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"IGNORAMUS ET IGNORABIMUS"? DOES CONTEMPORARY ANTIPHYSICALISM HAVE A POSITIVE PROGRAM?[2]

This article attempts to find out whether the contemporary antiphysicalism has a positive program. Using the approaches of such contemporary analytical philosophers as Colin McGinn, Joseph Levine, Noam Chomsky, Thomas Nagel, and David Chalmers, the author evaluates the ratio of negative and positive components in modern antiphysicalistic approaches, and determines the role of skepticism in their theories. To what extent can antiphysicalism withstand physicalism, and is physicalism in spite of its faults in a better position, since it offers, admittedly imperfect answers, while antiphysicalism does not offer anything other than criticism of the existing theories?

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Introduction

Skepticism in philosophy has always been treated skeptically; when it resulted in a sort of intellectual coquetry it was viewed as fakery, and when it made serious claims about itself it was considered a form of capitulation. Nevertheless, it has always been much harder for a philosopher than a scientist to admit that he does not have a solution for a certain problem. This is related to the traditional differences in the methods of scientific and philosophical research; while science searches for solutions in time, putting forward and discarding hypotheses, philosophy strives for a universal solution that is not susceptible to time. However the philosophical method for achieving the Truth is being reconsidered in contemporary and especially analytical philosophy, and today philosophers more and more frequently state that the philosophical reflections of tomorrow might turn out to be more efficient than today. However in spite of the fact that expectations inherent to science are making their way into philosophy, the possibility of taking a skeptical position for philosophers is accompanied by serious discomfort.

This is also due to the fact that skeptical versions leave us alone with our guesses and generally constrain us from further search. To assert themselves skeptics often say that they do not simply boycott research but help to understand and recognize that a conclusive solution for a certain problem turns out to be essentially unachievable. The main reproach addressed to the skeptics traditionally deals with their impotence and non-productiveness; however skepticism has a positive side as well in that it gives a certain clarity, showing us the main causes of the difficulties that philosophical theories encounter.

This situation is directly related to the mind-body problem, to which most contemporary analytical philosophers are searching for a solution. It allows for the division of contemporary analytical philosophers into two camps, optimists who are in the majority, and pessimists whose numbers are noticeably smaller. In general, pessimistically set philosophers suppose that the lack of a solution that suits everybody is not accidental, since the very statement of question about relation of the mind and body contains a principal, systematic mistake. Sometimes philosophers point out that stating the question of how mental and physical states are related to each other is a counterproductive task from the very beginning. It would be much more productive to state that reality can be described using different methods: for example, in the context of mental and physical dictionaries. Problems without a solution, in turn, come up when the description of one dictionary is attempted in the terms of another, and this is exactly what is happening when mental states are searched for in the brain. Other thinkers suppose that although the mind-body problem is stated quite correctly, it cannot have a solution in principle. Such philosophers are closer to the skeptical position which I will describe in detail later.

Skepticism and the mind-body problem

But first let us try to understand why skepticism towards the mind-body problem is treated so badly by the contemporary philosophy. The importance of this problem is that it raises many other problems, such as the nature of death and possibility of the immortality, free will, the nature of "I" or "self", the nature of emotions, perception and memory. Exactly how the question of the relation between the mind and the body is answered leads to other problems for free will or the finiteness/infinity of human existence. For example, if we take the position of naturalistic monism, which believes that the mind is part of the physical reality, the activity of a subject becomes fully deterministic. If, pursuant to this theory, the world and the mind as a part of the world, fully follow the laws of natural sciences, then the mental activity of a subject, including its will, is a physical state subordinated to natural laws. Human behavior, then, is directly defined by the physical laws which are in turn defined deterministically. Therefore we will have to search for nonstandard ways to preserve free will or simply declare that people are not free. On the other hand, if we agree with the dualist outlooks, that a person's free will can be preserved at the expense of receiving a new block of problems in the form of causation, that is, the impact of the mental and physical systems on each other.

The mind-body problem also has important consequences for understanding the "I". If by the term "self" or "I" something ontological is understood, then many contemporary philosophers will state that "I" is a fiction. The idea of "I" autonomy as an unalienable unique essence has its roots in the Christian idea of an immortal soul. Since the majority of contemporary analytical philosophers of the mind are physicalists, this idea is unacceptable for them. However there is a more common position according to which we have to rephrase the concept of self by refusing the notion of its unity and identity. Most likely, the self is something being constantly transformed and fluid, and artificially constructed by our language and cultural stereotypes.

As we can see, the mind-body problem like a snowball gathers other equally important problems and therefore skepticism shown in relation to the core problem will mean capitulation in attempts to get answers to other fundamental questions. If the mind-body problem for any reason cannot have a positive solution, this means that we will also be unable to answer such questions as whether a subject is free from a fully deterministic world, whether its mental experience is finite, or whether it ends with the death of the body.

In order to clarify the situation we need to understand what a skeptical position is, in relation to the mind-body problem. This question is important because it is directly related to the epistemological status of antiphysicalistic programs in contemporary philosophy of mind. And some of the thorniest questions are; Does contemporary antiphysicalism have a positive program?

To what extent can antiphysicalism withstand physicalism, and is physicalism in spite of its faults in a better position, since it offers, admittedly imperfect answers, while antiphysicalism does not offer anything other than criticism of the existing theories?

Skeptical points of view in antiphysicalistic strategies

Criticism of physicalism today is represented by two main branches, skepticism itself represented by the theories of such authors as McGinn, Chomsky and Levine, and the nominally positive, naturalistic dualism of Chalmers. First I will discuss the theories that can be considered skeptical, and then I will describe the position of naturalistic dualism from the perspective of whether it really is positive.

The theory of cognitive closure developed by McGinn is considered as a skeptical position. This theory directly relates to the theory of Kant, who has some critical considerations on finding a solution for the psychophysical problem, going back to the Cartesian statement of the problem of how the mind is related to the body (McGinn 1999, p. 38-40). According to Kant, the psychophysical problem itself is incorrectly formulated, therefore any solutions will turn out to be dead-ends. In Kant's terminology this means that the solution to the psychophysical problem lies on the other side of any possible experience, and this should be understood as unreachable. An agent thinks on this side of the possible experience and cannot leave its ground. But what does "lies on the other side of any possible experience" mean? This provision is quite close to what McGinn describes in his conception of "cognitive closure".

> "A type of mind M is cognitively closed with respect to a property P (or theory T) if and only if the concept-forming procedures at M's disposal cannot extend to a grasp of P (or an understanding of T). Conceiving minds come in different kinds, equipped with varying powers and limitations, biases and blind spots, so that properties (or theories) may be accessible to some minds but not to others. What is closed to the mind of a rat may be open to the mind of a monkey, and what is open to us may be closed to the monkey. Representational power is not all or nothing. Minds are biological products like bodies, and like bodies they come in different shapes and sizes, more or less capacious, more or less suited to certain cognitive tasks" (McGinn 1989, p. 351).

As we can see, McGinn interprets constraints of cognition in quite a naturalistic sense, he means that a human has certain biological parameters (structure of brain or senses) that act as his systematic constraints. Due to this and in spite of the fact that the relation of the body to the mind is

a serious and real (not artificial) problem, we are in principle not able to provide a satisfactory answer. The question of the nature of the mind simply lies beyond our cognitive capabilities since every biological species has certain constraints. For example, dogs cannot prove the theorem of Pythagoras, and people are not able to come up with a theory explaining how the mind is related to the body. The same idea although not interpreted in such naturalistic sense we meet in the transcendental philosophy of Kant. Everything that we can know is related to what we receive from the experience which is formed with our active participation. We do not receive information about the world in the form of neutral material, but rather process external information (perceptional and conceptual) and only after that does it become part of our knowledge. But Kant's transcendental philosophy does not specify whether we owe the peculiarities of our cognitive apparatus to the structure of our physical substrate. McGinn in turn does not imply a subject-centered model of the world; there are no implications that the world as it was given to us was formed by a priori structures of transcendental apparatus of a subject. In other words, it would probably be too hasty to consider McGinn's position transcendentalist by default. However, nevertheless it is easy to get a thesis of limitation of out cognitive capabilities from such model, at least in the area related to the structure of our cognition. In order to understand how our apparatus (mind) is built we would have to exceed the fitness of things given us by our experience which is not possible. This constraint is of objective nature as we can only get to know something that we are not ourselves. And since our mind is the only thing with which we can try to understand our own mind, it is unlikely that this objective will ever be achieved. Due to such skepticism McGinn's theory is usually referred to as mysterial. One can argue about the preciseness and adequacy of this term, since in strict skepticism there is nothing mystical. If a skeptic argues why there is not and cannot be an answer to a certain question, his position will look more realistic than mystical. On the contrary, attempts to have positive knowledge about the areas that due to some systematic constraints cannot become the subject of research often look like mysticism. However the applicability of the chosen term here has only a secondary importance and we are more interested in the possibility of finding a solution for the mind-body problem itself, which for McGinn and his followers are more pessimistic.

Another philosopher-skeptic who does not hide his pessimistic outlook on finding a solution for the mind-body problem is Chomsky. He proposes dividing all problems that the human mind has ever tackled into mysteries and problems. Problems can have a solution while mysteries cannot. Problems are initially stated in such a way that they present reworded and hidden solutions – a researcher's objective is simply to decrypt the answer hidden in the question. This does not mean that all problems that a human mind can solve are hidden tautologies. The majority of problems and solutions lie in the area of experimental knowledge, and a great share of theories that people create are a part of the empirical science, namely, natural science (Pinker 1999). However when we say

that in the case of problems a researcher just has to decrypt the answer already inside the problem, we mean that even scientific problems are stated using interpretations and expectations added by the scientists. The material that a scientist is working with is such that it is relevant for the apparatus and tools of the cognitive procedures. According to Chomsky there are "admissible and inadmissible hypotheses" (Chomsky 1975, p. 78-80). The human mind is a system of properties formed by certain powers and constraints. Therefore admissible hypotheses are the hypotheses that are acceptable for a certain specific system; in this case the human mind. In relation to these hypotheses the mind can build sufficiently extensive and complex explanatory theories. But the same properties of the mind that allow for the successful development and verification of hypotheses can exclude working with other inaccessible hypotheses as irrelevant for the human mind. Some theories can simply be missing from among the ones that are identified by the specific properties of the human mind while they might be accessible to an intellect with another form of organization. In spite of the naturalistic setting according to which the human mind is a part of the natural world and therefore has the potential to solve any natural science problems, there are certain confines and restrictions that are defined by the special structure of the mind itself. Chomsky gives examples that we have already seen in McGinn's work: for a rat certain problems are mysteries lying outside its cognitive abilities so it cannot solve them (Chomsky 1975, p. 81). The same is true for a human. The effort extended in the development of natural sciences, namely finding properties of the human mind as aspects of the natural world might never succeed, because the area of the mind, especially its connection to the body might turn out to be just such an area where a human mind will never be able to get into due to systematic constrains (Chomsky 2000, p. 57-60).

Another demonstration of the difficulties of getting a positive mind theory is Levine's approach. His first criticism is directed against physicalism, and only the second questions the possibility of getting any adequate mind theory at all. Physicalism fails because it should not just gives us a physical description of mental states and properties, but should give an explanation of these properties. However the problems are in the fact that such an explanation can be given not only in the framework of physicalism, but also any other theory striving to offer a non-contradictory solution for the mind-body problem. Levine gives the following example: how can we explain the fact, for example, that Cicero is identical to Tullius? We can only explain that the same object bears two names. However Levine says that in this case an explanation should involve a deductive relation between the explanans and explanandum. Someone might explain R if he is able to deduct R from statements about the explanans. An example of such an explanation is water boiling, where the appearance of bubbles can be explained through a reference to the intermolecular interaction of water molecules. If two statements are deductively connected to each other then they have the necessary link. However there is no such required link between statements about the brain and the

mind phenomenon. A certain gap in explanation inevitably remains between the mental and physical facts. The explanatory gap is a term introduced for the difficulty that physicalist theories of mind have in explaining how the physical properties give rise to the way things feel when they are experienced. For instance in the statement "Pain is the firing of C-fibers" it is pointed out that while it might be valid in a physiological sense, it does not help us to understand how pain feels. To take an example of a phenomenon in which there is no gap, imagine a contemporary computer, as marvelous as these devices are, their behavior can be fully explained by their circuitry, and vice versa. By contrast, it is thought that subjective conscious experience constitutes a separate effect that demands another cause, a cause that is either outside the physical world or due to an as yet unknown physical phenomenon (Levine 1983, p. 357).

Difficulties with physicalism related to the lack of the required logical link between the physical and the mental are, in essence, a traditional objection of antiphysicalistic approaches. However the notion of an explanatory gap seems to be more problematic than just a critical indication of the conflict of physicalism. Overall it indicates that we do not have a single description and formalization apparatus for two groups of the facts – physicalistic and mental, and this seriously complicates search for any satisfactory theory of the mind even if it is not aimed at physicalistic solutions (Rosenthal 2002, p. 178-201). Therefore the problem with the explanation gap can also be construed in the skeptical key.

In the general form these problems have the form of a meta-language paradox – we try to turn something that is a tool into an object, and in this case the naturalizing procedure cannot be fulfilled (Fodor 1983, p. 113). This is connected with the fact that we try to gain access to consciousness through the very framework of logical categories which is the fundamental attribute of consciousness itself. It is not clear, however, what the meta–description could be in this case. Moreover, consciousness itself appears as the only condition for the possibility of operating these categories. It is impossible to determine consciousness by means of subject–object or type–sort distinctions, not only because it is not an object or type, nor a subject or sort, but also because consciousness inevitably turns out to be prior to all other similar distinctions.

Some other philosopher-antiphysicalists such as for example Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers suppose that skepticism of McGinn, Levine or Chomsky is excessively radical. Thus according to Nagel the problem lies not in the limitation of our cognitive resources but in the fact that the mind should not be subjected to scientific study, since it cannot be naturalized. Scientific research is possible only for an objective picture of the reality, excluding subjective "points of view". However since the objectiveness of the mind is to be subjective, that is, the essence of the mind is the subjective experience of the subject, mind inevitably eludes the field of vision of scientists (Chalmers 2003, p. 31-33). This failure is related to the fact that knowledge of all the

physical facts that make up the essence of a mindtill does not allow us to live through the experience of a creature that orients itself in space using echolocation as our own experience while exactly this experience is the object of research. If the experience ("what is it like?") is the object that we strive to study then this is exactly what we need to get rather than what makes it possible (Nagel 1974*).* At the same time we cannot subject it to the neurophysical correlation that accompanies this experience. And we have to keep in mind the epistemic asymmetry of these two points of view, it is one thing to directly experience the taste of an orange, and something completely different to listen to a story about what orange tastes like. Although Nagel himself is not ready to take the position of a methodological skeptic and refrains from insisting on principle the impossibility of solving the mind-body problem, his position has serious pessimistic implications. At least if we agree that subjective experience will systematically slip from the theories designed to explain the link between mental and physical facts then prospects of developing a satisfactory theory get seriously complicated (Nagel 1986, p. 76).

Optimistic points of view in antiphysicalistic strategies

Against this background, the naturalistic dualism theory developed by Chalmers seems the most optimistic. But how positive are its implications? Can it boast ready solutions? Recall that naturalistic dualism is a position according to which the mind is supervenient on the physical substrate due to certain contingent psychophysical laws of nature which on their own are not considered to be physical laws. Psychophysical laws of nature are responsible for the correlation of physical and phenomenal facts, namely for the relation of supervenience that lies at the base of the structural orderliness of the universe (Chalmers 1996, p. 256-263).

These laws are random since there is no principle that sets a strict order between the set of physical and the set of phenomenal facts. Conceivability arguments let us imagine a world where there would be no psychophysical laws at all or they would be different. Since a zombie world is quite possible, the presence of a correlation in our world between physical and phenomenal is strictly contingent. Such an outlook lets us talk about natural but not logical of cognitive on physical. Despite being contingent, psychophysical laws are the fundamental laws of the universe. Their ontological status is no different from the fundamental physical laws; they are also responsible for structure and appearance of the universe (Chalmers 1996, p. 301-303).

It is not difficult to notice that naturalistic dualism is not alien to the natural science methods of justification, it produces hypotheses and searches for answers to the questions stated today in the future.

Possibly this last circumstance can be considered the main drawback of naturalistic dualism. Because of a certain level of impatience and the tendency of philosophical logical style of substantiation towards the classical, the naturalistic dualism can be accused of pushing back too many solutions to later times. To be precise, even the main question of "how exactly is the mind related to the body?" still has no clear and specific answer. Supporters of naturalistic dualism say that the science of the future, having reconsidered its key provisions and developed new ones, will be able to eliminate the shortcomings that this approach has. Therefore we just have to pass the baton onto the future generations of researchers who will create a new fundamental science about the mind and discover new psychophysical laws. Such a theory can be considered more as a draft theory whose provisions and thesis are traced with a dotted line. The final theory of a non-reductive explanation of the mind still remains to be developed. For now though we still have a gap in its explanation and the elimination of this gap will have to be in the form of a certain program rather than an actual theory. In spite of its draft state this approach is firmly aimed at finding solutions which will agree well with data from natural sciences and common sense. It is as if the naturalistic dualism is alien to mysticism, skepticism and archaism. Its intricacy however is in the fact that agreeing with science and common sense it does not exclude the possibility of a serious reconsideration of the basic implications of the science and common sense. In order for a fundamental understanding of the structure of the universe to reach unanimity we will have to change. And from this perspective the accusation of the incompleteness of naturalistic dualism can be displayed in an optimistic manner – this approach gives a reason to reconsider possibly outdated views of the world. Its internal contradiction and openness pushes us to get rid of the usual dogmas and stereotypes. However to abandon the concepts which are now commonly accepted has only a prognostic character. To be precise, we do not know yet what exactly psychophysical laws look like (except for the most general rule of natural supervenience). We do not have formulas for psychophysical laws; their principles and logic in a formal and precise form are unknown. Unlike traditional substantial dualism, which in contemporary analytical philosophy is traditionally accompanied by a veil of mystery and mysticism, naturalistic dualism hopes to give a comprehensively clear and complete view of the structure of psychophysical reality, in spite of the deferral of solutions. It seems as if its implications do not have a skeptical component: it is unlikely that we will ever learn about any of the darkest mechanisms of interaction between the mind and the body. Naturalistic dualism is aimed at a positive program reconstructing the nature of the mind, which takes time and over time becomes clearer. From this perspective the theory of naturalistic dualism means scientific development – we might not understand something today but we can learn it in the future. However we cannot reach this point without a reconsideration of our notion of the

structure of the world – in the future scientific knowledge will transform to include psychophysical laws.

Is there a positive program?

Therefore as we can see the theory of naturalistic dualism is currently developed only in the form of a general program. Its more specific details will have to be clarified in the future. At the same time, in spite of a certain optimism demonstrated by this approach, we in fact have to acknowledge that solution of the mind-body problem that we strive for is not given by this approach. The solution is postponed and in many ways it is linked to the possibility of finding special psychophysical laws. Although formally this approach does not seem skeptical it is also difficult to present it as an antiphysicalistic theory with a certain positive core. Naturalistic dualism is more of a consecutive and convincing criticism of known physicalistical theories but for now it does not look like a complete theory. This is related to the fact that for now it has more hypothetic rather than affirmative statements.

Considering the above we can try to understand the situation formed in contemporary analytical philosophy of the mind. The persistent popularity of physicalism can be explained by the fact that antiphysicalism still does not have comprehensive formal counterarguments in the form of explanatory theories although it has serious criticism, sometimes almost destructive for physicalism. Because of this one might get the feeling that philosophers try to follow approaches that might not be immaculate but offer a certain positive knowledge that you can either agree with or not. The initial unpopularity of skeptical positions who imply the impossibility of solving the mind-body problem seems like too big a disappointment for researchers of this approach to claim wide acknowledgement. At the same time skeptical positions generally rooted in transcendentalist models of explanation of the mind do have their say – the mind-body problem is attributed to the type of philosophical paradoxes in relation to which the maximum of epistemic productivity relates to the clarification of the problem itself. In spite of the fact that antiphysicalism is represented by not only by skeptical theories, in general antiphysicalistic programs can be described as mainly critical. Their accent is on the criticism of the existing physicalistic theories and pointing at the often radical difficulty of resolving the mind-body problem. Therefore, although today antiphysicalism gives very serious criticism of physicalism, the positions of the later are still strong. Whether this situation will change depends on how convincing the positive program of antiphysicalists will turn out to be. This will allow the discussion participants to choose (as it may turn out) the lesser of two evils.

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