

CRITIQUE

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The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of the University of Durham

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Reflections on the Philosophy of Mind, Metaphysics, and the
Philosophy of Language

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Editor's Preface

*"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world"*¹

The above quote neatly captures a certain view on the relationship between language, thought and metaphysics; for the early Wittgenstein, language is the expression of thoughts, and the best way to understand the fundamental structure of reality is to understand the nature of meaning in our language. In truth, the philosophy of language, metaphysics, and the philosophy of mind have always been inextricably connected. This Winter Edition of *Critique* collates 4 original reflections on that research cluster. I will now try to summarise the thoughts expressed in each.

In "Disturbing Dreams" Roger Squires draws a distinction between two conceptions of what we do when we recall a dream. Under a 'Nightmariner' conception, we recall actual events that happened to us. Under a 'Wideawake' conception, what we have is apparent recollection; we recall our dreams *as if* those events actually happened to us, though they in fact did not. Squires is very much a Wideawake and spends the essay arguing as such, drawing as much on a rich tapestry of literature as on other philosophers. Of potential interest here is that Wittgenstein himself "struck the sparks which set the topic on fire in its 'modern' form". Indeed, one can trace a lineage of friendship and teaching from Wittgenstein, through Ryle, to Squires! It is with immense pleasure that we publish his essay here.

In our other contribution by a professional academic, Dr Philip Goff generously agreed to spend some time being interviewed by *Critique*, the transcript of which is published below. The conversation largely focusses on Dr Goff's work in Panpsychism, for which he is well known. However, towards the end, the relationship between Panpsychism and the spiritual is addressed. Should we take our spiritual experiences seriously? If not, why not? And if so, can a materialist really accommodate this? I thoroughly enjoyed the conversation we had, and I hope it brings as much pleasure to the reader as it did to myself.

¹ Wittgenstein, L. (1922) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Ogden, C.K. (Trans) Oxford: Routledge

Finally, our referees have selected two excellent undergraduate essays which address themes within the philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and the philosophy of language. The first, by Oda Eide, is a critical assessment of one common explanation of *probability*, namely, Frequentism. Oda concludes that Frequentism, both Finite and Hypothetical, is untenable. Her article is wide-ranging, considering objections and answers to Frequentism in an almost iterative manner, coming in the end to the logical conclusion of her argument; probability cannot be reduced to the frequency of an outcome, hypothetical or real.

In part, Oda argues against these theories on the basis of what Russell might have called a “robust sense of reality”; we should not need drastic ontological commitments, like concrete possible worlds, to explain probabilities. Lizzy Merral, in our second undergraduate contribution, takes up this theme, subjecting Lewis’ counterpart theory to a sustained attack. Claims about what we could have been, what she could have done and what might have happened are ubiquitous. Lewis’ counterpart theory claims to explain these statements; Merral argues that he simply does not capture our motivations for engaging in modal discourse. Merral discerns two different critiques of counterpart theory; one is epistemological, the other psychological. The issue at hand, she argues, is not how we may know who our counterparts are, but rather whether we are even concerned with them in the first place. In fact, when we make modal statements about ourselves, we have no *psychological* concern for counterparts; we care about ourselves in *this* world.

The point of undergraduate journals such as this one is to give students an opportunity to engage in their peers’ work, to experience editing, and to celebrate the excellent essays submitted by other students. It is about young people cutting their teeth in academic practices which often feel oddly sealed off from them. It has been a pleasure to engage in such a project.

Vinay Ostrolenk

Editor

Disturbing Dreams

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Are dream tales recollections?

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), a dream is “A train of thoughts, images or fancies passing through the mind during sleep; a vision during sleep” and the dream-world is “the world that one seems to enter in dreams; a world of dreams or illusions”. To dream is “to have visions and imaginary sense-impressions in sleep”, “to behold or imagine in sleep”. Such definitions do not fit historical usage because in many societies dream tellers were thought to be recalling things they had actually done (communicated with the gods, visited happy hunting grounds) and were believed to have witnessed scenes from other worlds. In such communities, people did not suppose they were recalling *merely* impressions, thoughts, imaginings, visions during sleep, but activities, conversations, encounters, messages from gods.

Young children often suppose that their dream memories are as valid as their memories awake. They may be scared that the monster they encountered in their dreams could still be lurking behind their bedroom curtains or lying in wait for them the next time they visit Dreamland. When the reassurances of their elders and the lack of suitable evidence convince them there were no such monsters, they may account for their errors by supposing they were taken in by such things as a film of a monster on their bedroom ceiling or realistic pictures on the wall. When they discover that these bedside films or pictures are also a fiction, they may well suppose that the things they recall must have been inside their heads, occurrences in a private arena, which for that reason resist any obvious disconfirmation.

The children’s curiosity about the concept of dreaming, like that of many psychologists and philosophers, appears to run out at that point. Can they envisage a realistic ‘mechanism’ by which people could observe things going on in their own heads? Perhaps they avoid thinking about this in the same way as they preserve their belief that Santa Claus delivers all those presents – it is done by magic!

Dream narratives are typically of activities undertaken by the speaker and of events they witnessed. These can be very strange, but, unusual or not, it is almost always immediately obvious that they cannot possibly have occurred as described. We do not let apparent waking testimony override the evidence to the contrary, any more than we would let an apparent childhood memory stand when contradicted by parents, photographs and diaries. “If a dream teller had witnessed scenes sufficiently similar to those related, that could possibly explain what she seems to recall. For instance, if someone told us a story about an eagle carrying away a golf ball, we would probably admit that, if she had in fact seen a buzzard carrying away a white puffball fungus, hers was indeed a witness account, albeit she had misidentified the things she saw. But there is usually no reason to think that a dream teller has been involved in events with that degree of similarity to the dream tale. We cannot so readily dismiss the very common assumption that dreamers recall some kind of hidden activity, perhaps *internal* imagery like a film, to which the machinery in their heads gives them the privileged access of a first-hand observer. According to the Roman philosopher-poet Lucretius, for example:

[W]hen we are sunk in sleep, we may see altars sending up clouds of steam and giving off smoke; and we cannot doubt that we are here dealing with images.
(*The Nature of the Universe*).

However, researchers, who investigate the superficially undifferentiated grey matter inside heads, do not report cerebral images or inward-looking eyes. To that extent Lucretius’s images, along with intra-cranial screens and projectors, should be rejected as a thoroughly disconfirmed speculation. This is for the same reason as emancipated children reject the initially plausible idea of external images on their bedroom walls. If there are no pictures inside our heads as we sleep, they *cannot* have been witnessed, employing equally undiscovered senses, and later recollected.

Nightmariners v Wideawakes

The whole idea that dream accounts are witness testimony may be questioned. Could they be pseudo-testimony? What if there is *nothing* in the history of the subject which they recall

when telling dreams?

This invites competing accounts of what dreams are. The first is that dreams are events recalled from sleep. I label those who accept this prevailing view, “Nightmariners”. This will also cover those who believe dreams are encounters with gods or nocturnal visits to other realms, even though they would not strictly be covered by standard dictionary definitions, such as the OED quoted above.

The second is that a dream is what is related or pictured, typically after sleeping, *as if* the events have been witnessed and are being recalled. I label “Wideawakes” those who think dreams are among the things we seem to recall but don’t. What we have is *apparent* recollecting, where nothing is recollected.

Wideawakes claim that all the evidence is against telling a dream being an actual instance of recalling, even if tellers and their listeners believe that it is.

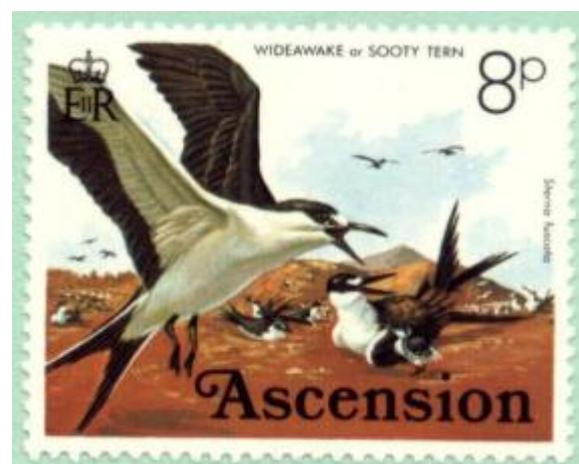
If Nightmariners and Wideawakes offer divergent definitions, this is because they base them on these different assumptions.

Is one definition correct and the other incorrect? This could not be settled by

finding out which of the two is faithful to common usage of the word “dream”, because there *is* no unified common usage which is neutral between the two camps. Nightmariners and Wideawakes use the same words but mean different things by them. What divides them is not confusion over language, but the validity of their different underlying factual assumptions.

Gremlins in the pipes

Here is another example where the same words may be used to mean very different things. “There are gremlins in the pipes” may be a rather fancy way of reporting faulty plumbing – perhaps the pipes are blocked or make thumping noises when the taps are turned. “We’ll soon see”, says the disconnecting plumber called in to investigate. Discovering a fat ball or an airlock, he reports back, “Yes, you were right, but I have removed the blockage – no



On remote Ascension Island in the South Atlantic almost half a million Sooty Terns are known as Wideawakes because their loud morning calls, “Wide awake!”, rouse the locals from their slumbers.

more gremlins". They would both have been amazed if the plumber had discovered ill-disposed little beings with axes and thoughts of sabotage.

But the owner could have intended his claim about gremlins 'literally', ready to gloat, "I told you so", when the wide-eyed plumber returned with gremlins in his zip pocket. He may have alerted a local reporter to witness a remarkable scene. The plumber, once he realized how they meant and understood the sentence about gremlins, would have to disappoint them

by revealing that he had proved them wrong - there were no gremlins in the pipes after all. On one interpretation the owner's claim was true, but on another false. It was the plumber that settled that, not a passing linguistic philosopher. When Nightmariners say, "Squiz had a dream", they mean something different from Wideawakes who use the same words, even though they would agree about the dream's 'content' - "Nefertiti came to view my hieroglyphs". Nightmariners would take this as waking testimony, a report about something that happened while Squiz was asleep. Wideawakes dispute the pervasive assumption that *anything* happened then. They

believe a dream is what the person awake relates *and merely seems to recall*, just as a story is what the storyteller tells us, though the same words could have been used to describe historical events.

For comparison, when we refer to the adventures of some famous explorer, we are concerned with events that occurred at a particular time and place, but when we refer to the adventures of Gulliver, say, geographical or historical investigation would not reveal what they were. The truth about this Gulliver's travels is determined by what Jonathan Swift wrote. We cannot find out independently where Gulliver went. The question makes no sense, given the assumption that Swift is writing fiction, though we can raise a superficially similar question by asking where Swift *in the novel* says Gulliver travelled.

"Dream" has a similar dual use to "adventure". Nightmariners assume dreamers recall events in sleep after waking; it makes perfect sense to inquire when *these* dreams occurred,



how long they lasted and how the person awake acquired such detailed knowledge about them. But Wideawakes assume that tales told in the morning are *not* recollections, so it would make no sense to ask when *these* dreams occurred or for how long, though we could raise similar-sounding questions about when and where they were *said* to have occurred (if that was indeed part of the dream narrative).

Wideawakes think it is as fanciful to believe people have dreams in sleep, events which they take part in and later recall, as it is to believe that a malfunctioning radio has been attacked by gremlins, or that Jack Frost was responsible for the overnight hard frost. These are presumably disprovable hypotheses, but we should be careful in *denying* “There are gremlins in my radio” or “Jack Frost came last night”, because these statements may be used to convey useful information about the radio or overnight temperatures. Similarly, Wideawakes and Nightmariners can happily tell each other about their dreams, though the former reject what they regard as dubious folk-tale explanations uncritically accepted by the latter.

Dreams and the afterlife; Hamlet and Hopkins

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
 Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
 May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
 Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
 Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
 Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.
 (Gerard Manley Hopkins in *No worse, there is none.*)

This ends with a statement assuming the Wideawake position on sleep. The comfort is that, as with death (in Hopkins' estimation) there are no occurrences to worry about, no threats, no nightmares, no suffering – no monsters witnessed, no further activities at all.

In the to-be-or-not-to-be soliloquy, Hamlet starts in the same vein:

To die, to sleep –
 No more, and by a sleep to say we end

The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to – 'tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wished.

But then he remembers that he is a Nightmariner:

To die, to sleep.
 To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
 Must give us pause.

Quite right, Hamlet. That's just the place to pause:

Who would these fardels bear,
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
 But that the dread of something after death,
 The undiscovered country from whose bourn
 No traveler returns, puzzles the will,
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have
 Than fly to others that we know not of?

[Shakespeare's *Hamlet* Act 3, Scene 1, lines 60-80]

How will things be for us after we die? Hamlet fears that we may be involved in 'ills' after death, thus noting a similarity with the question how things are for us after we go to sleep. He refers in both cases to countries visited, suggesting that the crucial difference is that no traveler returns after shuffling off their mortal coil in death. The assumption is that we broadly know what happens in sleep – we dream – but what happens when and if we visit the undiscovered country of death is much more speculative. Nevertheless, it is instructive to compare the Afterlife, what people allegedly do after they die, and Dreaming, what people allegedly do while asleep.

We have a wide variety of idioms for death: "passed away", "kicked the bucket", "ran down

the curtain and joined the choir invisible”, as exploited in the *Monty Python* “Dead Parrot” sketch. In Homer the soul departs, though I’m told that is just about the only thing that it does. Like “going to heaven,” these are generally euphemisms, oblique or picturesque ways of softening the terrible truth that some close acquaintances will never be close or distant again. For many, death is the irreversible end of a person. To take Pythonesque descriptions at face value, as it were, would be to reject this assumption and therefore to misunderstand what had been said.

But travelling to an undiscovered country was no euphemism for Hamlet. The fear of troubles in the afterlife was given as a reason against suicide. Christian believers took the idea of heaven and hell – as in Bosch’s paintings or Dante’s *Inferno* – seriously, so seriously that some of their most important decisions would depend on what wonderful or terrible things they thought could happen to them *after* death. Similar fears arise for the faithful in other religions.

Deadenders, who say, “We go to heaven”, usually mean no more than that we die, that the person is no more. Afterlifers, who use the language of a departing soul ‘seriously’, have different beliefs about death. The successive stages of an insect’s life (egg, larva, cocoon, butterfly – same insect) show that it is intelligible to regard death as a stage in a person’s history. Ancient stories of heroes visiting the Underworld make sense if we assume this butterfly model for persons with a dramatic stage in their lives after death. These claims cannot be ruled out *a priori* and deserve J.L. Austin’s accolade of being at least false. On the face of it, however, claims about people surviving death are indeed manifestly false.

After the dramatic demise of their normal functions when they die, people are inert and show no signs of further communication or purposeful activity. We may speculate that they continue as a soul, a special part capable of thought and feeling after the rest of the person has failed to function. But no such part has been identified and its departure at death is missed by keen observers or by even our most sensitive tracking instruments. No convincing evidence identifies any apparent walking ghost as someone once alive. Alleged communications from surviving individuals have been exposed as fakes. Where would souls be? There are no plausible candidates to be Hamlet’s undiscovered country. These considerations suggest that life after death is a superstition.

Those who use the phrases about death euphemistically are clearly not committed to any next-stage story, which they probably regard as discredited by observation and science.

Thus far, it is a factual rather than a conceptual inquiry, one on which philosophers, at least of my stripe, have no particular authority. I have raised the question of life after death because, as Hopkins and Shakespeare showed, there are similarities in the debate about the possibility of dreaming after going to sleep. In regarding death as the irreversible demise of the person, the stance taken by Deadenders is parallel to that of Wideawakes in the debate about what does or does not happen in sleep.

Just as Afterlififers believe in experiences and activities after death, so Nightmariners assume that people witness events in sleep and participate in sleeping activities, those they later dub “dreaming”. Wideawakes challenge these empirical claims. According to them, unresponsive and non-communicative sleepers show no convincing signs of deliberate undertakings later recalled from that time. Efforts to construe sleep walking and talking, Rapid Eye Movements or distinctive brain processes as signs of and markers for dreaming are reminiscent of appeals by Conan Doyle-type spiritualists to séances, Ouija boards, ectoplasm and poltergeists.

Dreamers’ apparent testimony after waking has to be rejected because it clashes with our knowledge of their history. Investigations into the credibility of, for example, Dreamland or the Land of Nod, as destinations for those who go to sleep, yield comically negative results. We don’t go anywhere when we go to sleep, apart from going to bed or wherever the bus is going.

Accentuating the negative

Some apparent Afterlififers think they can save their position by describing departed souls in such a way that they avoid empirical disconfirmation. They may say that souls are or have immaterial, non-physical bodies which may be heading for heavenly or hellish destinations somewhere not in space - so no wonder that they elude our vision and travel below the radar. Incorporeal bodies are alleged to go in no determinable direction to non-geographical locations. But what kind of travel is that? The price paid for relying on these negative descriptions is that we lose our grip on how to recognise souls, their travels and alleged abodes; it is an illusion that we can understand what the word “soul” means by this negative route. “Person with no body” and “travelling in no direction” are in this context contradictory phrases.

The lapse into nonsense is a consequence of refusing to allow these claims to face what

Quine called the ‘tribunal of experience’. “We avoid *that kind* of material or physical test, but not a spiritual one”, say putative Afterlififers. But can it be explained, e.g., by examples, what a *spiritual* assessment is, other than by insisting it is *not* a material or physical one? We are still on the negative road to unintelligibility. It would be plainer sailing if we had a clear idea what was being contrasted with a ‘material’ assessment. Given their negative characterisation, however, Afterlififers cannot refer back to examples of spiritual assessments to make the contrast; the suspicion is that ‘material’ assessments are just what everyone else would call assessments.

This excursion into the Afterlife was intended to illuminate the debate about sleep and dreams, where some slippery pseudo-Nightmariners take a similarly unsustainable negative tack. I return to the main topic after rehearsing another parallel dispute about hallucinations.

Hallucinations

A: When he hallucinates, McB sees a dagger.

Z: No, because there is no dagger. He can’t see what isn’t there.

A: McB sees something like a dagger.

Z: But there isn’t anything like a dagger – look, it’s just an empty hall.

A: McB must see a dagger in his head.

Z: Brain physiologists have looked inside heads; there aren’t any miniature daggers there and he can’t see what’s behind his eyes.

A: McB sees a picture/image/impression of a dagger.

Z: Cerebral investigators have found no pictures, impressions or images conveniently accompanied by suitable inner eyes.

A: When hallucinating, McB has a *mental* image of a dagger, a sensory impression.

Z: In what medium, equivalent to canvas, wood or glass, are these mental images or impressions formed? How thick are they? How heavy? Is anything written on the other side?

A: These questions do not apply to them, because they are immaterial, incorporeal, non-physical.

Z: If they have no weight, no size, no dimensions, no appearance, no other side, then they would not be locatable or detectable by sight or by inward perception. Whatever such things may be, they are not images or pictures.

In informal discussions we may refer to such things as smoke, gases, dust, even smudges on glass or reflections in mirrors, as insubstantial or immaterial. These things can be elusive, but a thorough search would surely show that there are no such things in place to reveal what hallucinatory visions are. The choice is between factual disproof – no explanatory smoke and mirrors are to be found - and apparently nonsensical claims, such as that there are non-physical pictures without a visible surface or without a glass or mirror in which to be reflected. [Thomas Hobbes makes the same point about the insubstantial nature of souls in *Leviathan* part 4 ch. 46].

McB does not *observe* what he hallucinates, neither with his eyes nor with a speculative introspection sense. We cannot point to anything in the hall, or in his head, or anywhere else, which will teach us what hallucinations are. Given the facts about hallucinating, definitions that appeal to distinctive sensations or impressions experienced by the hallucinator are as misleading as definitions of a hard frost would be if presented as the handiwork of an icy alien being. Why do people drift into the hallucinations cul-de-sac when they would not take seriously a description of freezing nights as a visitation by Jack Frost? McB 'sees' (seems to see) what he hallucinates - a dagger, for instance. We may suppose that an imagined dagger is a part of McB's experience, but this familiar description too readily takes us back on a futile search for alternative perceptible objects - dagger simulacra, apparent daggers, seeming daggers. Unless such things can be discovered, hallucinating has not been explained at all. The wrong turn is taken when we unthinkingly assume that there is no alternative but to understand his hallucination by appealing to what McB perceives. We understand "McB seems to see a dagger" as working in the same way as if he had said himself, "I seem to see a dagger", where he would probably be cautiously claiming that there is indeed a dagger, or something like a dagger to be seen.

There is an alternative way to understand "McB seems to see a dagger". It does not have to be about McB's perception or introspection. Rather, we can take a step back and think of his situation in the gloomy hall, grasping at thin air and shouting about things which exist only in his imagination – that is, not at all. *We are saying how McB appears to us and other*

observers. We can make sense of his strange behaviour by reference to a notional dagger a few feet in front of him. If there had been such a dagger, then his words and gestures would have made sense, being appropriate to what is around him. Taking advantage of our knowledge about what is involved in seeing a dagger, we can understand his reactions and make sense of what he is doing and what is happening to him. He is *not* seeing a dagger, of course, but, if there were a certain kind of weapon just in front of him, that is exactly what he would be doing.

On this alternative view it is no good asking for spatio-temporal co-ordinates and expecting to find there something hallucinated. "Where is McB's hallucinatory dagger?" has no straightforward sense. It could be *given* a sense by assimilating it to a partly similar question, namely, "If McB were seeing an actual dagger, where would *that* be?" But no-one will be looking in the suggested place for the murder weapon.

Is dreaming imagining in sleep?

Where do we go when we go to sleep? People who say we go to Dreamland and enjoy sweet dreams often communicate no more than that we sleep and will have stories to tell on re-awakening. Their claims are comparable to euphemistic reports of death, such as going to heaven. But I fear they often mean something more full-blooded. Nightmariners probably enjoy a landslide majority in assuming that, when dream tellers appear to recall fantastic adventures, this is because there were indeed nocturnal revels in the Land of Nod going on while the dreamer was asleep.

They may press their case as follows: "When we dream, we do have images, as Lucretius said, but they are *mental images*. We do recall activities in sleep, but these are *mental activities*, such as thinking or imagining". Their assumption here seems to be that, unlike 'physical' activities such as jumping over houses or running away from tigers, these mental activities cannot be directly observed by third parties. This apparently blocks Wideawake's favourite challenge that Nightmariner's assumptions about the stuff of dreams may be disconfirmed by careful inspection of someone who has gone to sleep.

There is nothing essentially mental, in this undercover sense, about forming an image, thinking or imagining; they are often evident enough. When we listen to a lecture, we may follow the professor's thinking, which we would be unable to do, were her thoughts to remain in her head. When the medieval historian dances around his study listening to

troubadour songs, we may be amused to watch him imagine that he is dancing with Eleanor of Aquitaine. Spectators may gather to watch a talented cartoonist sketch images of well-known characters. Thinking, imagining and picturing are often no more *hidden* or elusively *internal* activities than playing table tennis or digging the garden. Indeed, if they were always out of view, it is difficult to see how we could learn what they are.

We may be confident that 'public' lecturing, dancing or sketching does not regularly occur in sleep to be reported as dreaming when the person awakes. It has to be conceded, however, that in a variety of circumstances, thinking and imagining can be kept under wraps so as to be unnoticed by even alert observers. If we suppose that dreams are, as the OED has it, "A train of thoughts, images or fancies passing through the mind during sleep; a vision during sleep" - images in the mind's eye, conversations in the mind's ear - can we not accept waking testimony as to their nature and occurrence? Nightmariners may claim that *purely mental* activity escapes the keen eyes and instruments of observers but can be recalled by those who engage in it.

What does the dictionary mean by fancies "passing through the mind"? People similarly say these things are "in the dreamer's head". But what, if anything, is alleged to be going on inside the sleeper? Behind closed eyelids, is there something equivalent to the lecturer spelling out his thoughts, the lads in the park imagining they are playing at Anfield, the new owner picturing what her new house will look like on paper or canvas? We should be able to investigate. In principle, physiological evidence would determine whether or not such inner activities occur. If nothing of this sort is found, what are people waking with dreams thought to be apprised of when they allegedly recall what they were doing in sleep? If it is claimed that the dreamer can *introspect* dreaming activity, why can't scientists check those observations? Wideawakes would claim that any such suggestions have been amply disconfirmed; there are no such dreams!

When someone imagines he is dancing while displaying no obvious signs of doing so, do we have to suppose that there must somewhere be counterparts to the observable things by which others would normally recognise what he was doing? It *could* be like that. Though the wistful medievalist may not be moving round the room with a suitable mannequin while songs of troubadours play on the audio, he may yet be gazing at an Eleanor portrait in his half-open desk drawer, making silent dancing movements with his feet under the desk while

humming ever so quietly a guitar accompaniment. This imagining would be effectively hidden, but it could have been discovered by an intrusive scrutiny. It would be the kind of concealment practised by someone solving a Rubik's cube by doing it behind her back or performing pelvic floor exercises unbeknownst at a business meeting. Is there any good reason to suppose that anyone engages in *this* kind of hidden imagining during sleep? Or, that if they did, that it would correspond with any later dream tales?

If the suggestion is that something is going on equivalent to the dancing, the foot-tapping, humming or behind-the-back Rubik cube processing, only more effectively concealed, then brain researchers should be able to settle this intra-cranial matter with their smart investigative techniques. Surely nothing of that sort will be discovered, no activity of which an observer familiar with the concept would judge, "Oh, yes. I can see what he is imagining – he's dancing with that Eleanor of Aquitaine again".

The alleged testimony of the purveyors of dreams

When people are awake, thinking and imagining may pass unnoticed, accomplished without the usual 'outward' behaviour by which they are often recognised, or by any inner equivalents. Why can't it be admitted that people imagine things, which are in this sense "hidden" or "in their heads", while asleep? Nightmariners claim that dream tales are waking testimony to that effect; purely mental activities are indeed the elusive stuff of dreams.

That dreaming in sleep is a hidden activity would not be settled by anything the dream teller said or showed. The lecturer did not recall that she did *not* tell anyone what she was thinking in sleep. The historian did not recall that, while asleep, he imagined he was dancing *without* moving around the room. *Observers* notice that she did not rehearse any arguments out loud and that the historian did not dance. They would be justified in thinking that *if* the sleeping dream tellers were thinking or imagining, they were keeping it to themselves. But if dreamers are thus inscrutable while asleep, spectators cannot confirm when that putative dreaming occurred or whether there has been any thinking, imagining or picturing at all.

How would dream tellers convince us that and when the alleged imagining in sleep actually occurred? Do they recall even being asleep? Would it carry any weight if a dream teller guesstimated, "I dreamt that five minutes ago"? How would he know? The dreamer can hardly tell us that, while thinking and picturing, he had looked at his watch five minutes

before – others probably know he didn't. Had he noticed in the middle of his shuteye the ever-punctual philosopher Kant walk by outside the window? Knowledge about the timing of any alleged imagining could not be derived from his first-hand testimony.

If a person knows when they have just been asleep, it is hardly because they recall sleeping. Typically, people wake momentarily disoriented and are unable to recall recent events in their environs. They must have dropped off. They *infer* that they have slept. It isn't like recalling that they have been out running for the last ten minutes, which they *don't* have to deduce from the ache in their legs and the sweat on their brow.

If the person waking up *does* remember anything from sleep, such as the siren of a passing fire engine or the saucepan boiling over, these things would not be part of any dream. Rather than being a recollection from the Land of Nod, the blaring siren belonged with a fire engine in the street outside; the saucepan boiled over in the kitchen, not in an imagined dream world.

"She must have imagined it".

Those Nightmariners, who believe that dreams are imagining or thinking in sleep, are not *testifying* to that effect when they relate their dreams. Dream tales are rarely about otherwise unnoticed thinking and imagining. Rather, the narrators appear to recall such conspicuous events as being chased by a bear or dancing with Nefertiti. So why are thinking and imagining popular candidates for the stuff of dreams?

It is perplexing when people describe, or picture, events-which-did-not-happen with the fluency and convincing detail of someone who had witnessed and participated in them. They are often ready to say more, in a manner which bystanders recognise as typical of someone recalling events and activities in their past lives. Yet the listeners are sure that the events in these tall tales did not happen. A persistent Nightmariner hypothesis is that the narrator imagined the events in sleep and is now recalling that; the dream is what he imagined, namely, being chased by a bear, and dreaming was his imagining it.

Suppose someone tells you an unlikely story. Disbelieving it, you may think, "He must have made it up". You could be speculating that your unreliable informant had spent time inventing the story *before* they told it to you. Alternatively, you could be assuming that spinning the tale was itself an example of making a story up, doing so as he went along. In a similar way, "She must have imagined it," as a response to a dream report, *could be a*

Nightmariner's speculation about prior acts of imagining, but could also be a minimal Wideawake declaration of disbelief in the unfolding adventures of the dream narrator.

In other cases where purported reminiscences go systematically awry, it can be because the person has taken part in events such as those reported, but has misplaced them in his or her history. For example, someone may give a vivid account of her adventures in Peru, only to be reminded by the plane tickets that she had actually been on holiday in Ecuador.

Suggestions as to possible holidays while asleep, however, are manifestly contrary to fact, though Nightmariners may go to great lengths to save this *type* of explanation. They may shrink the putative holiday so that it could conceivably have taken place inside the dream teller, thus avoiding the ready disconfirmation that the person allegedly having memorable adventures was inert and unresponsive in bed. But the mechanics of such an unlikely miniaturisation of perception and action are hard to work out; physiologists familiar with our internal workings predictably consign such 'models' to the scrapheap.

A related everyday explanation for unanchored recollections is that the narrator has previously imagined taking part in a drama and later rehearsed the fictional events as if they were part of her past experience. For example, she may have seen a film or read a book and 'identified' with one of the characters. Now, people often imagine seeing and doing things in the absence of videos, audio books, or other detectable props. Such thinking and imagining often pass unrecognised when someone is awake, but we do not doubt their occurrence. Could dreaming be such generally private imaginings? If the dream teller was recalling what she had thus imagined, that could explain her apparent reporting and what Norman Malcolm called her "waking impressions" (where what dreamers tell, show, or are prone to tell and show, *are* their impressions).

Can we establish whether or not they *did* indeed imagine these things in sleep? How would we recognise and locate the activity of imagining, which we know only under the description, "that imagining which could explain what the dream teller seems to recollect"? If imagining in sleep cannot be observed by sleep monitors or brain researchers, how can it be observed by those who allegedly engage in it? If it has not been witnessed, how can it be recalled? If we do not recognise imagining in sleep on at least some occasions, should we not take seriously that this may be because it does not occur?

The problem with describing undercover imagining in such a way that it escapes disconfirmation, is that we may not find a route to confirmation either, which threatens our

understanding of what hypothesising it involves. Sometimes it is the injudicious use of words such as “mental” and “immaterial” which lead to unintelligibility. ‘Non-physical’ picturing eludes our understanding in the same way as incorporeal departing souls. Something similar is true when, as in the OED definitions, reference is made to visions, fancies or sense-impressions. What are these but pictures which lack the vital features by which they may be recognised and identified as such?

If we did have independent grounds for believing that thinking and imagining occurred in sleep, then it may be reasonable to interpret dream tales as somehow reflecting these activities and being explicable by them. Dream telling unaided cannot sustain that view. It is comparable to the debate about whether there are thoughts and imaginings after death. Detecting such things makes sense provided we assume there are survivors who are capable of expressing what they think and imagine. This assumption seems to be false. Following that pattern, I would say the evidence is against sleepers being capable of revealing what they think and imagine.

Admittedly, there are some controversial claims by experimental sleep researchers that sleepers may be trained under special circumstances to signal when they are enjoying so-called ‘lucid’ dreaming. See, for instance, Stephen LaBerge in *Lucid dreaming: Evidence and methodology*. There are many other studies, which should not be lightly dismissed, but I sidestep them in this article, apart from an itch to make a comparison with the alleged evidence that under special circumstances ghosts communicate their thoughts through séances or Ouija boards. In any case these specialist ‘discoveries’ can have played no part in explaining the seductive appeal of the Nightmariner position.

Recapitulating

“I rode on horseback with the gauchos” says the waking dreamer. We know that, never having been to Argentina, he cannot be recalling that. It is easy to assume that he must be recalling something else, something which during sleep, he interpreted as riding with the gauchos. What could he have mis-interpreted in sleep? It would be ridiculous to suppose the sleeping person has somehow observed with shut eyes anything comparable to herding cattle on the Pampas and only marginally less absurd to suppose he had been watching deceptively realistic films or images.

Postulating visions, sense-impressions, sensations or experiences in sleep is an attempt to save the day for this type of explanation. Once it is spelled out what these items are, however, they will either succumb to empirical disconfirmation or be characterised in such a way that it becomes senseless to claim that they could ever be witnessed and recalled. Has the dream teller observed *anything* in sleep which could explain why, after waking up, he tells a certain kind of story? Some Nightmariners suggest that activities such as imagining and picturing occur, which they call “dreaming”. “Dreams” are the events pictured or imagined. If further inquiry reveals that there are no such hidden activities, as Wideawake claims, then the conclusion to be drawn is that there is no dreaming and there are no dreams. It is not Nightmariner’s definitions that are wrong; it is the assumption on which they are based.

In the comparable case of hallucinations, it is unreasonable to insist that when McB seems to see a weapon, he *must* be seeing something like it, even when nothing suitable can be found. In the case of dreams, it is likewise unreasonable for Nightmariners to insist that, when the dream teller appears to recall jumping over her house, in the teeth of all evidence to the contrary, she *must* be recalling something similar to that, such as an imagined mighty jump. If we talk about products of imagination at all, we should be charitably understood to be referring to the tales and adventures recounted by dreamers when they appear to be recollecting after sleep. Those notional events are what Wideawakes call “dreams”.

Diagnostic remarks

People suppose that Wideawakes are denying what every dream teller is inclined to believe. Do Nightmariners suppose that what makes the rehearsal of dreams like recalling is that the teller is inclined to think they are true? On Wideawake’s conception, however, in deciding whether tales are dream tales, it makes no difference whether the narrators themselves believe them. In waking up with a tale to tell, they are not thereby asserting or endorsing anything. What matters is that the story *could* be true or false, that the audience understands what is said, pictured or otherwise expressed. “But the speaker must mean what she says!” They must mean to *say* it, but not necessarily to offer it as testimony. The dream-teller need not herself have any view about whether she saw the house on fire (or anything like that). Others will judge whether she delivers the description as if she were a witness.

If the dream tale is introduced by “I recall jumping over the house”, for instance, this does sound as if friends who know better would need to correct the speaker. But the speaker is hardly likely to be surprised that she did not jump over her house. There is no need to treat what she says as a tentative assertion that she *does* recall such a jump. “Recall” should probably have been in inverted commas.

If someone tells us over coffee about her friend Guy, “He appears (or seems) to recall a bonfire party”, that may be because she has noticed that Guy knows a lot about such a party and thinks the likely reason is that he witnessed or took part in it. When people describe the tellers of dreams in similar terms - “Antigonus appears (or seems) to recall being chased by a bear” – we readily assume that this, too, is because Antigonus can give a vivid account of a chase and the likely reason is that he lived through it, if not in reality, at least in his imagination. This resort to imaginative activity, presumably in sleep, informs the popular definitions and fits the Nightmariner conception of what dreaming is.

However, there is an alternative understanding of “Guy appears (or seems) to recall a bonfire party”. There may be no suggestion that Guy witnessed any particular bonfire party, but from what he says and does, and from what he is inclined to say and do, his actual and potential behaviour may be fairly judged as *like* someone who is recalling – in this case – a bonfire party. The similarity should be spelled out, but it does not matter for the truth of the appears-to-recall statement whether Guy is even inclined to believe that he witnessed any bonfire party. The relevant assessments are the ones made by observers, not by Guy himself.

Wideawakes describe dream tellers in this alternative way. Antigonus may seem to recall being chased by a bear. In what he says and does, he resembles someone recalling such a dramatic chase. But, when Wideawakes say Antigonus “seems to recall --”, they are not warily suggesting that he *does* recall --; their description leaves that possibility completely open. They regard that question as a matter for inquiry, one which they are confident will reveal that Antigonus is not recalling anything.

Consistent with the first interpretation of “He seems to recall”, Nightmariners will define dreams as what people imagine while dreaming in sleep, the recollection of which can explain their waking state. Taking the second interpretation, Wideawakes explain that dreams are tales told or activities pictured in a manner and in circumstances which are

recognisably similar to actual recollections. But the dream teller is no more recalling things than the hallucinator is seeing things.

Nightmariner's conception is often taken for granted when people talk about dreams. It is said that dreaming may start in sleep at a certain time and last for short or long periods. Apparently, what is dreamt (the dream) may be recalled or forgotten after waking. Sleep researchers try to correlate dreaming with such phenomena as eye-movements, breathing patterns and skin responses. Physiologists look for distinctive brain activity, with similarities to what goes on in the brain when witnessing or imagining while awake.

On the Wideawake definition of a dream, it makes no sense to ask when and where a dream occurs, whether dreams are recalled or forgotten, or whether they can be correlated with cerebral activity in any straightforward way. These things make sense on Nightmariner's definition, but only because it is founded on dubious assumptions. Bluntly, Wideawakes regard these in-built assumptions as no more credible than assumptions about gremlins built into a report on a machine malfunctioning. We can define dreams either way; the key disagreement is about the different assumptions behind the lexicography.

Something constructive to say?

This article has been written by a Wideawake. After the destructive work on the Nightmariner position, we are left with a constructive conceptual challenge. This arises from some of the most influential words ever written on this topic:

People who on waking tell us certain incidents (that they have been in such-and-such places, etc.). Then we teach them the expression "I dreamt", which precedes the narrative. Afterwards I sometimes ask them "did you dream anything last night?" and am answered yes or no, sometimes with an account of a dream, sometimes not. That is the language-game. [Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*: 184e]

Only in a small minority of cases where people "tell us certain incidents" do we teach them to preface their tales with "I dreamt". They could be recalling the incidents. They could be telling us a story, reading it from a book or making it up. There are other speech activities when saying such things as, "He was chased by a bear", would be appropriate. So how do we select the cases where it *is* appropriate for the speaker to say, "I dreamt"?

To have a dream is to recall ('recall', seem to recall) something when nothing is recalled, just as to have an hallucination is to see ('see', seem to see) something when nothing of the kind

is seen. We have to fully understand how to recognise recalling, bearing witness, before we can catch on to what dreams are. "Dream" is a necessarily paradoxical concept. A dream is not what you think it is.

Bibliography with Historical Notes

Lucretius, T. C. (1994) *The Nature of the Universe* Latham, R.E. (Trans) London: Penguin
is considered to be a Roman presentation of the teachings of Epicurus of Samos 341-270
B.C.

Lucretius was my representative Nightmariner, though these have always been as plentiful
as blackberries.

Wittgenstein struck the sparks which set the topic on fire in its 'modern' form in mid-20th
century:

Wittgenstein, L. (1953) *Philosophical Investigations* Anscombe, G.E.M., Hacker P.M.S, &
Schulte, J. (Trans.) Hacker, P.M.S. & Schulte, J. (Eds.) Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd

He inspired his friend Oetz Bouwsma and their joint student and friend Norman Malcolm to
produce the following landmark writings:

Bowsma, O.K. (1965) "On Many Occasions I Have in Sleep Been Deceived" in *Philosophical
Essays* London: University of Nebraska Press

Malcolm, N. (1959) *Dreaming (Studies in philosophical psychology)* London: Routledge &
Kegan Paul.

Gilbert Ryle, another friend of Wittgenstein and Bouwsma, reportedly had Wideawake
sympathies in the 1940s and 1950s, which may be reflected in the following article by one of
his students:

MacDonald, M., (1953). Sleeping and waking. *Mind* 62 (April): 202-215

When I confessed to Ryle, my B.Phil. supervisor 1963-4, that I was impressed by the
arguments in *Dreaming*, he replied, "The interesting question is why Malcolm is absolutely
convinced he is right while everyone else is equally absolutely sure he is wrong!" There is
nothing on dreaming in Ryle's publications and I formed a secret ambition to supply a
missing chapter in an updated *The Concept of Mind*.

Wideawake's views have been on the defensive since the publication of Hilary Putnam's article:

Putnam, H. (1962) "Dreaming and 'Depth Grammar'" in *Analytical Philosophy* R. Butler (ed.)
Oxford: Basil Blackwell

This argued that the 'Wittgensteinians' were inclined towards Malcolm's views because they had a defective 'criterial' conception of meaning.

Two other impressive articles, in very different but subtle ways, threatened to de-stabilise Wideawakes:

Hunter, J.F.M. (1973) "Some questions about dreaming" in *Essays after Wittgenstein*
Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Dennett, D.C. (1981) "Are Dreams Experiences?" in *Brainstorms* Cambridge, Massachusetts:
The MIT Press

Acknowledgments

David Cockburn discussed an earlier paper, which covered the same ground; his often innocently disguised criticisms can change my mind like none other since Ryle. I commented on a perceptive unpublished paper by Rachael Wiseman two years ago and apologise if I have unknowingly appropriated any of her insights. Thanks, above all, to Andy Hamilton for much debate on this topic and great encouragement over many years.

Interview with Dr Philip Goff

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Interviewer: Firstly, thank you for doing this interview with Critique. Your most well-known for your ideas around Panpsychism and you had a lot of publicity on it. What are your motivations for adopting a theory of Panpsychism?

Dr Philip Goff: I think we have to start with the problem of consciousness itself, which panpsychism purports to be a solution to. The challenge is to understand how consciousness fits into our overall understanding of reality. Despite great progress on our understanding of the brain, we still don't really have an explanation of how complicated electro-chemical signalling in the brain is able to produce the inner-subjective world of smells and sounds and tastes that each of us knows in our own case. This is broadly now accepted as a serious problem (though it wasn't always) but many people think it is simply a scientific problem: let the neuroscientists plug away at it and one day we'll get a solution. However, I try to argue the problem of consciousness is radically different to any other scientific problem, and in fact there is good reason to think that our conventional scientific approach alone isn't going to be able to wholly deal with it.

Interviewer: Is this because quantitative descriptions of reality won't ever be able to explain the qualitative experiences of consciousness?

Dr Philip Goff: We have to explore the various options. Neuroscience is crucial for dealing with consciousness, but we have to recognise its limits. What neuroscience gives us are *correlations*: correlations between particular brain activities and particular kinds of experience. Neuroscientists have built up rich data on this topic, data concerning what are sometimes called the Neural Correlates of Consciousness (NCC), and that's really important data but that in itself is not an explanation of consciousness. We want to know why it is the case that certain kinds of brain activities are associated with certain kinds of experience, and for that we just have to explore the various options. Probably still the most popular one is

Materialism – the view that we can just explain experience in terms of electrochemical signalling in the brain. I guess what you were getting at with the question is my motivation for rejecting this: physical science works with a purely quantitative vocabulary whereas consciousness is an essentially qualitative, quality-involving phenomenon. If you think about, for example, the redness of a red experience or the smell of coffee, you can't capture these kinds of qualities in the purely quantitative vocabulary of physical science. As long as your description of the brain is framed in that purely quantitative vocabulary, you're going to leave out these qualities and hence consciousness itself. So, Materialism, which I think is the conventional scientific approach, cannot deal with consciousness entirely because of that quantitative-qualitative gap which I think is unbridgeable. Therefore, we have to look for alternatives. It is this understanding of the problem of consciousness, coupled with the inadequacies Materialism, which motivate the search for other theories of consciousness.

Interviewer: People usually present as a dichotomy Materialism and Cartesian Dualism. I take it you're trying to make out a third way between them. Could you explain how Panpsychism differs from Materialism and Cartesian Dualism?

Dr Philip Goff: Yeah, that's exactly right. When I was a student, I was taught that those were the two options; either you were a Materialist and thought that consciousness could be explained in terms of the chemistry of the brain, or you were a dualist and thought consciousness could be explained outside the workings of the brain and was non-physical. I believe Panpsychism is a really attractive middle-way between these two options. The starting point of Panpsychism is that physical science doesn't really tell us what matter is. A bizarre claim I know! But actually, what philosophers of science have come to realise is that science is confined to describing the *behaviour* of matter. Physics tells us that particles have mass and charge, and these in turn are entirely characterised in terms of behaviours like attraction, repulsion, resistance to acceleration. That's all really useful information, but it doesn't tell us the *intrinsic nature* of matter. The question is, what is an electron, independently of its behaviour in relation to other particles? So, the claim is that there is this huge hole in our standard understanding of the universe, and the proposal is to put consciousness in that hole. The Panpsychist does not deny that there is just matter (this is the disagreement with the Dualist) but maintains that matter can be described from two

perspectives: through its behaviour or through its *intrinsic nature*. There is more to matter than physical science suggests. So, in that sense it is a compromise position between those more standard conventional explanations of consciousness.

Interviewer: As it stands then, this view appears compelling. But I want to tease at some potential complications with it. One way to tease this is out might be through the notion of free will. As I understand it, at a basic level, the Materialist might say there is no free will in the common way we understand it. The Cartesian Dualist might give humans a radical free will, given the immaterial nature of the mind. The Panpsychist approach is that ontological atoms are conscious and that when they come together in our brain they combine to form an incredibly complex consciousness. But what is the resulting view on the free will of humans? If that combination happens in the same manner as physical neurons combine, do we get the Materialist denial of free will? Or does this combination of basic conscious particles operate independently of material laws? In the latter case, we have the odd view that the intrinsic nature of matter is independent of the laws governing its observable behaviour.

Dr Philip Goff: Well, a lot of panpsychists would like to say that yes, the causal structure of reality is perfectly described by science and neuroscience. If you think that the story we get from physical science is a deterministic one, then it looks like both the Materialist and the Panpsychist might be in the same boat with respect to free will. Indeed, a Panpsychist might be fine with that. It might be worth noting here that there is a sense in which consciousness is more of a non-negotiable datum than free will. The reality of consciousness is much more evident than the reality of free will. We can make sense of the idea that we might not be free in the way we ordinarily think we are, but it is much harder to imagine that we might not be conscious in the ordinary way we think we are – how can we doubt that we feel pain, for example? It is important to note, then, that when a Panpsychist talks of conscious we are not talking of anything more than a basic experience – free will is not necessarily involved. However, there are other forms of Panpsychism. For example, there are Emergentist or Strong-Emergentist forms of Panpsychism where, although there is just matter, matter comes in layers. I guess physics would describe the micro level, but when matter is arranged in certain complex forms radically new forms of consciousness emerge

and the physical system may behave in a different way, a way that you couldn't simply predict from knowledge of its parts from physical science. In fact, I have a paper (a rather experimental paper) called "Panpsychism and Free Will"¹, similar to what I tried out in the last chapter of my book *Galileo's Error*². There I try out a kind of pan-agentalist theory. Under this version of Panpsychism, in some sense, particles have free will and choose what they are going to do. Well, the obvious question is: why isn't there chaos? In response, we might say particles have a certain inclination to behave in a certain way and simply due to the basic nature of their consciousness they don't have the resources to doubt that inclination to change course. For me, the problem with a libertarian view of free will is that, on most readings of the view, free will is something uniquely borne by humans, and, at some point in our evolutionary history, it simply appeared. But on the pan-agentalist view we have a much more uniform picture of nature and I believe, in science and philosophy, it is very attractive to have a uniform view of nature. I'm somewhat agnostic on the truth of all this, but the point is more of a conditional: if you believe in libertarian free will, Panpsychism is an attractive theory of reality.

Interviewer: That pan-agentalist view, then, puts a lot of weight on inclination – it holds the whole fabric of physical reality together!

Dr Philip Goff: The word 'desire' is used in so many different ways in philosophy. I think we can make some sense of the idea that animals have a simple form of that yearning. We might take it further back to simpler and simpler forms of life and give particles a yearning and a capacity to act on that yearning! This resembles Schopenhauer, and in the kind of Panpsychist view I defend there is, I think, a precedent in Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer followed Kant in thinking that we can't know the world in and of itself, but argued there is one counterexample, namely, our own mind. Do you not think that makes sense, then, to think of the basic particles as having some kind of proto consciousness?

¹ Goff, P. (2020) "Panpsychism and Free Will: A Case Study in Liberal Naturalism" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 20:2, July 2020, 123 - 144

² Goff, P. (2019) *Galileo's Error: foundations for a new science of consciousness* London: Rider Books

Interviewer: It does seem odd to say that an electron can want anything... One reason might be that electrons have no sense receptors – so it is difficult to imagine how they might desire to move, in the sense that we do... or indeed desire to behave in any way!

Dr Philip Goff: I'm partly inspired by my two young children... if you look at a new-born baby, William James said their experience is just "buzzing, blooming confusion". They have urges, I think, and they can act on them, but they don't know what the hell they're doing! What they are able to do is to make changes in their brain. As cognitive development happens, their buzzing, blooming confusion starts to represent objects in an environment, and their choices, which I think in some metaphysical sense are choices to make changes in their brain, start to be represented as possibilities, possible actions in the external world. I think ultimately we are our brains, and our agency consists in our capacity to make changes in our brain, but in cognitive development I start to associate the ability to make changes in my brain with moving my arm or some such. I think then I would accuse you of being anthropocentric. Yes, mature adult human consciousness is associated with sensing an environment and interacting with it, but I don't see why that's an essential element of consciousness or will in general and moreover I think it can be built from simpler forms of consciousness.

Interviewer: I have read that Panpsychism might be traced back to the ancient Greeks, but that it has been revived recently by David Chalmers' work on the 'hard problem of consciousness'. Chalmers also (famously) writes on the problem of Zombies. The idea behind a philosophical Zombie is that it behaves exactly in the same way to external stimuli as a normal human, is made up of exactly the same physical matter, and yet it isn't conscious. If these Zombies are logically possible, Materialism seems to be wrong. Now, you say this is *logically possible*. But why can't the Materialist deny that Zombies might be *metaphysically possible*, and hence in that way deny the possibility of Zombies? Surely metaphysical possibility is more important than logical possibility in this respect?

Dr Philip Goff: Well, I think Chalmers would accept that his work helped revive interest in consciousness, but the problem he was pointing to is very old, perhaps going back to Descartes. A second preface: I don't normally go straight for Zombies when I'm talking to a

general audience. I usually start by talking about the qualitative-quantitative gap; Chalmers usually starts by talking about explanation, and how we want an explanation of consciousness. Zombies only pop up in the more heavy-weight philosophical discussions, but, having said that, I'm happy to answer this, and I like talking about Zombies anyway! I suppose I don't find them that persuasive to a general audience, but your question is a very good one. In *Galileo's Error* I do talk about logical possibility and I put a footnote to say we do get something of a distinction here. So, I guess since Kripke, people have wanted to distinguish between logical or conceptual possibility and metaphysical possibility. The former concerns what we can't rule out by 'armchair' reasoning. The latter concerns possibility in some more robust sense. Some cases where these come apart: could water not be H₂O? Kripke wants to say well that's logically possible (you can't know through reasoning that water is H₂O), but it certainly is metaphysically impossible (because water and H₂O are simply the same thing!). Both Chalmers and I recognise that there are these two different concepts, but we both want to say that these come back together. Chalmers has a very complex way of doing it, mine is a little simpler: when you understand the essential nature of what you're conceiving of, that the essential nature of water is *just* H₂O, then the two senses of possibility come together again. Concerning Zombies, then, whether these two distinct notions of possibility can come apart basically depends on whether we know the essential nature of consciousness. And I argue that we do know, introspectively, what consciousness essentially is. This is getting into the core of the subject now... but let's take the feeling of pain: pain is *essentially* defined by how it feels... of course I know how it feels... therefore I know the essential nature of that pain. I qualify this in all sorts of ways in various papers, but this is the basic idea, and it's the reason, in the case of consciousness, logical and metaphysical reality come together. When we attend to experiences, attend to what it's like to feel them, then I think we hit upon their essential nature. This is the kind of stuff I get into my academic work. I have an academic book *Consciousness and Fundamental Reality* where I get into these heavy-duty issues to do with the connection between logical possibility and metaphysical possibility. I tend to steer totally clear of that in popular work, but I do think that the consciousness debate hangs and falls on that. Can I grasp the essential nature of the pain I'm feeling right now?

Interviewer: This is so interesting because this all touches on threads that run throughout the philosophy course at Durham. We do the philosophy of mind and topics such as introspection and Zombies in the first-year *Knowledge and Reality* course, and then in second year or third year we have the opportunity to study Kripke as part of the *Language, Logic and Reality* course, a course I highly recommend to any first years reading this! I just have one final question. So, I believe your Christian? Is that right?

Dr Philip Goff: Well, sort of! I describe myself as a non-believing Christian...

Interviewer: I was just interested in whether your beliefs concerning religion fed into your antipathy towards Materialism...

Dr Philip Goff: So, I think it's a modern corruption to talk about religion in terms of belief. We tend to talk about how Christians are 'believers' and that they believe that God exists, and Jesus rose from the dead and so on... I think that's a modern mistake, the result of a linguistic change that occurred, a mistranslation. Karen Armstrong, the historian, has written on this. The Greek word 'Pistos' from the new testament that we translate as 'faith' or 'belief' didn't really mean 'belief' in the modern sense; it meant commitment or engagement or having your heart in something. When the bible was first translated, the King James' bible, 'belief' was not a bad translation; it meant something slightly different. Armstrong quotes, for example, Shakespeare writing 'believe not by disdain' as meaning 'don't be committed to your disdain' or "don't have your heart in your disdain'. I think of faith as more of a commitment or engagement than a belief. I'm developing my own view of faith as, sort-of, trusting in a framework for interpreting and acting upon your spiritual experiences. So, I'm actually an atheist with respect to the traditional idea of God; I'm totally persuaded by the problem of evil. But I do have some spiritual convictions. I like the term 'noumenal experiences' for this generic sense that there's a higher reality at the root of things. Those experiences could be delusions, but then, so could any experience! We could all be brains in vats! So, I think all knowledge is rooted in trusting experiences, and I would defend that its rationally acceptable, at the very least, to trust in noumenal experiences. So, ok, where do we go from here? We could just work with this alone, but for me there's something unfulfilling about that. So, I think that's a motivation to turn to a

more full-blown religion, using it as a framework to understand and act upon those noumenal experiences. So, for example, certain forms of Hindu mysticism will tell you that what you're experiencing in those moments is ultimate reality at the core of your being. What you should do is meditate on that and you will come to identify with it. Christianity, on the other hand, might tell you that you're experiencing a loving God, and what you should do is pray and deepen your relationship with it. So, to adopt a religion is to trust one of those frameworks. Now belief requires a lot of evidence. It's hard to see which if any of these religions is true. But all of them work in deepening our relationship with the transcendent and providing spiritual nourishment. So, for example, if someone who is raised a Muslim admits that they don't know whether their religion engenders true beliefs but by engaging with this framework and trusting this framework they find spiritual nourishment, I want to say that's perfectly rationally permissible. When we think about this in terms of belief, then we think 'shit, there isn't enough evidence to believe this!'. But when we think about this in terms of engaging and trusting and working within a framework, then we might start to provide for our need for spiritual nourishment. So, let me come back to your question. I would say two things. Firstly, there is definitely no necessary connection between Panpsychism and spirituality. That's really important, because of the cultural connotations. Panpsychists like Chalmers and Luke Roelofs are total atheists, but, nonetheless, believe in consciousness and want us to fit that into our scientific story. But if, for independent reasons, you are a Panpsychist, then I would say spiritual convictions are more consonant with your view of the world. Suppose, for example, you take mystical experiences seriously and you think that it reveals some higher form of consciousness at the root of all things. If you already think reality, at the fundamental level, is constituted of consciousness, then this isn't so much of a leap as it is for a Materialist.

Do Frequencies Explain Probability? A Critical Assessment of Frequentism.

By Oda Eide

Introduction

According to frequentism, the probability of any given event can be identified with the frequency at which this event occurs. Frequentism can be divided into Finite frequentism and Hypothetical frequentism, none of which are found by this essay to sufficiently explain probabilities. This essay will mainly assess and expand upon the extensive critiques of frequentism as they are presented by Hájek (1997; 2009). It will focus on two main objections to frequentism, namely 1) the reference class problem and 2) the problem of frequencies taking the 'wrong value'. Ultimately, these problems will prove largely unsolvable, rendering frequentism an unsatisfactory account of probability.

Issues of reference class

According to Finite Frequentism (hereby FF), the probability of an attribute A in a finite reference class R is the relative frequency of actual occurrences of A within R. By identifying probability with actual frequencies, FF therefore links probability to real states of affairs. This is often implicitly assumed by statistics and research in general. It also coincides with what many people might assume probability to be. Thus, FF has the strength that it appears intuitively true (La Caze, 2016: 341-2). For instance, as argued by Venn (1876), the probability of being male is nothing but the proportion of male births relative to all births. However, a prominent problem for FF is that it appears unclear exactly what reference class one should put different attributes in when calculating probability. As argued by Hájek (1997: 213-4), no reference class is the canonical one. There will always be multiple possibilities, all of which yield different probabilities. Suppose person A wishes to calculate their probability of dying before turning 80. It appears unclear if A should put themselves in the same reference class as the set of all humans, everyone with the same gender, everyone with the same exercise habits or in a narrower set combining all of these characteristics (ibid.) Supposedly, A would want the class to be sufficiently narrow as to say something

meaningful about themselves, yet broad enough for the frequency to be somewhat accurate. It seems unclear how this balance should be found.

An issue for FF is arguably that the reference class problem allows for mutually exclusive facts to be simultaneously true. Suppose person A is a female who exercises every day. A calculates her probability P of living past 80 using the reference class R_1 of 'all females' and finds that $P=0.6$. Seemingly she can truthfully state S_1 : 'A has a 60% chance of living past 80'. Alternatively, assume she is instead putting herself in the reference class R_2 of 'everyone who exercises every day' and now finds $P=0.85$. Thus, she can truthfully state S_2 : 'A has an 85% chance of living past 80'. It follows that both S_1 and S_2 are both true. This is logically inconsistent as S_1 cannot be true if S_2 is true and S_2 cannot be true if S_1 is true. In response to this, it could be argued that probabilities cannot act as truth-makers and so none of these statements hold any truth-value.¹ This has the drawback that it then remains unexplained why anyone would concern themselves with probabilities. If neither S_1 nor S_2 can be truthfully stated, the debate on how probabilities should be understood appears rather empty. Should probabilities fail to hold any truth-value, this also appears to weaken FF. Part of FF's attractiveness is that it grounds probability in actual state of affairs. Thus, these states of affairs could presumably act together as a truth-maker for probabilistic claims. If this is not the case, it becomes less obvious why probability should be connected to actual frequencies.

In response to the shortcomings of FF, frequentists such as von Mises (1957) have modified frequentism to accommodate these problems, denoting this account 'Hypothetical Frequentism' (HF). On HF, *the probability of an attribute A in a reference class R is the value of the limiting relative frequency of A's within R, if R was infinite* (ibid.: 20) This has the following advantage: suppose person A and person B are competing for the first time and someone asks, 'What is the probability of A beating B in poker?'. Rather than having to include games involving other players than A and B in the reference class, one could imagine that A and B playing an infinite number of games. The probability is then given by the limit this infinite sequence converges to.

¹ A truth-maker is here understood as an entity x which makes a (probabilistic) statement y true iff y is true because x exists.

However, we are concerned with *A's current* chances of beating B, not their chances of beating them after having played an infinite number of times (as they might be better trained, older and/or more exhausted at that time) (La Caze, 2016: 350). Thus, HF must necessarily postulate hypothetical worlds. It seems the infinite sequence must either take place in a world in which A and B never change their level of skill *or* the games must take place simultaneously in separate, infinite possible worlds. In assuming this, HF runs into the aforementioned problem of whether probabilistic claims can hold truth-value, seeing as hypothetical entities appear unfit as truth-makers (Fine, 2018: 556). Facing this problem, the Lewisian view of infinite worlds as concrete entities can be adopted. Then, probability depends on real sequences taking place in other concrete worlds (see Lewis, 1986).

However, one might be apprehensive towards such a drastic ontological expansion, rendering this an unattractive account. Furthermore, since other possible worlds are wholly inaccessible to us, Lewis argues that knowledge of these worlds must be entirely *a priori* (ibid.). Consequently, under this reading of HF, our knowledge of probabilities is also entirely *a priori*. How plausible is this? While one might seem to be able to logically deduct the probability of a head or tail result from a coin-toss, it seems most probabilities are known through empirical observation. Even calculations of the probability of the result of a coin-toss require observations of the uniform density of the coin, the stillness of the air around the coin, a certain manner of flicking the coin which does not bias one side over another. None of this information is *a priori*. If the hypothetical frequentist denies that we can know the value of any probability whose value cannot be known *a priori*, at the least, it seems to allow for a much smaller set of probabilities to be known to us than what we might intuitively assume. This is indubitably a drawback.

A significant problem for HF is therefore it that fails to ground probability in actual reality, which arguably is one of FF's main benefits. By grounding probability in actual reality, however, FF becomes more susceptible to the so-called 'single-case reference class problem' (Hájek, 1997: 218). According to Hájek, for FF to provide an account in which the individual is subject to non-trivial probability, reality must necessarily contain more than one actual individual. Consequently, solipsism cannot be correct on FF. Imagine then a world in which you are in fact the only human alive, for instance after a devastating global disaster. When wanting to calculate your probability for survival, there appears to be no relevant reference class of people to refer to. The probabilities of survival before and during

the disaster are most likely vastly different than the current probability. Consequently, you cannot include past people in the reference class, only yourself. Thus, it seems FF cannot allow for the probability to take an intermediate value, only 1 or 0 depending on whether or not you die. On the contrary, HF can allow for the probability to be intermediate in this scenario.

HF, however, might still face problems concerning the 'single case reference class'. Hájek (2009: 228) argues that this problem persists on HF due to the possible existence of events that necessarily can only happen once. He does, however, refrain from giving examples of what such events might be. Perhaps one could argue that the birth of the universe qualifies. However, a hypothetical frequentist would presumably postulate the existence of multiple hypothetical universes to overcome this obstacle (but again meeting the problem of a drastic ontological commitment). Alternatively, an event that has the property of 'necessarily happening only once across all hypothetical scenarios' might satisfy Hájek's description. Nevertheless, this appears to be a fringe case unconnected to any known phenomena we might wish to calculate the probability of. Moreover, it can be questioned if one can properly conceive of such a property. Indeed, von Mises (1957: 17) holds that to speak of necessarily single-case hypothetical events is mere 'nonsense'. Taking this into consideration, this does not appear to be a strong objection to HF.

This is not to say that Hájek fails to present strong objections to HF. A further issue concerning reference classes is that of probabilities in existential claims. Hájek (2009: 222-3) asks us to consider the claim S3: 'The probability of tachyons existing is 0.1'. On FF, if tachyons do in fact exist then every tachyon has the property of existing. Consequently, the probability is 1. Conversely, if tachyons do not exist, no tachyons have the property of existing and so the probability equals 0 (ibid.).² On HF, this issue can perhaps be avoided by claiming that the true formulation of S3 is 'In 10% of all possible worlds, tachyons exist.' Nonetheless, an issue remains: S3 is concerned with the probability of tachyons existing in *our world*, not in some other possible world. Other possible worlds might have conditions vastly different than ours. Thus, we might wish to exclude them from the reference class.³

² Although the finite frequentist might object that since FF is a fundamentally empiricist account of probability, statements like S3 which cannot be verified through empirical observation cannot (and should not) be analysed within the framework of FF. Thus, the remainder of this discussion focuses on HF.

³ For instance, there might be empty worlds, meaning nothing exists there. Presumably, such conditions are not what one has in mind when uttering S3.

This worry is acknowledged by Tosh (2016: 187), who suggests that the referenced class is narrowed by only including possible worlds which contain counterparts of the person uttering the existential claim.³ Presumably, conditions will then be similar enough for the reference class to have relevance to our world (ibid.). However, this has the drawback that the probability of tachyons existing is dependent on the probability of some arbitrary person existing. Suppose persons A and B both utter S3. Moreover, suppose that A and B are identical, except for the fact that B was conceived via in vitro fertilisation while A was not. They will consider two different reference classes when uttering S3, because A's counterparts will exist in all worlds B's counterparts exist *plus* all worlds in which IVF is not invented. Thus, these reference classes might yield different probabilities. Consequently, Tosh's account has the absurd result that the probability of tachyons existing will depend on the unrelated fact of whether the person uttering S3 was conceived by IVF.

Considering these objections to frequentism, it appears that the problem of properly defining reference classes remains insufficiently resolved. While HF appears to fare better than FF at countering many of these objections, it still faces the problem of probabilistic existential claims (unless one wishes to bite the bullet and claim that the truth-value of such statements simply cannot be determined). In the following section of this essay, I will refrain from discussing FF any further as HF appears to be a more satisfactory account overall.

The problem of frequencies taking the wrong value

The remainder of this essay will discuss several issues facing HF regarding the limit relative frequency taking the seemingly 'wrong' value. I will use the example of a coin toss to demonstrate this, with H and T denoting heads and tails respectively. Firstly, as pointed out by Hájek (2009: 220-1), the limit might not exist. Consider a hypothetical infinite sequence of coin tosses, in which the relative frequency of head to tails oscillates in the following pattern: TH TTTTHH TTTTTTHHHHHH TTTTTTTTTTTHHHHHHHHHHHH... The runs of each side will always be long enough to counterbalance the previous run. Consequently, a limit will never be reached (ibid.).⁴ Hence, it seems one must draw the absurd conclusion that the

³ Tosh specifies that counterparts should be understood as perfect replicas of the actual person, sharing an identical past.

⁴ As the equally long runs of T and H continue to grow, the limit will oscillate between the values 0 and 1, rather than approach a specific number. Thus, the limit does not exist. To illustrate, this could also be

probability of heads/tails simply does not exist. Assuming the coin is fair, it should be $\frac{1}{2}$ and so this cannot be true. One could counter this by agreeing with Reichenbach (1949: 70-2). He holds that we should simply not consider such sequences, seeing it as an axiom of HF that the limit *must* exist. Still, this might be seen as merely avoiding the problem rather than solving it.

Moreover, HF is faced with the issue that even with a fair coin one might toss tails every single time, yielding the following infinite sequence S1: TTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT.... The probability of tails is then 1. If the coin is fair this is clearly incorrect (Hájek, 2009: 220). Still, S1 is evidently a possible sequence. S1 is not less likely than any other sequence, as all possible sequences will have the same probability of being actual. In fact, there will be a possible infinite sequence yielding any probability of heads/tails imaginable (ibid.: 227). In response to these problems, I would like to propose the following solution, although it is admittedly an inconvenient one: Suppose HF is modified so that it is not concerned with a single hypothetical infinite sequence but rather with an infinite sequence of the limits of mutually exclusive infinite sequences (denoting this infinite hypothetical frequentism (IHF)). On IHF, probability is given by the limit that is converged to by an infinite number of limits. These limits belong to mutually exclusive infinite sequences. Hence, the limit of sequence TTTTTTT... will be outweighed by the limit of sequence HHHHHH..., Similarly, any 'inconvenient' sequence such as THHHHH... will be effectively nulled out by its counterpart HTTTTTT... Ultimately, these limits will converge to the limit-value $\frac{1}{2}$.

Nonetheless, IHF faces the objection that it seems absurd that a simple phenomenon like probability should entail such an extraordinary truth-maker. Admittedly, it appears counterintuitive that one should need an 'infinity of infinities' to establish that the probability of tails is $\frac{1}{2}$. For someone adhering to a Lewisian view of concrete possible worlds this would entail a further explosion of ontology.⁵ Furthermore, it requires that the sequences of infinite worlds 'interact' with each other in the sense that they must all be different sequences. This also appears problematic. If one is ready to accept such drawbacks, however, IHF does solve many of the problems facing HF.

replicated with a function on the form $y=\sin(x)$. The limit will oscillate between -1 and 1 as x approaches infinity. Consequently, no limit exists.

⁵ Although a proponent of the Lewisian account might not understand this as an explosion of ontology, seeing as infinity times infinity equals infinity.

So far, this essay has accepted the premise that there can be such a thing as probability taking the 'wrong value'. However, this premise threatens to make frequentism circular (Lindley 1965; Renyi, 1970). If the limit of the sequence HTHTHTHTHT... takes the value $1/3$, how does one know this to be the 'wrong value' without referring back to probability as a concept existing independently of frequencies? Indeed, any account of probability unable to escape circularity appears highly inadequate (Keynes 1921: 52-5). A possible answer is that we observe sequences taking place in the actual world and draw conclusions based on the limits they appear to converge to under ideal conditions. However, consider the aforementioned problem of any infinite sequence having the same probability of being actual. How do we know that our world is not one with an 'outlier' sequence? Take for instance the probability of dying. In our world, we observe a 100% probability that all animals will die at some point. Thus, the infinite sequence in our world is DDDDDDD... Nevertheless, the sequence in other possible worlds might be completely different. The probability of living forever could very well be $1/2$. Although unlikely, it is possible that we inhabit a world exhibiting an extreme sequence of events. Thus, it seems the 'true value' of a probability cannot be inferred simply by observing the actual world.

Hope for frequentism?

Consequently, one might wish to discard frequentism and argue that we infer the true value of a probability through logical deduction rather than through observing actual frequencies. Since a coin has 2 sides, 1 divided by 2 is 0.5. Resultingly, this is the probability of either side facing up. Similarly, it can be inferred that for a hypothetical 64-sided coin the probability of it landing with any one side up is $1/64$ (Hájek, 2002: 3.2). In response to this, it can be objected that one cannot know the probability of tails without actually observing coin tosses. Suppose that after having observed actual coin tosses for a long time, it becomes exceedingly clear that the frequency of heads to tails is much larger than $1/2$. This might, for instance, be because the pattern of the coin makes the tail side heavier, causing it to land on this side more frequently. Having observed this, it seems irrational to continue to hold the initial belief that the probability equals $1/2$. People are often modifying their beliefs given by logical reasoning when presented with conflicting empirical observations. Hence, before one can actually observe the 64-sided coin, the probability of it landing on the n th side is unknown as one is unaware of any factors that might make this occurrence

disproportionately likely. Hence, it appears that what is understood as the right and wrong values of a probability is dependent on actual frequencies.

This conclusion might seem like an argument for frequentism, as it appears to argue that frequencies are crucial in determining probabilities. However, it should be clarified that this is not necessarily the case. Rather, it might merely demonstrate how humans' limited grasp on probability (not actual probability) depends on frequencies. For instance, suppose a person A who is perfectly ambidextrous. While she might find it equally comfortable to write with either hand, she writes only with her right hand because she believes this to be the socially acceptable thing to do with other people around. Moreover, A lives in a small apartment shared with 10 other people and works in an open-plan office, meaning she never writes without other people being present. Some person B observing the actual frequency of left to right hand concludes that she writes with her right hand with a probability of 1. If A is asked, however, she might answer that the probability is $\frac{1}{2}$ since she is equally happy doing both. The probability cannot be 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ simultaneously.

Consequently, one of them must be wrong. On frequentism, B appears to be correct. Nevertheless, it seems somewhat absurd to conclude that some arbitrary person knows better than A what the probability of A using her right hand is. This highlights how frequencies can be *context-sensitive* in ways probabilities do not appear to be. Thus, frequencies might fail equal actual probability, rather equalling only what people believe them to be given the restrictions of their context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay has argued that frequentism fails to sufficiently explain probabilities. While the reference class problem appears to be largely solved by adhering to HF rather than FF, HF still displays significant weaknesses. Although a number of problems concerning the limit relative frequency taking the 'wrong' value can be solved by adopting IHF, this account involves several premises which are highly objectionable. Moreover, both HF and IFH are subject to the problem of circularity. Thus, no frequentist account has been shown to provide a fully satisfactory explanation of probability.

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Rejecting Lewis' Counterparts

By Lizzy Merrall

Introduction

This essay will argue that Lewis's counterpart theory is an unacceptable feature of modal realism because it fails to explain why we should be personally concerned with modal facts about our counterparts. To defend this position, I will first outline Lewis's modal realism and counterpart theory. I will then introduce Kripke's argument from concern, which argues that we are personally concerned with modal facts about ourselves rather than modal facts about our counterparts. My argument against this position is two-fold: firstly, I will introduce my *epistemological claim* which raises concerns about establishing counterpart-similarity. After showing that this claim ultimately fails, I will then introduce an argument raised by Miller which suggests that we care about our counterparts for *comparative* reasons. However, I hope to show that this response is flawed through the second part of my argument, the *psychological claim*, which raises doubts about whether counterparts feature in our natural intuitions about modal psychology. Altogether, this leads me to conclude that counterpart theory is an unacceptable feature of modal realism.

The egocentric claim

Before I begin, I will defend my assumption that for counterpart theory to be acceptable it must explain why we should care about our counterparts. The egocentric claim that we care about what happens to *us* – and not necessarily someone similar to us – is powerful. One reason to accept this assumption is that it is grounded in empirical evidence, as scientists have found that unconscious psychological mechanisms cause us to be 'egocentrically biased' and are so pervasive that they lead us to conclude that 'self-interested outcomes are not only desirable but morally justifiable' (Epley & Caruso, 2004, p. 171). We might arrive at this belief because we are detached from the experiences of others; whilst our perspective of the world is felt directly, the experiences of others and our counterparts in a different possible world 'must be inferred' because we are not numerically identical to them and so do not have access to their memories or thoughts (Epley & Caruso, 2004, p. 173). Although there is no general scientific consensus on where humans lie on the 'selfish-selfless spectrum', my opponents

seem to share my assumption that humans are egocentrically motivated (Sonne & Gash, 2018, p.3).

For example, Miller, a defender of counterpart theory, accepts this 'cynical' view of human nature, agreeing that our feelings about what happen to us 'are more intense and personal than our feelings about our counterparts' (Miller, 1992, p. 134, 137). The natural plausibility of this assumption also makes the rewards higher for the counterpart theorist if they succeed in spite of this, because if we began under the assumption that humans were naturally altruistic, there would hardly be a basis for discussion as we could argue that we care about our counterparts because we are naturally altruistic. For this reason, the counterpart theorist should bear the burden of proof and show us that we are not only personally concerned with modal facts about ourselves, but with modal facts about our respective counterparts. If the counterpart theorist successfully meets this criterion, then I will accept that counterpart theory is an acceptable feature of modal realism.

Counterpart theory and modal realism

Modal realism argues that possible worlds actually exist but are spatiotemporally isolated from one another. By this, Lewis means that possible worlds have no influence over each other and do not overlap, so we cannot visit another possible world from our own world (1986, p.2). This means that knowledge about these possible worlds is purely *a priori*, because we can't learn about them through empirical investigation. Nevertheless, Lewis maintains that there are concrete possible worlds representing 'every way that a world could possibly be' – including a possible world where "Humphrey" wins the election (1986, p.2). However, whilst modal realism argues that there are an infinite number of concrete possible worlds, counterpart theory specifies that 'each object is found in only one possible world' – even if there seems to be a 'virtually indistinguishable' copy of Humphrey in another world, these two "Humphreys" are non-identical (Nolan, 2005, p. 68).

Counterpart theory's general idea is that provided a person in a possible world is sufficiently similar to Humphrey, by holding 'certain similarity relations', that person becomes a *counterpart* of Humphrey (Divers, 2002, p. 122; Lewis, 1986, p. 88). Counterparts are meant to be useful in modal discussions, because they tell us that for 'something to be possible for

[Humphrey] is for it to happen to one of [his] counterparts', so it is possible that Humphrey won the election if one of his counterparts has won the election (Nolan, 2005. P. 68). However, the idea that possibilities about Person X are made true by events that happen to someone else, like Person Y, has led to much criticism. Lewis's theory has even led philosophers to reject talk of possible worlds altogether, since it requires us to analyse '*de re* modal facts about [people like] Humphrey in terms of possibilities involving someone other than Humphrey' (Sider, 1999, p. 290). The issue here is that it isn't clear why we should be personally concerned with Person Y's experiences when we are fundamentally concerned with Person X. This problem has been described by Jubien as a 'fallacy of reference' and is what we are concerned with when we examine Kripke's argument from concern (Jubien, 1993, p. 23).

Argument from concern

According to our world, Hubert Humphrey was a presidential candidate who lost the 1968 US election. Under Lewis's theory however, Humphrey wins the election *in absentia* through counterparts in other possible worlds (Lewis, 1986, p. 192). Consequently, when we make the claim that Humphrey might have won the election, Lewis agrees that he might have, because there is a possible world in which Humphrey's counterpart wins the election. However, as explained above, 'we are not talking about something that might have happened to *Humphrey* but to someone else, a "counterpart"' and this raises the issue that we might not actually care about what happens to our *counterparts*, but what happens to *us*' (Kripke, 1980, p. 45). As Kripke aptly puts it, 'Humphrey could not care less whether someone *else*, no matter how much resembling him, would have been victorious in another possible world' (Kripke, 1980, p. 45). This argument from concern leads to a contradiction in Lewis's argument and is outlined as follows:

- '(1) Modal facts are facts about counterparts.
- (2) We are personally concerned with modal facts
- (3) We are not personally concerned with facts about counterparts' (Miller, 1992, p. 134).

For the purposes of this essay, I will only be focusing on premise (3), which I split into two distinct interpretations:

1. *Epistemological claim*: we are not personally concerned with modal facts about our counterparts, because we do not know if they are sufficiently similar to us.
2. *Psychological claim*: we are not personally concerned with modal facts about our counterparts, because counterparts don't feature in our natural intuitions about modal psychology.

I will begin by addressing the *epistemological claim* first.

Argument from concern: assessing the epistemological claim

In order to avoid the contradiction outlined earlier and to maintain counterpart theory, the counterpart theorist must address the objection presented by the *epistemological claim*. To overcome the *epistemological claim*, it might be reasonable for critics to demand that Lewis provide a system for determining whether counterparts are sufficiently similar to us. However, Lewis provides no such account of similarity and I will argue that Lewis has good justification to demand that we should, ourselves, determine the criteria for sufficient counterpart-similarity; I submit that the *epistemological claim* actually fails.

One reason why we might choose to determine counterpart-similarity ourselves is grounded in the fact that knowledge about Lewis's possible worlds is *a priori*. This means that we are reliant on qualitative descriptions about our counterparts when we determine similarity, but descriptions of this kind can be vague; for example, we might describe Humphrey's counterpart as having brown hair and a receding hairline, but this is ambiguous and applies to many people. Therefore, 'the counterpart relation must be established in terms of qualitative resemblance' but with detailed descriptions that can accurately pick out or identify a counterpart in another possible world (Kripke, 1980, p. 45). If we determine similarity ourselves, we can decide whether descriptions of our counterparts are too vague for us to establish sufficient similarity and thus require extra detail.

This leads me to another reason why we should accept Lewis's suggestion to determine counterpart-similarity ourselves; people will have different opinions about the *content* of these descriptions – what, exactly, are the necessary and sufficient conditions for counterpart-similarity? For example, I might argue that my counterpart should be described as having the same upbringing as me because this played a large role in my personal

development. However, someone else with a more flexible understanding of similarity might argue that their counterpart only needs to look like them. Whilst the critic might argue that these differences in opinion are exactly why we need a universal counterpart test, I believe that this diversity in opinion actually lends itself to Lewis's theory.

As Divers explains, the 'counterpart relation is the resultant of similarities (and dissimilarities) in various aspects, where similarity in a given respect is a matter of degree ... [and] may be differently weighted' (2002, p. 122). Although we might think a counterpart test is ideal for determining counterpart similarity (and, therefore, whether or not we care for our counterparts), Lewis is right to avoid it. If Lewis were to stipulate a test of this kind, it would only lead to widespread disagreement because of people's differences in opinion. By allowing for some ambiguity in counterpart similarity, we accept that 'people have ... different intuitions about what is essential, and ... [avoid] arguments between different sides [which] so often gets nowhere.' (Nolan, 2005, P. 69). Lewis recognises that the relative importance of similarities will 'differ from one person to another, or differ from one occasion to another, or are indeterminate even for a single person on a single occasion, so far is comparative similarity indeterminate' (1973, p. 91). Consequently, the counterpart critic must accept that their *epistemological claim* falls short; we know if counterparts are sufficiently similar to us or not because we set the criteria for similarity ourselves. More importantly though, the counterpart critic must now ensure their *psychological claim* is a well-grounded and powerful objection to counterpart theory, as it must overcome counterpart theory's attractive 'flexibility in ... judgements about essences' which allow us to consider how 'different sorts of things are essential to a given object' and that 'different sorts of similarity are relevant in different contexts' (Nolan, 2005, P. 69).

Argument from concern: assessing the psychological claim

I will now address the *psychological claim* that we are not personally concerned with modal facts about our counterparts, because counterparts don't feature in our natural intuitions about modal psychology. To reiterate, the idea behind this claim is that we are egocentrically motivated and only care about what happens (or might happen) to *us*. As illustrated by Kripke's objection, 'Humphrey is egoconcerned by his belief that he might have won but is not ... egoconcerned by learning of ... the fact ... that someone else [his counterpart] won a

similar contest' because our natural intuitions about modal psychology involve *us*, not our counterparts (Divers, 2002, p. 133).

First, we might consider the differences between concern for ourselves and concern for our counterparts. Miller's main argument here is that our feelings about counterfactuals are 'more intense and personal' and could 'be the reverse of our feelings about counterparts', whereas feelings about our counterparts are comparative and competitive (1992, p. 134). For example, Humphrey might feel very upset that he lost the election, but at the same time feel a bit happy for his counterpart who happened to win the election. Here, we can see that Humphrey's feelings towards his own position are intensely negative, but his feelings towards his winning counterpart are mildly positive. From this, we might conclude that we are not personally concerned with facts about our counterparts, because our concern for them is less intense than and are the reverse of our own feelings. However, according to Miller, this would misrepresent 'both the analysis of counterfactuals and our feelings about counterparts' because we need to be more specific about what personal concern consists of here (1992, p. 135).

Instead, Miller can respond to the *psychological claim* by arguing that we are 'personally concerned with relational facts about others, including counterparts, when we are the other term of the relation' or, in other words, that comparisons with our counterparts exist in our modal psychology for *competitive* reasons (1992, p. 135). The idea that 'selfish personal concerns are almost never solipsistic' makes intuitive sense – we constantly compare ourselves to others, so it is reasonable to argue that we are personally concerned with our counterparts for comparative purposes (Miller, 1992, p. 133). For example, many parents who can afford to will send their children to fee-paying schools which are often better off than state schools in terms of resources and facilities. The reason for this is that education is a 'positional good'; if your child has a better education, it makes them happier and better off, but it makes someone else's life worse off (Brighouse & Swift, 2006, p. 474). In a similar vein, counterpart theorists can argue that 'the better the possibility looks the worst the actuality looks and vice versa' (Miller, 1992, p. 137). Whilst a student might view their classmates as competitors for top grades, we might also view our counterparts as 'rivals not friends' for the

best possible life (Miller, 1992, p. 136). Under this view, the personal concern we have for our counterparts is 'not brotherly affection ... it is simple jealousy' (Miller, 1992, p. 136).

Miller justifies this by arguing that our main concern with counterfactuals lies not 'directly with the possibility described but rather with the comparison between our actual lives and that possible state of affairs' (Miller, 1992, p. 137). For example, according to Miller, when we consider the modal fact that Humphrey might have won the election, Humphrey's motivation behind asking this question is to find out whether he has 'fare[d] worse', as his ego-centric concern is to 'strive to be the happiest ... in all the worlds' (1992, p. 136). Consequently, Miller responds to the *psychological claim* by arguing that counterpart comparisons feature in our modal psychology for *competitive* reasons. However, I will now argue that Miller fails to adequately respond to the *psychological claim*, because we are naturally inclined to use our *worldmates* for comparisons and not our counterparts. I will defend this belief by arguing that worldmates are more likely to feature in our modal psychology because worldmates are more relevant to us; we want to be the best in *this* possible world and our competitors in this world are our worldmates.

Our worldmates are our competitors because 'we all have egoconcerns ... [about] individuals who are the same as us in respect of family membership, or occupation, or age ... etc.' leading us to make worldmate comparisons, like 'I am egoconcerned whether my colleagues are being paid more or less than I am being paid' (Drivers, 2002, p. 137). Rather than comparing ourselves to a counterpart, whose world we cannot actually empirically investigate or prove exists, we can look to compare ourselves to our worldmates. This makes intuitive sense, because we tend to think about having the best possible life in *this* world; unlike what Miller claims, it hardly matters to us that we should have the best possible life in *all* worlds. This position becomes clearer when we apply it to an analogy about competitive sporting events like the Olympics. Consider the question, what should a 100m race competitor be personally concerned with: whether one of the other 100m runners wins his race, or with who wins the long jump? Our intuitive response here is to say that the runner should only care about or compare himself to the other runners competing with him in his race. Analogously, we should only compare ourselves to our worldmates who compete with us in the *same* world, not our counterparts who compete in a different world altogether. This leads me to conclude that we

are not personally concerned with counterparts because they do not feature in our modal psychology – even for comparative reasons. If we want to make comparisons, worldmates would be more relevant, leading me to affirm the psychological claim. For this reason, counterpart theory is an unacceptable feature of modal realism because it fails to show why we should be personally concerned with counterparts and, with my claim affirmed, the contradiction still stands.

A counterpart theorist will have to respond to this objection by explaining *why* counterparts are more useful or more relevant than worldmates for comparative purposes. The counterpart theorist might achieve this by restricting the kinds of counterparts that should be used for comparisons. For example, the counterpart theorist might suggest that we should only make comparisons with counterparts who have lived the exact same life as us, up until the point of a new decision. To analogise, if you're deciding whether to leave your job or not, it might be useful to make comparisons with counterparts who have led the *exact same life up until that decision* and see how their choice impacted their lives. This makes counterpart theory explanatorily useful because, if most of your counterparts who left the job ended up in poverty, then it is less likely that you will make the same decision to leave your job (and you can explain that choice in virtue of your counterparts). However, the disadvantage of taking this response is that the counterpart theorist must concede that people no longer have control over determining counterpart similarity; everyone must accept that you can only make comparisons with counterparts who have led the exact same life as you in every respect, up until a new decision. This is something the counterpart theorist might not be willing to accept, but I simply want to raise a potential avenue a counterpart theorist might take in response to my position.

Conclusion

To summarise, the *epistemological claim*, that we don't know if our counterparts are sufficiently similar to us, was defeated by the fact that we determine the criteria for counterpart similarity ourselves. However, I then introduced the *psychological claim* that we are not personally concerned with modal facts about our counterparts, because they don't feature in our natural intuitions about modal psychology. Although Miller argues that we care about our counterparts for comparative purposes, I showed that we are actually naturally

inclined to use our worldmates for comparisons. I justified this move by explaining how worldmates are more relevant as competitors, because they are in the *same* world as us; the only world that we can empirically investigate and are concerned with being the “best” in. Consequently, because the counterpart theorist has failed to establish why we should be personally concerned with counterparts, due to the contradiction, I conclude that counterpart theory is an unacceptable feature of modal realism.

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