does not do the explanatory work initially envisaged by the neutral monist and, as a consequence, the view can easily be collapsed into a form of mental monism.

I defend neutral monism by reflecting on the purely epistemic character of mental and material properties, specifically that these merely correspond to distinct ways for an agent to apprehend the neutral stuff. Accordingly, mental and material properties are to be construed as basic concepts in the agent’s epistemic toolkit; each concept has its own identity and function and is thus equally necessary to characterise an agent’s existence in the world. Given the epistemic value of both concepts, from the perspective of the neutral monist, it would be a mistake to limit our conception of fundamental reality to only one of them.

Avoiding the leap from an epistemic concept, namely the mental, to posting this type of property as ontologically fundamental, therefore, saves the neutral monist from the challenge at hand, on the grounds that casting an epistemic perspective simply does not entail that material properties ontologically depend on mental ones, as posited by the mental monist. This way the collapse of neutral monism into mental monism is averted.

**Keywords**: consciousness, neutral monism, mental and physical
**On what there really is**
A natural language critique of Quine’s conception of ontology

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Quine’s conception of ontology has been the most popular (Inwagen 1998, 2009; Berto and Plebani 2015). In this paper I criticise that conception on the basis of natural language examples: eventive existentials, quantifier restrictions, and quantification over unreal objects. The last example gives rise to a new conception of ontology.

The evidence bears on three central theses of Quine’s conception:

(1) Being is the same concept as existence.
(2) Being/existence is a single concept.
(3) first-order predicate logic existential quantification expresses being (and existence)

The motivation Inwagen (2009, 1998) provides for (1)-(3) relies on the synonymy and univocity of predication of being, existence, and quantification. As such, the motivation for (1)-(3) is responsive to natural language use. Given this motivation, the Quinean ontologist is committed three natural language claims:

**NL (1)** Forms of to be and to exist are substitutable salva veritate.

**NL (2)** Predications of to be (and to exist) are univocal.

**NL (3)** Existentially quantification over objects is true only if the univocal predications of to be and to exist are true of those objects.

Eventive existentials are existential sentences—there is an F—where “an F” refers to an event. However, events do not exist, but occur. Hence, eventive existentials violate **NL (1)**, because existential sentences predicate being in natural language. Moreover, quantification over events contradicts **NL (3)** as well.

Existential sentences can be contextually restricted, whereas forms of to exist cannot. Restricted existential sentences deny being to objects that exist. As such, quantifier restriction violates **NL (1)** and **NL (3)**. Moreover, quantification can be contextually restricted in more forms than one and existential sentences are predications of being. Hence, quantifier restriction violates **NL (2)** as well.

Natural language allows for existential sentences that quantify over historical objects, merely possible objects, and imaginary objects, but not for predications of existence to be true of them. Hence, quantification over unreal objects violates **NL (1)**. If one insists on the truth of **NL (1)**, the result is there can be sentences that involve both a predication and a denial of to exist, the former occurring in an existential construction “there exists”. The resulting sentences, however, violate **NL (2)**. In either case, the sentence violates **NL (3)**.

Quantification over unreal objects in natural language is most problematic for the Quinean conception, because it gives rise to two forms of quantification. One of those forms concerns what there is, and the other concerns what there really is. For ontology, the question is which form of quantification should be its subject matter. Tentatively, I suggest that it is the restricted form, since it pertains to what reality consist of.

**Keywords:** Ontology, Quantification, Existence, Being
References


On Dasgupta’s deflationary conception of grounding

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During the last decade there has been a grounding revolution in metaphysics, an enormous growth of interest in investigation of the concept of grounding: the distinctive kind of metaphysical determination. It is usually said that introducing the notion of ground has many benefits, because it can play variety of useful theoretical roles: it helps us to illuminate fundamental structure of the world, it gives us better way of understanding and defining relevant metaphysical notions and theses, etc. Shamik Dasgupta in his 2017 article “Constitutive Explanation” notes that the literature on grounding is dominantly focused on inflated conceptions of ground and that it often presupposes: (i) the reification of grounding explanations, (ii) that grounding is primitive in an important metaphysical sense, and (iii) that grounding explanations are objective. According to him, all this assumptions are controversial and, instead of the inflated, he proposes the deflated conception of grounding. He believes that grounding can still be philosophically useful even if it does not correspond to any part of reality, and that it is compatible with anti-realism. In his opinion, the central role of grounding is limning many issues of intellectual interest. Dasgupta thinks that this role of grounding can be achieved without any commitment to realism, but I will argue that even the most deflated theory of grounding has at least some minimal commitments to realism. The debate between grounding monists (who think that there is only one unified concept of ground) and grounding pluralist (who hold that there are different concepts) reflects the difference between inflated and deflated theories of grounding, but both sides have their own realist commitments. I will argue that if one holds that the notion of grounding should have at least a modest role of framing general metaphysical questions and views, the deflationary option should incorporate some connection to reality and should give us a plausible explanation of what is the role of specific grounding relations in such framing. This is something that lacks in Dasgupta’s conception. Furthermore, I suspect that one of the important problems of his proposal is that his notion of grounding is too coarse-grained to play any serious role in metaphysics. Thus, it seems that his deflated theory of grounding is too deflated, and there is a serious worry that it can collapse into grounding nihilism. If the grounding project is to preserve its philosophical attractiveness, it cannot completely avoid realist commitments. Apart from my criticism, I will also emphasize some positive aspects of Dasgupta’s account.

Key words: grounding, deflationism, realism, constitutive explanations
Contrary to famous Russell's prediction, there is still a ubiquitous usage of causal concepts across sciences. For example, as a result of their survey through epidemiological literature, Parascandola and Weed (2001) identify at least five different meanings (or to borrow their term, 'categories') of the concept of cause in epidemiology: production, necessary and sufficient, sufficient component, counterfactual and probabilistic. These different accounts or categories of causality correspond to different evidence and methodological principles used to assert causal claims. In philosophical literature we can find a variety of monist accounts of causality, such as regularity, probability, process/mechanistic, counterfactual and agency or interventionist accounts. Each of these theories provide some necessary or sufficient indicators of causation, or a set of conditions that a certain relation ought to satisfy in order to be considered as a causal relation or an instance of causality. However, concerning their view of what exactly do causes do, we can follow Hall (2004) and put these accounts in two different camps: production or mechanistic accounts and dependence or difference-making accounts.

Similarly, we can argue that causal claims in sciences are based on two types of evidence: mechanistic, where scientists provide a description of a mechanism responsible for the phenomenon or statistical and probabilistic evidence for the relation of dependence between variables. Building on their epistemic account of causality, Russo and Williamson (2007) claim that such an account of causality reflects the practice in health sciences, and possibly in some other sciences, where evidence of one of the aspects of causality (probabilistic or mechanistic) is not sufficient for the assessment of a causal claim. Therefore, in order to establish the causal claim that A causes B, we need both statistical or probabilistic evidence and the evidence of the underlying mechanism. This has been now regarded as Russo-Williamson Thesis (RWT). In order to discard RWT, one could find an appropriate range of cases in health sciences where scientists have not been guided by RWT. In this paper, I discuss Williamson's epistemic account of causality and another recently proposed account of causality, inferentialist account of causality of J. Reiss (2011, 2012), in the light of a few cases from the history of health sciences which, seemingly, do not support RWT. Although there are some serious problems for inferentialist account raised by Williamson (2013), I argue that it provides a better starting point for the understanding of scientific practice of assessing causal claims.

**Keywords**: causal claim, causal explanation, evidence, mechanisms, causal dependence
References


Why Aristotelian kinds need essences

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In this paper, I endorse a theory of kinds as *sui generis* universals in a Neo-Aristotelian framework. These kinds are often understood as the conjoining operator of tropes, i.e. particularised properties, in objects of a given kind. Accordingly, the object's bundle of tropes does not determine the kind of the object, but the other way around: the kind determines the object's tropes (and their union). Among others, this recently has been proposed by Hommen in *Kinds as universals: a Neo-Aristotelian Approach* (2019). Having examined kinds in this framework, I argue that the integration of essences can be useful to preserve the ontological priority of particular objects. Such ontological priority has been underlined by Aristotle and many Neo-Aristotelians: objects are *primary*, kinds *secondary substances* (Aristotle, *Categories* 2a14). Otherwise, I see the possible risk of falling into a Platonic ontology, where kinds are *primary substances* which dictate how the objects should be, rather than vice versa. Consequently, I propose *general essence* as the unificatory operator that conjoins the object's tropes. I define essence as *the very being of a particular as a “such”*, i.e. an object's kind (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Z 1028b35).

First, the essence establishes the identity conditions of a particular object as a member of a kind. This is motivated by the fact that the essence determines the metaphysical species of an object: a metaphysical kind, not the very being of something as *this specific object* (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Z 1030a12). Secondly, the essence establishes the conditions of instantiation, i.e. existence, of the kind. Here, the conditions of instantiation coincide with those of existence since kinds must be instantiated at least once in order to exist: they are *secondary substances* (Lowe 2005). Finally, essential tropes are conjoined in the objects (and accordingly the properties in the kind) *in virtue of* the essence. Throughout, I am assuming a distinction between kind universals and property universals, such as in Lowe's four-category ontology\(^1\). Moreover, I follow a definitional rather than a modal conception of essence, coherent with the Aristotelian framework.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 1, I broadly introduce the theory of Neo-Aristotelian kinds and its possible shortcomings without the postulation of essences. Then, in section 2, I present Aristotelian essences and the advantages gained from adding them to the framework. Firstly, essences avoid the eventual risk of falling into a Platonic ontology and preserve the relations of ontological dependence between particulars and kinds, still explaining why tropes are conjoined. Secondly, essence can explain instantiation: it establishes the conditions of instantiation of kinds in the particular objects of that kind. Finally, essences allow us to elucidate the relation between an object's tropes and the kind's properties: the properties of the kind correspond to the essential tropes present in the particular object *in virtue of* the essence. In section 3, I illustrate the relations of ontological dependence between essences, objects and kinds. Kinds' identity-conditions are established by essence, whereas their existence depends on the individuals.

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**Keywords:** Kinds - Essence – Aristotelian Metaphysics - Properties - Ontological dependence

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\(^1\) *Lowe's four-category ontology* (Lowe 2005 1.1 p.26)
In defence of narrow content as primary intensions

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Thoughts have contents: I believe that my dog, Guinness, is infinitely amazing. But what determines which content a thought has? According to internalists, a subject’s thoughts’ contents are determined by that subject’s internal properties (i.e. thoughts’ contents are narrow), whereas externalists claim that thoughts’ contents depend, at least partially, on what is going on outside the subject.

Chalmers (2003) develops an epistemic two-dimensionalist (E2-D) account of narrow content that reconciles narrow content with Twin-Earth thought experiments. In this paper I use recent advances in epistemic logic to defend the E2-D account of narrow content (E2-D) against Derek Ball’s (2014) ‘Quinean Master Argument’ (QMA).

According to the E2-D account, a thought is cognitively insignificant iff it has a necessary primary intension. Ball (2014) argues that the E2-D account fails because a Quinean thinker – a thinker for whom every belief is susceptible to revision – has no thoughts with necessary primary intensions, yet can still have cognitively insignificant thoughts.

Ball’s argument relies on the following premiss:

(QMA*): Quinean thinkers are possible, and can have cognitively insignificant thoughts.

I use the hyperintensional epistemic logic developed by Jago (2014) to model a Quinean thinker, and show they cannot have cognitively insignificant thoughts. It is a necessary condition for a content’s being cognitively insignificant that it is uninformative. Suppose at time \( t_1 \) agent \( i \) is agnostic about whether or not \( p \), and learns \( p \) at \( t_2 \). On this account, \( p \) is informative to \( i \) iff the set of epistemically accessible worlds to \( i \) at \( t_2 \) is a proper subset of the set of epistemically accessible worlds to \( i \) at \( t_1 \), and uninformative otherwise.

For a Quinean thinker, it is epistemically possible that any proposition, \( p \), is false, and so, for all \( p \), there is a world, \( w \), at which \( p \) is false. Thus, at \( t_2 \) \( w \) is no longer accessible, and therefore the set of epistemically accessible worlds at \( t_2 \) is a proper subset of the set of worlds epistemically accessible at \( t_1 \). Thus, for all \( p \), \( p \) is informative to a Quinean thinker and therefore Quinean thinkers cannot have cognitively insignificant thoughts.

Finally, I consider two responses on Ball’s behalf. First, insofar as there is strong empirical data showing that ordinary agents are Quinean thinkers, my argument goes too far and shows ordinary agents cannot have cognitively insignificant thoughts. Second, Quinean thinkers cannot be modelled using epistemic logic since they never rule out any epistemic possibilities. I find both responses wanting: against the former, no empirical evidence shows ordinary agents are Quinean with respect to all their beliefs; and, if the latter were true, then no proposition would be informative to a Quinean thinker, thereby undermining the claim that such thinkers are possible.

References

This paper argues that time travellers *can* kill their grandfathers even though they will never succeed. They can do it because they have the *ability*. I will argue, contrary to Kadri Vihvelin (1996), that abilities should not be analysed in terms of their ‘outputs’ – i.e. whether an agent will succeed – but more in terms of their ‘inputs’ – i.e. whether an agent ‘has what it takes’ to carry out an action. I will begin by outlining the famous Grandfather Paradox and the challenge it poses to the possibility of time travel. More specifically, if time travel were logically possible, then it would be equally possible to go back in time and kill your Grandfather as a child. If successful it would seemingly be the case that my Grandfather was both alive and not alive at the same time, the same goes for me. This is logically impossible, and hence a fortiori it is argued that time travel is logically impossible. In order to rebut the Grandfather Paradox I will follow David Lewis’ (1976) response. Lewis wishes to show that a time traveller both *can* and *cannot* kill their Grandfather.

Second I will outline Vihvelin’s response to Lewis which follows a variation of the conditional analysis of ability. The conditional analysis of ability focuses on the outcomes of actions (i.e. whether an agent will succeed or fail in their action) and from this suggests that an agent has the ability if there is a chance of success. Vihvelin attempts to show, contrary to Lewis, that there is no sense in which a time traveller can kill their Grandfather because they will never succeed in killing their Grandfather.

Then, I introduce my own counterexample to Vihvelin and the conditional analysis using the case of an infinite lottery. This case poses a scenario (without time travel) in which it seems like an agent has the ability to win the lottery yet they will never succeed because in this lottery there are infinitely many tickets. However, intuitively the agent has ‘what it takes’ to win (in a very Lewisian sense) because they have bought a ticket, which under normal circumstances is, in a very literal sense, all it takes to have a chance to win the lottery.

Finally, I will use the case of an infinite lottery to motivate my own analysis that abilities require inputs and apply it to the Grandfather Paradox. Hence, we should reject traditional analyses of ability which look to the outputs. I will formulate my analyses as follows:

\[(A) \text{ S possesses an ability A if and only if S possesses the inputs relevant for A-ing}\]

Using this analysis motivated by the case of the infinite lottery, I will conclude that time travellers can kill their Grandfathers because they possess the inputs relevant which, under ordinary circumstances, would ensure the success of their action.

**Keywords**: Time Travel, Ability, Freedom, Grandfather Paradox
**Modus ponens and the contextualistic solution to the miners paradox**

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The aim of this talk will be to present my original solution to a famous *miners paradox*, established by Niko Kolodny and John MacFarlane in their paper “Ifs and Oughts”. The main premise of the paradox is that the miners are trapped in one of the two shafts and we cannot block either one of them to prevent the flood, since we do not know where they are and blocking of the wrong one would lead to unnecessary deaths. However, Kolodny and MacFarlane construct a counterexample that proves that the use of modus ponens will lead not only to a false conclusion, but also a contradictory one. In the case of trapped miners, conclusion will be that we ought to block one of the shafts, which contradicts the first premise that neither of the two shafts ought to be blocked. Kolodny and MacFarlane conclude that modus ponens is the cause of this type of contradictions.

I have noticed two fundamental problems with the premises presented by Kolodny and MacFarlane. They claim that the first premise (“We ought to block neither shaft.”) is based on our moral obligations and thus indisputable. However, I shall try to point out that this premise can only be accepted as a conclusion of reasoning – the one already involving modus ponens. I shall claim that Kolodny and MacFarlane need to use modus ponens in order to construct such premise that would allow them further construction of the argument against modus ponens. If the argument is successful in proving that the use of modus ponens is wrong, it is such just because of the previous correct use of modus ponens.

Even bigger problem arises with second and third premise (“If the miners are in shaft A/B, we ought to block shaft A/B.”) Kolodny and MacFarlane once again believe that these conditionals are undeniable; however, I shall claim that they are acceptable only in specific contexts. I shall try to prove that the paradox is based on a context switch, one that even Kolodny and MacFarlane are not aware of and that specifically this switch is the source of contradiction. Kolodny and MacFarlane deny the role of our knowledge (or, more precisely, the lack of it) of miners’ whereabouts, but I believe that the knowledge is what creates the context and thus makes the premises either true or false.

In order to consolidate my case against miners paradox, I shall make a distinction between true and appropriate conditional premises. I shall analyze Kolodny’s and MacFarlane’s semantics in order to prove that although their premises can be considered as true according to such semantics, they are not necessarily appropriate for paradox. This distinction will be based on another one I will try to establish – between the complete and the incomplete conditional premises. A complete conditional premise is the one that includes all the true antecedents that are relevant for the context of the argument they are used in. I shall conclude that Kolodny and MacFarlane use the incomplete premises, which are inappropriate for the context of the paradox.
Multipropositionalism and propositional attitude reports

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Propositional attitude reports are used to attribute intentional mental states, such as believing, doubting, realizing, etc., to an agent. An important tenet of a theory of propositional attitude reports is to give a method for determining the truth-conditions of these reports. Here I propose a novel analysis based on the perspective of multipropositionalism using what I think is an extension of Perry’s (2012) reference-reflexive theory. If adequate, this multipropositionalist account would offer a response to a persistent problem that the phenomenon of opacity poses to any theory of propositional attitude reports.

For this purpose, first, I put forward some of the desiderata that a theory of propositional attitude reports should take into account, which I present as five different theses, namely, Direct Reference: the content of an utterance of a sentence with a name is a singular proposition, Semantic Innocence: the content of a sentence doesn’t change when embedded in a propositional attitude report, Full Articulation: the content of an utterance of a sentence is a function of the semantic values of the phonetically or orthographically realized expressions that comprise the sentence and its logical form, Propositional Truth: the truth-conditions of an utterance of a sentence are fully determined by the proposition which plays the role of the semantic value of the utterance, and Semantic Competence: an utterance of a sentence has just the truth-conditions that a competent speaker judge it to have. Then, I present the argument from opacity against a very simple theory of propositional attitude reports called the Naive-Russellian and, after that, I present a quick survey of the answers that a Fregean, a Neo-Russellian, and a Contextualist, offer to the problem of opacity. However, I show how these theories fail in satisfying the accorded desiderata. Although the lack of accordance with the desiderata shouldn’t be considered as a knock-down argument for abandoning such theories, I suggest that a theory that preserves the desiderata should be preferred over its rivals.

In the final section, I suggest that a multipropositionalist solution is at hand. Here, I present Perry’s reference-reflexive theory, which is based on the perspective of multipropositionalism. My suggestion is that the thesis of Propositional Truth must be modified in such a way that the multipropositionalist perspective is incorporated into its reformulation. As it is formulated, the thesis presupposes the perspective of monopropositionalism, i.e., the idea that the semantic value of an utterance of a sentence is determined by only one proposition. In contrast, Perry’s theory claims that a single utterance of a sentence is associated with a complex system of related propositions, each one specifying different truth-conditions. The propositions in the system span from a reflexive content to a referential content, with several incremental contents in between. Very roughly, the multipropositionalist response exploits some of these incremental contents associated with a report, which are called network content, to resolve the problem from the argument of opacity. Finally, I show how the theory is compatible with the accorded desiderata.

Keywords: propositional attitude reports, beliefs, multipropositionalism, John Perry
Commitments in act-based theories of propositions

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Several recent ‘act-based theories’ of propositions (Soames 2010, 2014, 2016, Hanks 2007, 2011, 2015) address the unity of the proposition problem by claiming that propositions are types of acts of predication. What ties together properties and objects into truth-apt entities is the act one performs when one predicates a property to an object. But Soames considers predication to be neutral or non-committal, whereas Hanks considers that predication is inherently assertive or judgmental. Hanks accommodates non-committal acts of predication by claiming that, in some contexts, the force of the act of predication is ‘cancelled’. Hanks has proposed to see cancelled predication not as consisting in an act of predication along with an additional act of cancelling, but as an act of predication that has been performed in a certain sort of context or setting that overrides the commitments inherent to that act. When one asserts that \( p \) or \( q \), the use of ‘or’ creates a cancellation context for the acts of predication performed under its scope, in virtue of the conventions associated with the performance of disjunctions.

In this presentation I claim that the problem of deciding between Hanks’ and Soames’ views on predication is generated by an ambiguity in how commitments related to acts of predication can be understood. On the one hand, acts of predication, qua moves in a conversational exchange, are ‘commitment change potentials’: an act of predication can change the social or epistemic commitments of a discourse state. On the other hand, acts of predication, qua truth-governed acts, are subject to standard of correctness imposed by the properties predicated during the act: if one performs an act of predication, one is subject to such standard of correctness and in such sense one is ‘committed’ to it. Now, that an act has standard of correctness does not mean that its performance automatically updates the speakers’ commitments on a discourse state. In consequence, predication is inherently committal using the former sense of commitment, not in the second, and the need for a theory of force-cancellation disappears.

**Keywords:** propositions, act-based theories, predication, commitments

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Mind-body parallelism and the mind-body problem

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This paper explores and motivates mind-body parallelism as a response to the mind-body problem. It is possible to make progress on this problem by considering what it would take to solve it in the first place. I suggest that it would require understanding, for every mental phenomenon, (i) what laws it obeys (if any), and (ii) how it correlates to physical phenomena (if any); additionally, (iii) if a mental phenomenon does not obey any laws or correlate with any physical phenomena, a reason would need to be given why it does not do so. Note that this characterization leaves space for positions on which certain mental phenomena do not obey any laws or correlate to any physical phenomena – more specifically, it does not rule out dualism. Alternatively, a broadly naturalistic position would start from the idea that mental phenomena do obey laws, and that they also necessarily correlate with physical phenomena (even if it is contingent with which phenomenon they are specifically correlated).

If the above is right, then mind-body parallelism starts to look like an attractive position. Mind-body parallelism is the Spinoza-inspired position that holds that mental and physical phenomena obey commensurable laws, and are also constantly correlated. Constant correlation can be construed as a symmetric supervenience claim: any change in phenomena on one side entails a change on the other. The empirical research appears to bear out this constant correlation between mental and physical phenomena – in fact, Herbert Feigl long ago realized that parallelism has no empirically testable differences from the identity theory that he himself advocated (Feigl, 1958).

If constant correlation is relatively straightforward, parallelism’s position on the mental laws is more controversial. I motivate this stance by a further argument, drawn from Spinoza’s criticisms of Descartes’ interactionist dualism. In the Ethics (Part V, preface) Spinoza criticized Descartes for failing to establish a “common standard” between the power of thought and the power of the body; because of this, Descartes was unable to explain how a determinate action in the mind could have a determinate effect in the body. Spinoza’s response to this problem was to develop a theory on which mind and body truly operate according to the same principles. But we can appreciate, at least, a weaker point that his argument establishes: the need for the commensurability of mental and physical phenomena. In particular, what this entails is a negative constraint on the kinds of laws that can be ascribed to mental phenomena: these laws cannot be such that they would prohibit the phenomena that fall under them from covarying with their corresponding physical phenomena. This negative constraint is not met by Descartes’ voluntarist account of the will. On the positive side, certain mental phenomena that have been given convincing materialist explanations – such as conditioned reflexes, or various instincts – clearly exemplify this correlation between relations in physical behaviors and corresponding relations between mental phenomena (such as association in the case of a conditioned reflex).

I conclude that mind-body parallelism has much to recommend itself. It is compatible with our current empirical understanding of the mind. It is a broadly materialistic position, while accepting the reality and irreducibility of the mind (cf. Strawson, 2015). More particularly, if I am right, it is also a position that resonates deeply with the general criteria that a solution to the mind-body problem should meet.

Keywords: Mind-Body Parallelism; Mind-Body Problem; Materialism; Spinoza
Metaphysical investigations: On metaphysical foundationalism and its discontents

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On the now popular view, reality is structured according to the tenets of metaphysical foundationalism. Crucially, this position relies on the fundamentality thesis and the well-foundedness thesis. Scholars have criticised metaphysical foundationalists for inadequately providing justificatory support for the theses on at least three counts. One, for appealing to the pre-theoretical sentiment of intuition. Two, for failing to establish the soundness of arguments from vicious infinite regress. Three, for failing to establish the soundness of arguments from theoretical virtue. In this essay, I will focus on the second count, i.e., the contention that without the fundamentality and well-foundedness theses ‘[b]eing would be infinitely deferred, never achieved’. (Schaffer 2009, 2010)

In the literature on foundational metaphysics some analogies have been drawn between foundational epistemology and foundational metaphysics. Some work has, furthermore, been done in developing alternatives to metaphysical foundationalism, drawing inspiration from alternative accounts to epistemological foundationalism in foundational epistemology. Notably, Morganti (2015) draws from Klein (2007), and Peijnenburg & Atkinson’s (2013) defence thereof, in which Morganti transposes Klein’s claim that justification emerges from an infinite chain of beliefs to the claim that being emerges from an infinite chain of being. Morganti is not the only one to draw inspiration from Klein as some related ideas in Bliss (forthcoming) harken back to Klein (2003). Specifically, Bliss discusses the explanatory shift which takes place, according to Klein, when epistemological foundationalists justify their choice of basic beliefs. While these aspects of Klein’s reasoning has enjoyed warranted attention and research it represents merely the outcome of his equally important groundwork on epistemological foundationalism. Specifically, Klein develops a Pyrrhonic criticism of the epistemological foundationalist’s version of the argument from vicious infinite regress which is crucial in developing his proposal for epistemological infinitism. The implications of this aspect of Klein’s reasoning on metaphysical foundationalism have so far not been researched.

In this essay, I will discuss the possibility of transposing Klein’s Pyrrhonic criticism of epistemological foundationalism to metaphysical foundationalism. In particular, I will consider three points. One, whether it is possible to transpose Klein’s Pyrrhonic criticism. Two, how we can transpose Klein’s Pyrrhonic criticism. Three, what kind of implications this transposition has for metaphysical foundationalism. I will argue that the main implication of Klein’s Pyrrhonic criticism is that metaphysical foundationalism is metaphysically insecure in the same way epistemological foundationalism is epistemically insecure. That is, the metaphysical foundationalist cannot justify their choice of fundamenta in the same way the epistemological foundationalist cannot justify their choice of basic beliefs.

The upshot of this paper will be to indicate new problems for metaphysical foundationalism which hitherto have not been discussed in the literature based on the identification of the implicit premisses which both epistemological and metaphysical foundationalism share.

**Keywords**: Metaphysical Security, Metaphysical Foundationalism, Fundamentality, Well-Foundedness, Vicious Infinite Regress

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1 They claim that intuition and custom do not provide justificatory support for metaphysical foundationalism.
2 They claim that metaphysical foundationalism is not more perspicuous.
References

Misunderstanding closure skepticism

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The following paper addresses certain contemporary objections to the external world skepticism engendered by the Closure Principle. These objections argue that the principle cannot generate radical skepticism as it fails to establish such a doubt either on formal grounds (Roush 2010, Atkins&Nance 2014) or by relying on a mistaken conception of perceptual reasons (Schönbaumsfeld 2016, 2017).

Closure-based skepticism is presented as having two main elements:

- The Closure Principle: If one knows H, and also knows that H implies ¬SK, and competently deduces ¬SK from H, thereby coming to believe ¬SK, while retaining one’s knowledge that H, one comes to know that ¬SK (Hawthorne 2005:43)
- The Argument from Ignorance: I know that H only if I know that ¬SK. I do not know that ¬SK. Therefore, I do not know that H. (Leite 2004:336, Pritchard 2005:37, DeRose 1995:1).

Combining these two components, the skeptical argument is expressed by this inconsistent skeptical triad:

A) One has no means of establishing ¬SK
B) The Closure principle
C) We have widespread everyday knowledge (Pritchard 2015:15, 2016:204)

Roush’s defective strategy against closure skepticism argues that the implication H→¬SK doesn’t hold; one might be a Brain-in-a-Vat while having hands. To account for this possibility the skeptic has therefore to revise ¬SK as ¬(¬H∧BIV) in order to maintain the inconsistent triad effective. If this is allowed, Roush argues, it is repeatable for any ordinary proposition, until ¬SK includes so many of the propositions we ordinarily take ourselves to know that nothing is left to doubt anymore. It is argued that the strategy fails; this inflation of ¬SK cannot be undertaken if the argument from ignorance is properly taken into account. The argument from Ignorance prohibits the first step of the anti-skeptical defective strategy, our knowledge of H (Avnur et al 2011:446) and given that the implication between H and ¬SK is rejected, no amount of ordinary knowledge will be capable of establishing the denial of the skeptical hypothesis. Atkins and Nance’s improvement on the strategy commits the mistake of taking the ignorance argument into account only after the inflationary move has already been executed.

The argument from ignorance has however been attacked Genia Schönbaumsfeld’s perceptual reasons strategy, which equates it to the Reasons Identity Thesis. This strategy asserts that closure skepticism unwarrantedly presupposes that in both the veridical as well as in the skeptical case the epistemic reasons afforded to us by perception will be necessarily the same. A counterexample is offered to show that closure skepticism does not need to endorse this thesis in order to motivate epistemological doubt. Epistemic value of perceptual experience is lost as the result of the skeptical argument, rather than as its presupposition.

1H=”here is a hand/I have a hand”
¬SK=”the (Brain-in-a-Vat) skeptical scenario doesn’t subsist”
The outcome of this defense of closure skepticism is twofold: these strategies neglect the relevance of the argument from ignorance because they misunderstand closure skepticism as threatening the truth of what is attended to in experience, rather than the possibility of our ever being in a position to know it. Furthermore, this analysis establishes that closure skepticism is not epistemically on par with neo-Moorean answers to it due to the ignorance predicament (Kraft 2015), and by harboring a connection to further forms of skepticism, namely debasing (Schaffer 2010) and underdetermination skepticism (Pritchard 2015).

**Keywords**: Closure, Skepticism, Perception, Evidence, Ignorance

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Problems with Vagueness and Gradability of Lewis’ Influence

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Faced with the seemingly unsolvable problem of late preemption, David Lewis had abandoned his original counterfactual analysis and formulated a new theory of causation (Lewis 2000, 2004). In that theory, causation is defined as an ancestral of influence relation. The definition of influence, on the other hand, is a complex thesis about the relation between events in terms of counterfactual dependence between their alterations. The controversial bit is that the definition involves vague qualifications such as “substantial range” and “not too distant”, which substantially affect the interpretation and the plausibility of the theory. Furthermore, although causation is typically understood as an all-or-nothing relation, the relation of influence is defined in such a way that admits of degree. This talk investigates whether introducing context-sensitivity into the influence theory of causation (ITC) can help to solve the problems that gradability of influence generates.

I will start by examining Schaffer’s and Bigaj’s interpretation of ITC (Schaffer 2001, Bigaj 2012). In opposition to them, I’ll offer what I consider to be the most charitable reading of the theory. I will argue that with the more liberal reading of the vague phrase “not too distant”, ITC can avoid a number of problems, including the “railroad switch” counterexample (due to Bigaj). For similar reasons, I also propose that the vague phrase “substantial range” should be read in a less strict and context-sensitive way.

In the second part of the talk, I will address the problem of gradability of influence. I will argue that there is a natural manoeuvre to avoid counterintuitive comparability of causation (in the cases of late preemption) while permitting the degree-based influence. More precisely, if we don’t want ITC to identify preempted alternatives as “less of a cause” of a given effect, we might want to allow for a context-sensitive threshold for what counts as a cause. This strategy is closely related to the “winner takes it all” interpretation of ITC (suggested in Kvart 2001).

Still, all these moves are forcing moves, and – as usual – they don’t get us out of the trouble, but instead lead us to a new undesirable position. Adopting an influence threshold within ITC creates, as I will argue, a new problem for the theory – a problem with certain cases of joint causation. The adopted threshold, in a given context, can force the analysis to disregard some of the legitimate joint causes simply because they influence the effect less than required.

Finally, on the basis of this diagnosis, I will present a scenario for counterexamples to the proposed (most charitable) reading of ITC that combines joint causation and preemption. What makes this scenario effective is that it can easily be modelled in such a manner to put (in the same context) the mutually inconsistent restrictions on how to set up the threshold. Consequently, this shows that all proposed efforts to save ITC ultimately fail.

Keywords: causation, influence, context, preemption, counterfactuals.