

the Denial the denial of the existence of consciousness or (as I will call it) experience

'experience' use 'experience' to mean what people usually mean by 'consciousness' ('what-it's-likeness')

we know with certainty that experience exists

Deniers: all philosophical behaviourists, all full-on functionalists, some followers of Wittgenstein, Dennett, Farrell, Feyerabend, Lewis, Rey, Rorty, many other covert operatives

Cicero 44BCE 'there is no statement so absurd that no philosopher will make it' (*De divinatione* 58.119)

Kahneman 2011 'we know that people can maintain an unshakable faith in any proposition, however absurd, when they are sustained by a community of like-minded believers' (217)

Bacon 1620 'once the human mind has favoured certain views (whether because they're generally accepted and believed, or because it finds them attractive), it pulls everything else into agreement with and support for them. Should they be outweighed by more powerful countervailing considerations, it either fails to notice these, or scorns them, or makes fine distinctions in order to neutralize and so reject them ... thereby preserving untouched the authority of its previous position'. (*Novum Organum* §1.46)

two leading mistakes about behaviourism and about materialism

real realism about experience = to take experience considered as subjective phenomenon (colour-experience, taste-experience, pain) to be *exactly what one took it to be before one did any philosophy*

Murdoch 1964 'philosophy is often a matter of finding a suitable context in which to say the obvious' (33)

James 1890 'as a psychic existent *feels*, so it must *be*' (*The Principles of Psychology* 1.162)

real materialists Democritus, Hobbes, Toland, Collins, La Mettrie, Priestley, Helmholtz, Darwin, Du Bois-Reymond, Haeckel, Nietzsche, Feigl, Maxwell, Nagel, Searle, Kripke, Lockwood, McGinn, Parfit, a host of others (*all materialists before the 1920s*)

real materialists can't use the word 'physical' as a term that stands opposed to the term 'mental' or 'experiential'

Russell 1956: 'we know nothing about the intrinsic quality *of physical events* except *when these are mental events that we directly experience*' (153; my emphasis)

'physical': doesn't mean or imply 'non-mental' or 'non-experiential'

'physicSal' physicSal terms = terms used in physics

Herbert Feigl 1967: 'more strongly than ever before, I am convinced that it is primarily the concept of the "physical" that requires reinterpretation and reconstruction' (1967: 142)

Grover Maxwell 1978 '*nonmaterialist physicalism* ... is nonmaterialist in that it does not attempt to eliminate or in any way deemphasize the importance of the "truly mental". On the

contrary, it accords central roles to *consciousness*, "private experience", subjectivity, "raw feels", "what it's like to be something", thoughts, pains, feelings, emotions, etc., as we *live* through them in all of their qualitative richness' (1978: 365)

real materialist → *serious* materialist → *minimally realistic* materialist → *real* realist about experience

Darwin 1838 'Why is thought [i.e. experience], being a secretion of brain, more wonderful than gravity, a property of matter?' (*Notebook C 271*)

Cabanis 1802 'in order to form a just idea of the operations which give rise to thought, one must consider the brain as an organ specifically dedicated to producing it, just as the stomach and intestines are dedicated to digestion [and] the liver to filtering bile'

behaviourism *methodological* behaviourism (good idea!) ... *philosophical* behaviourism (bad!)
logical behaviourism (also bad)

'eliminativism' denial of the existence of experience

'reductive materialism' ... is really eliminativist

to looking-glass a term: to use a word in such a way that whatever one means by it, it excludes what the word actually means

the B-Denial

Broad 1925 'Reductive Materialism ... and strict Behaviourism ... are instances of the numerous class of theories which are so preposterously silly that only very learned men could have thought of them. I may be accused of breaking a butterfly on a wheel in this discussion of Behaviourism. But it is important to remember that a theory which is in fact absurd may be accepted by the simple-minded because it is put forward in highly technical terms by learned persons who are themselves too confused to know exactly what they mean'

Boring 1948: experience or 'consciousness is what you experience immediately' (1948: 6).

Farrell 1950

- [Boring's claim above is] a 'comical and pathogenic remark' (189)
- 'it is quite possible that the notion of "experience" will be generally discarded as delusive' (195)
- it is only by 'restricting the use of the word "experience" to "raw feels" [that we can] go on defending the view that "experience" and "behaviour" are not identical; and this line of defence is hopeless' (194)
- 'the notion of "experience" can be shown to resemble an occult notion like "witchcraft" in a primitive community that is in the process of being acculturated to the West' (195) .. science 'is getting to the brink of rejecting [experience] ... as "unreal" or "non-existent"' (194–195)

naturalism accept materialism: everything that concretely exists is wholly physical

experience like ours wholly a matter of neural goings-on in the brain .. beyond reasonable doubt

the M-Denial materialism rules out experience/consciousness

the N-Denial naturalism rules out experience/consciousness

a line of thought

[0] naturalism = materialism = physicalism is true

[1] experience is a wholly natural phenomenon (yes)

[2] experience is a wholly natural phenomenon whose existence is certain (yes)

[3] experience is a wholly natural phenomenon with whose nature we are directly acquainted,
at

least in certain fundamental respects (yes)

the false naturalists now say:

*[4] experience can't possibly be wholly physical (they agree with Descartes!) →

*[5] experience doesn't really exist (M-Denial, N-Denial)

*[6] the existence of experience is incompatible with the findings of natural science (in
particular
physics)

*[7] we have got the nature of the physical pretty much taped, at least in certain very
fundamental
respects

*[8] we know enough about the physical to be certain [4] that experience can't be physical

Lewis 1994 'remember that the physical nature of ordinary matter under mild conditions is very well understood' (412)

Lewis 1995 'the most formidable opposition to any form of mind-body identity comes from the friends of qualia' (106)

Maxwell 1978 'there is a widespread tendency to identify the mind-body identity thesis with materialism. To do so, however, is to miss the point *entirely* of any genuine mind-brain identity claim. Materialism, *as it is typically proposed and defended*, seeks to eliminate the *genuinely mental* realm, to deny that genuinely mental events exist' (365; second emphasis mine)

Lockwood 2003 'on the assumption that some form of materialism is .. true, we have only to introspect in order to recognize that our present understanding of matter is itself radically deficient' (447)

the F-Denial ('functionalism' based denial)

functionalism in the philosophy of mind = one can capture the whole nature of an experiential state like e.g. pain by analysing it as a certain sort of functional state, i.e. a state with certain sorts of typical causes and certain sorts of typical behavioural effects (on this view, briefly, creatures that have no experience—philosophical 'zombies'—can feel pain)

the silence of physics

Eddington 1928 'what knowledge have we of the nature of atoms [e.g.] that renders it at all

incongruous that they should constitute a thinking [experiencing] object?' Answer: none

Eddington 1928 panpsychist proposal: 'it seems rather silly to prefer to attach .. thought [experience or consciousness] to something of a so-called 'concrete' nature inconsistent with thought, and then to wonder where the thought [experience] comes from' (257–60)

Dennett 1991 proposes to explain 'every ... feature of human consciousness within the framework of contemporary physical science' (40)

Russell 1927 we are 'guilty, unconsciously and in spite of explicit disavowals, of a *confusion in [our] imaginative picture*' of reality (382)

two more motivations for the Denial

[1] 'problem of mental causation'

there is mental causation .. how? we don't know .. this is a fundamental part of our ignorance of the physical

[2] commitment to the non-experiential

two positions

'[NE]': basic intrinsic nature of the physical is non-experiential

'[E]': basic intrinsic nature of the physical is experiential (panpsychist proposal)

we are deeply attached to [NE]

famously invalid move from $[P \rightarrow Q]$ to $[\text{not } P \rightarrow \text{not } Q]$

in this particular case: move from

'if it behaves in this sort of way then it is or may be an experiential being'

to

'if it doesn't behave in this sort of way then it's not an experiential being'

what evidence is there for the existence of non-experiential reality? zero

radical emergence If [NE] is true, there must be radical emergence, i.e. emergence of the experiential from the wholly and utterly non-experiential

many of us have got accustomed to this idea, but it's plausible that

natura non facit saltum (nature doesn't make radical ontological jumps)

James 1890 *If evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some shape must have been present at the very origin of things.* Accordingly we find that the more clear-sighted evolutionary philosophers are beginning to posit it there. ... The fact is that discontinuity comes in if a new nature comes in at all. The *quantity* of the latter is quite immaterial. The girl in 'Midshipman Easy' could not excuse the illegitimacy of her child by saying, 'it was a very small one.' And Consciousness, however small, is an illegitimate birth in any philosophy that starts without it, and yet professes to explain all facts by continuous evolution (149)