

# 11. IN WHAT SENSE IS CONSCIOUSNESS A PROPERTY?

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## Introduction

WHEN PHILOSOPHERS of mind talk about properties, they often have in mind two kinds of properties, namely, *mental properties* (such as being in pain) and *physical properties* (such as electrochemical processes in the brain). It has been said that both mental and physical properties are related to *consciousness*. Consciousness remains one of the hardest mental phenomena to pin down precisely. Yet consciousness is an extremely familiar mental phenomenon, given that we all know directly what it is like to be conscious. For example, we have an immediate awareness of sensations caused by external objects such as the trees in our backyard, the cars we see on the freeway, and the like. Similarly, we have an immediate awareness of bodily sensations that are caused internally, say by an annoying headache that bothers some of us when we forget to stop by Starbucks for our morning coffee! We also introspect most (if not all) of the thoughts that run through our minds. We routinely form beliefs about various sorts of things we encounter in our lives. For the most part, we are capable of identifying and fulfilling our desires. As free agents, we are also capable of making personal decisions.<sup>1</sup>

The bottom line is that such mental activities are linked to consciousness. That is, engaging in such mental activities strongly presupposes consciousness. We don't attribute such mental activities to a person who is deemed to have completely lost consciousness, and most certainly, we don't attribute such mental activities to a dead person, death involving a complete cessation of conscious experience(s).

But what is consciousness? This is a million-dollar question. One response to the question is that consciousness is a property. But what sort of property is it? As we shall see, the notion of "property" raises complex and difficult metaphysical issues which have direct implications for our analysis of the nature of consciousness. Therefore, anyone who proposes that consciousness is a property must answer the central question, "In what sense is consciousness a property (assuming that it is)?" Let us call this question the *propertyhoodness of consciousness question* (PCQ).

In dealing with the PCQ, it is customary for consciousness theorists to consider the kinds of first-order subjective experiences mentioned above (e.g., immediate awareness

of pain sensations). There is nothing wrong with considering first-order subjective experiences. However, if we want to give an account of the nature of consciousness that is as precise and informative as possible, a mere first-order-experience-based analysis of consciousness would be inadequate. So we need to adopt a second-order analysis of the first-order subjective features attributed to consciousness.<sup>2</sup> An example of a second-order analysis of the first-order subjective experience, say a sensation of tooth pain, would be an analysis of the nature of pain itself. That is, it would attempt to figure out what makes a pain what it is. But such a strategy has not received the attention it deserves in the relevant literature on consciousness studies. Even when traces of it are found, discussions employing it tend to be very obscure.

If consciousness is a property, then, it does not seem to be one in the sense that, say, redness or brownness or whiteness is a property. To show the difference, we need to locate the first-order discussions on consciousness within the framework of the general metaphysical account of properties. In doing so, we will be able to give the second-order analysis of the first-order accounts of the nature of consciousness. The advantage of adopting such a strategy is that it gives us the conceptual resources we need to answer the PCQ as precisely and informatively as possible.

We need to keep in mind that discussions related to the notion of property are by no means exclusive to the field of philosophy. Such discussions figure equally in non-philosophical fields such as physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, and theology. For example, physics informs us that electrons have mass, charge (negative), and spin. Chemistry informs us that chemical elements such as oxygen and carbon are distinguished from each other by their *atomic number* and *atomic mass*.<sup>3</sup> Biology informs us that phenomena such as reproduction, metabolism,

autonomy, organized complexity, growth, and development mark out living things from non-living things. Mathematics informs us that an equilateral triangle is a geometrical figure with three sides that have equal lengths and equal interior angles. Christian theology informs us that God is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. In each of such cases, we are being told about the properties of the things in question, namely electrons, chemical elements, living things vs. non-living things, an equilateral triangle, and the Christian God.

Progress in figuring out what the things we investigate are like depends to a great extent on our knowledge of what the properties of the things in question are like. In this regard, discussions of the metaphysics of “properties” have great significance even for non-philosophical fields. A philosophical account of properties will help us unpack the underlying ontological nature of the properties of the things that the first-order disciplines such as physics and biology study or investigate. Of course, it could be said that the first-order disciplines can carry out their investigation of the nature of reality (e.g., the external world) without paying attention to the second-order philosophical questions. However, in such cases, they will end up engaging in only a partial investigation of the things in question. This point is well expressed by a philosopher of physics, Tim Maudlin.<sup>4</sup> In his *Philosophy of Physics: Space and Time*, Maudlin remarks that physics proper (i.e., a first-order discipline) can study such things as heat, space, time, and matter without ever focusing on what their *nature* is. Maudlin claims that the focus of contemporary physics education is on learning how to solve equations. Its goal is to find practical answers to the first-order questions or issues. But if we want to have a deeper grasp of the ontological underpinning of the things we investigate, the second-order, philosophical analysis

of questions and assumptions that arise in any first-order discipline will be non-negotiable.

Unfortunately, many people in academia often lose sight of this important point. For example, it is not uncommon to hear in academic circles people claiming that all that we need to secure a grip on the nature of reality is securing empirical or quantifiable results. Nothing could be further from the truth. As Maudlin's remarks above remind us, empirical results alone do not give us a complete knowledge or picture of the nature of reality. For any given first-order discipline *P*, there is the philosophy of that *P*. Here we can replace the variable *P* with any first-order discipline, e.g., biology. In this case, we can state the point as follows: *for the first order discipline of biology, it is the case that there is the philosophy of biology.* What this means is that biology cannot exist without making philosophical assumptions in regard to the objects of its own investigations.

For example, when scientists in general and biologists in particular talk about what life is, they don't attempt to define it. Rather what they do is describe the characteristics of life, such as metabolism, reproduction, and complexity.<sup>5</sup> But listing the characteristics of life is not the same thing as answering the philosophical question of what life is. So in order to make progress in understanding the nature of life, both empirical (scientific) and non-empirical (philosophical) domains of human inquiry must come together. The same thing is true of all other first-order disciplines. If I am right about this, then *philosophy*, as the second-order discipline, cannot be shut out from making its presence felt in any first-order discipline of human inquiry.

In this chapter, I will advance my discussion of the propertyhood of consciousness in light of some influential philosophical theories of properties. My goal in doing so is to shed some light on the nature of consciousness. The discussion

advanced in this chapter will, I hope, give an important philosophical foundation for those who work on the science of consciousness.

I will begin my discussion by framing and locating the PCQ (the propertyhoodness of consciousness question) within the broader contemporary debates on the nature of mental properties. Following this, my discussion will proceed in five stages. In stage one, I will present a brief exposition of some of the dominant and representative views of the metaphysics of properties such as *Platonic universals*, *Aristotelian universals*, and *Nominalism*. In stage two, I will present the analysis of consciousness taken as a property within the framework of the theories of properties discussed in stage one. Ultimately, I will find these theories of properties wanting in terms of unpacking the true nature of consciousness. In stage three, I will discuss the location problem concerning the PCQ. In stage four, I will present an alternative model of consciousness called *the bearer-dependent model of consciousness*. I will develop this model of consciousness against the backdrop of the discussions advanced in stages one, two, and three. Finally, in stage five, I will discuss why the bearer-dependent model of consciousness provides us with an excellent conceptual framework to account for the co-emergence of consciousness and its bearer on the one hand and the sense in which consciousness can be said to be a property on the other.

## 1. Framing and Locating the PCQ

WE CAN think of at least four claims that underlie the various answers the philosophers of mind have proposed concerning the nature of mental properties. Here are the four claims I have in mind:<sup>6</sup>

- a. *The ontological thesis*: mental and physical properties are ontologically distinct.

- b. *The conceptual thesis*: mental and physical properties are only conceptually distinct.
- c. *The identity thesis*: mental and physical properties are identical.
- d. *The eliminativist thesis*: mental properties are not real.

In its modern form, the *ontological thesis* has its roots in Rene Descartes's view of *substance dualism*. In this view, a mental property such as *being in pain* is ontologically distinct from any physical property, such as being extended in space or neuronal firings in the brain. Descartes also made a corresponding distinction between an immaterial substance (self/soul) and a material substance (brain/body). For Descartes, an immaterial substance is the bearer of mental properties whereas a material substance is the bearer of physical properties. For Descartes, these distinctions are *real*. That is, they are not merely conceptual. Consequently, for Descartes, these distinctions have the utmost ontological significance in the sense of carving human nature at its joints.<sup>7</sup>

Most contemporary philosophers of mind (along with most cognitive neuroscientists and psychologists) do not embrace the ontological thesis.<sup>8</sup> Instead, they defend some form of (b), (c), or (d). I will discuss each of these in turn.

Central to thesis (b), the *conceptual thesis*, is the claim that mental properties and physical properties differ from each other only conceptually. That is, in describing properties as being "mental" and "physical," it is not implied that there are two ontologically distinct species of properties. Rather, what we have is a single physical property under two different descriptions. A prominent physicalist philosopher of mind, David Papineau, calls the defenders of thesis (b) "conceptual dualists." At the ontological level, Papineau claims that conceptualist

dualists, in endorsing only physical properties, are thoroughgoing monists.<sup>9</sup>

But some defenders of the conceptual thesis are monists with a twist, i.e., *neutral monists*. Neutral monism comes in various forms.<sup>10</sup> Central to this view is the idea that properties are neither *physical* nor *mental*. Proponents of neutral monism argue that there is no *real* ontological distinction between mental properties and physical properties. In light of this, some neutral monists argue that those who embrace the ontological thesis [(a) above], lack an adequate conception of the nature of properties. In this regard, a notable philosopher of mind, John Heil, claims that properties are best understood as *powerful qualities*.<sup>11</sup> That is, for Heil, a given property can be conceived as a quality or as a power. Heil argues that physical properties appear to be powers, not qualities, whereas mental properties appear to be qualities, not powers. Heil illustrates the notion of properties as powerful qualities by referring to the sphericity of tomatoes. Sphericity is the quality that a tomato has that gives a tomato the power to roll across a flat surface. But for Heil, the mental-physical property distinction is nothing more than considering a single property in two different ways.<sup>12</sup>

If, following (b), the mental-physical distinction is only conceptual, then the properties in question must be identical in the strict numerical sense. This is what the *identity thesis* (c) seems to entail. The sense of a strict identity implied by (c) is said to be well captured via the familiar Leibniz's Law of the *indiscernibility of identicals*, according to which for all  $x$  and for all  $y$ , if  $x$  is identical to  $y$  then for any property  $P$ ,  $x$  has  $P$  if and only if  $y$  has  $P$ . This means that whatever features are said to be true of mental properties are also said to be true of physical properties and vice versa. For example, such a strict identity, according to some, underlies the

mind-body identity theory.<sup>13</sup> Such a strict identity is also said to be necessary to establish the causal closure of the physical domain.<sup>14</sup> This is the claim according to which, for every physical event *E* there is a sufficient physical cause *C* such that no non-physical cause can bring about a physical effect.

Yet identifying mental properties with physical properties in such a way continues to be elusive, because first-person-based subjective features of mental properties, such as one's direct awareness of the *painfulness* of a pain, stubbornly resist a purely physical analysis. Mental properties are also said to be unique in that they have an independent causal profile, a claim that goes against what (c) strongly entails, which is *the causal closure of the physical domain*.<sup>15</sup>

But if establishing (c) proves to be less than straightforward, then the same thing must be true of (b) as well, contra Papineau's and Heil's defense of (b). This is simply because it is hard to see how (b) can be defended without thereby presupposing (c).<sup>16</sup> As pointed out earlier, (c) seems to be a direct consequence of (b). If so, why can't we just do away with mental phenomena altogether? Why don't we look up to mature neuroscience for an ultimate solution? Such questions have led to the rise of (d) *the eliminativist thesis*.

A leading advocate of eliminative materialism, Paul Churchland, claims that our common-sense psychological terms, such as "beliefs," "desires," "fears," "sensations," "pains," etc., are highly misleading. Such psychological terms can be described as "folk psychology." Churchland claims that folk psychology fails to account for the causes of human behavior as well as the nature of the cognitive activity. He argues that our common-sense psychological framework is false. So, for Churchland, nothing represents our inner nature that is not recognized by mature or completed neuroscience.<sup>17</sup>

In opposition to the eliminativist thesis, Daniel Lorca and Eric LaRock have recently argued that, contrary to Churchland's claims, eliminative materialism lacks any significant boost from the domain of neuroscience. Citing empirical evidence, Lorca and LaRock argue that Churchland's objections against folk psychology are ineffective and pose no serious threat to folk psychology.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in his *Agents Under Fire*, Angus Menuge shows why eliminative materialism utterly fails to get rid of folk psychology.<sup>19</sup>

Locating the PCQ against the backdrop of position (a) and (b) draws attention to what I call the *subjectivity feature*, according to which consciousness is rooted in first-personal subjective experience(s). Here the main issue becomes dealing with what David Chalmers describes as the *hard problem of consciousness*.<sup>20</sup> This problem is said to arise from trying to explain the nature of subjective or conscious experience(s). As Thomas Nagel famously put it: "there is something it is like to," say, *have a taste of ice cream*.<sup>21</sup> But how can such experience be explained by analyzing neuronal activities in our brains? Or how does *subjectivity* arise from electrochemical activities in the brain? Joseph Levine calls this problem the "*explanatory gap problem*."<sup>22</sup>

By its very nature, many have said, consciousness is multifaceted. To see this, following David Carruthers, we can distinguish between *creature consciousness* and *mental-state consciousness*. The former comes in the form of intransitive and transitive consciousness. A person is said to be intransitively conscious if he or she is awake as opposed to being asleep or even comatose. A person is said to be transitively conscious if he or she is conscious of something, say, oncoming traffic while crossing a road. The latter (mental state consciousness) also comes in at least two forms, namely phenomenal consciousness, and access consciousness. A person is said to be

phenomenally conscious if there is something it is like to have, say, a toothache. A person is said to have access consciousness if the non-phenomenal features of conscious states such as *beliefs* figure in reasoning. Moreover, a person's focused awareness of a mental state (say, his or her feelings) are described as *reflective or introspective consciousness*. Similarly, consciousness directed to the self is described as *self-consciousness*.<sup>23</sup>

Discussions of the problems besetting the nature of the phenomenal consciousness customarily pit the *subjectivity feature* against (a), (b), (c), and (d). But how one goes about doing this will be constrained by one's theory of mind, that is, by whether one is undertaking such a task within the framework of a physicalist or a dualist theory of mind.<sup>24</sup> But progress in answering the PCQ depends on getting some grip on the *subjectivity feature*. In this case, the *subjectivity feature* sets the agenda for the sorts of approaches and analyses described in (a)–(d). Let us now turn to that discussion.

## 2. Stage One: The Metaphysics of Properties

IN THIS section, I will present a brief exposition of some of the dominant and representative views of the metaphysics of properties. The discussion in this section will pave the way for the analysis of the nature of phenomenal consciousness presented in section 3.

### 2.1 Property

What is a property? A property (“attribute,” “feature,” “characteristic,” “type,” “quality”) is said to be a way something can be. Consider, for example, a red apple on your kitchen table. We can talk about this particular apple in terms of, *inter alia*, its color, shape, and size properties. That is, we can say that this apple is red, round, and big respectively. Taken collectively, such properties describe the way this particular

apple is. At least *prima facie* it does not seem to be the case that we can describe objects we see around us without referring to some or all of their features. When in doubt about this matter, try to describe an apple on your kitchen table without referring to any of its features. I am sure you will not find it an easy thing to do. We can't help but refer to an object's attribute(s) if we want to get some grip on what the object in question is like. Such considerations could be said to give us intuitively compelling reasons to embrace properties. But it is an open question, whether or not such considerations give us sufficient ground to establish the ontological status of properties.<sup>25</sup>

### 2.2 The Key Questions

The nature of properties and their existential status go hand in hand. That is, these two things stand or fall together. But why? We can answer this question by saying that it does not seem to be the case that there can be a positive knowledge of the nature of a non-existing thing.<sup>26</sup> So it seems natural to approach the investigation of properties (as most if not all philosophers do) by first focusing on the *existence question* and then moving on to tackle the *nature question*. In his *Universals*, J. P. Moreland illustrates this approach well.<sup>27</sup> In what follows, I will refer to the questions raised by Moreland as *Moreland's Questions*:

1. Do properties exist?
2. If properties exist, are they universals or particulars?
3. If properties are universals, are they abstract objects?
4. What is the relationship between a property and the thing that has it? Is the property “in” what has it and, if so, what sort of “in” is this (spatial or non-spatial)?
5. If properties exist, can they exist even if no particular exemplifies them?

6. If properties are universals, what account can be given of the individuation of two entities that have all their pure properties in common?

In answering Questions (1)–(6), philosophers have advocated two broadly defined positions, namely, *metaphysical realism* and *nominalism*. I say “broadly defined” because each of these positions has many sub-varieties.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.3 *Metaphysical Realism*

Metaphysical realists (or “realists,” for short) claim that properties are *real*, that is, they genuinely exist. In this case, the realists’ answer to *Moreland’s Question* (1) would be affirmative.<sup>29</sup> But if properties exist, then what sort of entities are they? This is *the nature question* that lies at the heart of *Moreland’s Question* (2).<sup>30</sup> Realists answer this question by arguing that properties are *universals*.<sup>31</sup> Universals are entities that are said to occupy multiple spatio-temporal locations at the same time. Following Plato, realists claim that the conception of properties as universals is rooted in what is being described as *the phenomenon of attribute agreement*. That is, numerically distinct objects share in common a numerically *identical* property.

Consider, for example, five red apples. Furthermore, suppose that these five apples exist in five different US states, say one red apple in California, one red apple in Arizona, one red apple in Texas, one red apple in Nevada, and one red apple in Colorado. In this case, the realists ask: Do we have five distinct rednesses, one belonging to each apple, or is it the case that we have only a single property, *redness*, which is shared by all of the five apples that exist in five different US states? For reasons we shall see, the realists would say that the five red apples all share a single redness in common. In this case, redness is said to be a universal that is instantiated by each red apple that exists in

five different US states. Philosophers also capture this point through a *type-token* distinction. A *type* is a *universal* such as redness whereas a token is an individual instantiation or manifestation of the type, in this case, the redness in question. Since the time of Plato, universals have been described as *one in many*, *one over many*, or *one and many*. These expressions are used to indicate that universals are repeatable entities in the sense of being exemplifiable simultaneously by multiple objects that occupy different spatio-temporal locations.<sup>32</sup>

Realists take different approaches in responding to *Moreland’s Questions* (3)–(6). Setting aside the details,<sup>33</sup> let’s look at two dominant approaches, namely, broadly Aristotelian and broadly Platonistic.<sup>34</sup>

For Aristotelian realists (Aristotelians), properties are immanent in the spatio-temporal domain. That is, properties exist wherever objects that exemplify them are.<sup>35</sup> Uninstantiated properties do not exist. Thus, properties are said to be inseparable from objects (concrete particulars) that instantiate them.<sup>36</sup> Aristotelians who defend the view known as *constituent ontology* argue that properties are constituents or parts of the concrete particulars that instantiate them. The “parts” in question are said to be metaphysical as opposed to being mereological.<sup>37</sup> But not all Aristotelians embrace constituent ontology.<sup>38</sup> Yet, they all seem to unite in their responses to *Moreland’s Questions* (3)–(6).

Regarding *Moreland’s Question* (3), Aristotelians deny that universals are *abstract objects* if this is taken to mean that universals exist outside the spatio-temporal domain. Regarding *Moreland’s Question* (4), Aristotelians claim that concrete particulars and properties are inseparable in that the former always exemplifies the latter. This means that for Aristotelians, properties, in some metaphysical sense, are inherent in the concrete particulars that instantiate or

exemplify them.<sup>39</sup> Some Aristotelians also claim that concrete particulars and universals stand to each other in formal ontological relations.<sup>40</sup> In light of such considerations, Aristotelians respond to *Moreland's Question* (5) by denying the reality of the existence of uninstantiated universals or properties.

Lastly, we come to individuation, which makes up *Moreland's Question* (6). At the heart of individuation is the question of what makes a certain individual, say John, to be distinct from other individuals of the same kind, e.g., other fellow human beings? In answering this question, Aristotelians make a distinction between a *property* universal such as *whiteness* and a *kind* universal such as *humanness*. For Aristotelians, it is a kind universal as opposed to a property universal which plays an individuating role. This is because, as Lowe argues, a property universal such as *whiteness* does not determine specific identity conditions for the concrete particulars that exemplify universals.<sup>41</sup>

For example, suppose that John and Smith are both white. Lowe claims that the property, "whiteness," that both John and Smith share in common does not put any constraint upon the correct answer to the question: *Is it or is it not the case, that John is identical to Smith?* In contrast, Lowe argues, "humanness" imposes constraint upon the identity question. Unlike the predicate "is white," the predicate "is human" carries with it both a criterion of *application* and a criterion of *identity*.

Lowe argues that a criterion of application fixes the extension of a predicate, thereby telling us a set of entities it applies to, whereas a criterion of identity fixes whether or not a certain entity to which a predicate applies is identical to another entity to which it applies. In light of this, for Aristotelians, *kind* universals, as opposed to property universals, play a role in individuation. That is, individuating universals such as *human*

*being* determine the identity condition of individuals that belong to them. They also fix the essence of individual entities by answering the question of *what* a certain individual is, whereas property universals only tell us *how* an individual is (that is, characterize entities as opposed to fixing their nature or essence).<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, for Platonic realists (Platonists), as Peter Van Inwagen argues, universals are abstract objects.<sup>43</sup> Being abstract objects, properties are said neither to occupy spatio-temporal locations nor to enter into causal relations (with entities in the spatio-temporal domain). In light of this, Platonists respond to *Moreland's Questions* (3)–(6) differently from Aristotelians. For Platonists, concrete particulars and properties stand to each other in an exemplification relation. But an exemplification relation is said to give rise to the problem of infinite regress.

Consider a certain red table, T. In this case, T is said to exemplify a property, redness. The relation between T and its redness is said to consist of T exemplifying the redness in question. Let us call this the first exemplification relation ( $R_1$ ) that connects T and its redness. But for the first exemplification relation,  $R_1$  to hold, we would need a second relation ( $R_2$ ), in virtue of which the original relation  $R_1$  obtains between T and redness. But again, for  $R_2$  to relate  $R_1$ , T, and redness, we would need yet again a third relation ( $R_3$ ), in virtue of which  $R_2$  relates  $R_1$ , T, and redness, and so on.

One way Platonists try to end the threat of such a regress problem is by taking the relation between T and its redness to consist in a *nexus of exemplification* relation that does not require any further relation. Here the word *nexus* refers to something that ties an object and the property it instantiates. In introducing the notion of nexus, Platonists take a modified conception of the exemplification relation to support their



central claim that abstract entities (i.e., properties) do not exist in concrete particulars that instantiate them. Rather concrete particulars and their properties stand to each other in a *primitive* exemplification relation that requires no further relation(s). Taken this way, concrete particulars do not have what van Inwagen calls, “ontological structure.” That is, concrete particulars do not have properties as metaphysical parts in the sense that the proponents of constituent ontology claim.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Platonists embrace relational ontology.

Given that properties do not (for Platonists) inhere in the objects that exemplify them, properties do and can exist uninstantiated.<sup>45</sup> Lastly, Platonists also deal with the issue of individuation. Some Platonists propose *bare particulars* to account for individuation. Bare particulars are said to be propertyless bearers of the properties of concrete particulars. However, some Platonists argue that bare particulars need not be characterized as being propertyless.<sup>46</sup>

Regardless of their differences, realists in general agree on at least two things. First, concrete particulars and their properties belong to two distinct ontological categories. Second, properties are universals. As we saw, however, Aristotelian realists and Platonic realists have sharp differences in their answers to *Moreland’s Questions* (3)–(6).

#### 2.4 Nominalism

Nominalism comes in different forms.<sup>47</sup> But any version of nominalism targets the two central claims embraced by realists. These are: (i) properties are universals; and (ii) concrete particulars and properties belong to two distinct ontological categories. Nominalists attack both (i) and (ii).

For example, extreme nominalists argue that only the category of concrete *particulars* exists. That means that the category of property does not exist. In light of this, extreme

nominalists reject the ontological distinction that the realists draw between concrete particulars and properties. Since the category of properties is non-existent, for extreme nominalists, any statement that refers to properties can be paraphrased away. For extreme nominalists, property-referring sentences are nothing but disguised ways of talking about only concrete particulars. W. V. Quine was the most outspoken defender of this view.<sup>48</sup> But Quine’s method of elimination of properties is said by many to be unsuccessful.<sup>49</sup>

Unlike extreme nominalists, moderate nominalists (hereafter, “trope theorists”) embrace the reality of properties. But for trope theorists, properties are tropes, not universals. Tropes are said to be *particularized properties*. Understood this way, tropes are said to be unshareable, that is, no two or more exactly similar objects can share any of their properties in common. For example, two cars can be exactly similar to each other, say in *being red*. But trope theorists claim that the redness of one car is entirely separate from the redness of the other car. That is, each car has its own redness. The same thing is true of other properties of objects such as size, shape, and so on. Even though objects do not share any of their properties in common, trope theories argue that objects with exactly similar properties belong to the same class. In this case, what underlies the class membership in question consists in the exact resemblance relation that the members in question are said to display. In this view, objects do not share an identical property. Thus, trope theorists reject the realists’ central claim (i), i.e., that properties are universals.

Trope theorists also reject realists’ central claim (ii), which concerns the distinction between a property and a concrete particular. Trope theorists endorse only a one-category ontology of property. A prominent trope

theorist, Keith Campbell, describes tropes as *abstract particulars*.<sup>50</sup> Tropes are said to be *abstract* in the sense that a certain feature of an object, say its redness, can be singled out by a mind through an act of abstraction. That is, a person can concentrate on any preferred feature of an object by ignoring all other features. Tropes are also said to be particulars in virtue of their instances. The features of an object, say, a certain table's redness, rectangularity, and smallness, are all unshareable with any other table with similar properties. In this case, a certain table's color, shape, and size properties are all located where the table in question is and nowhere else. Given their one-category ontology, trope theorists argue that objects are made up of the amalgamation of their properties. It is in this sense that trope theorists attempt to establish the particularity of objects.<sup>51</sup> Various objections have been raised against the trope theory, but for now, there is no need to visit them.<sup>52</sup>

*Metalinguistic nominalists* also reject (i) and (ii), given their serious focus on the role of language.<sup>53</sup> Like extreme nominalists, metalinguistic nominalists endorse only concrete particulars. But unlike extreme nominalists, they do not eliminate the realists' view of properties. But this is not because they embrace the ontology of properties. Rather, metalinguistic nominalists think that the realists' view of properties is explanatorily useful. For example, the sentence "Lionel Messi is compassionate" can apply to many people provided that they also express compassion. Taken this way, compassion is a property or *universal*. But metalinguistic nominalists argue that talk of compassion is nothing more than talk about language as opposed to a non-linguistic entity that the language is said to be about. So metalinguistic nominalists disapprove of *object language* that allows us to refer to non-linguistic

entities.<sup>54</sup> But they claim that sentences, including abstract referring devices, are ultimately *metalinguistic*—implicitly disguised ways of talking about linguistic expressions.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, there is a *fictionalist* view of properties.<sup>56</sup> Central to fictionalism is the claim that sentences that appear to refer to abstract entities are all false. But fictionalists grant that one can still talk about abstract entities provided that in talking about them one is only engaging in fictional discourse. For example, in saying that "Pegasus is sick," one is not making any reference to a real winged divine horse. So, the statement is false. But in the fictional story in which it appears, the statement "Pegasus is sick" can be said to be true. Since fictional entities do not exist in reality, fictionalists argue that sentences that commit us to the ontology of properties are all false. In this way, fictionalists do away with properties described in (i) and (ii) above.

In the upcoming section, I will discuss the propertyhoodness of consciousness question (PCQ) against the backdrop of the metaphysics of properties briefly outlined above. I will argue that the *subjectivity feature* resists fitting into any of the foregoing conceptions of properties. Recall that according to the subjectivity feature, consciousness is rooted in first-personal subjective experience(s).

### 3. Stage Two: Phenomenal Consciousness as a Property

THE CHALLENGE we face in answering *Moreland's Question* (1)—i.e., do properties exist?—in relation to the PCQ has to do with spelling out the notion of "property." Recall that we characterized a property as a way something can be. But it seems less clear if the same characterization applies (in any straightforward way) to phenomenal consciousness. Consider, for example, Smith. Just by looking at Smith,

you get no access to Smith's phenomenal consciousness. Smith's phenomenal consciousness does not appear to you as, say, as a red rose flower appears to you. There is something it is like to appear as a red rose flower. Again, you can talk about a red rose flower in terms of the other properties it has, namely its shape property as well as its size property. Taken collectively, such properties describe the way a particular rose flower is. But it makes little sense, if any, to apply the same sort of analysis to how one can be said to stand in relation to Smith's phenomenal consciousness. This is because Smith's phenomenal consciousness does not manifest itself with a color property or a shape property or a size property. For all we know, Smith could be a zombie, with no phenomenal consciousness despite giving all the outward impressions of being a conscious being. This makes it difficult to answer *Moreland's Question* (1): the very move we make to give an account of the propertyhoodness of consciousness could end up being a category mistake. This is the first sign of why the subjectivity feature seems to resist fitting into the foregoing analysis of properties.

At this point we face a new central question: Could it be the case that not only we, but Smith himself, has a difficulty in getting access to Smith's phenomenal consciousness? Let's suppose that Smith faces no problem accessing his phenomenal consciousness. Yet, if by "accessing" we mean Smith has access in a way similar to the way one has access to various properties of a rose flower (e.g., redness), then the answer to the above question must be negative, for it does not seem to be the case that Smith's phenomenal consciousness appears to him in the way that, e.g., color, size, or shape properties do. It turns out that consciousness is what allows anything to appear to us in a certain way. But consciousness itself is not, in the same sense, an

appearance. One can only be appeared-to-redly by a rose because one is conscious.

But it remains highly dubious to suppose that one has been appeared-to-consciously. This is dubious because consciousness is not an ordinary content of consciousness, as, say, the redness of a rose can be said to be. By contrast, one can only be conscious of consciousness itself by exercising one's second-order capacity of self-consciousness. Such a second-order capacity of being self-conscious is also described as metacognition. Thus, it might seem difficult to say how one can best go about answering *Moreland's Question* (1) in relation to the PCQ; yet all is not lost. We can still make some progress. But to be able to do this, first, we need to modify *Moreland's Question* (1) and then extend the modification to the rest of *Moreland's Questions* (2)–(6) as follows:

*Moreland's Question* (1) becomes (1\*):

Does the property of being conscious exist?

*Moreland's Question* (2) becomes (2\*): If

the property of being conscious exists, is it universal or particular?

*Moreland's Question* (3) becomes (3\*):

If the property of being conscious is universal, is it an abstract object?

*Moreland's Question* (4) becomes (4\*):

What is the relationship between being conscious and the thing that is said to be conscious? Is the property of being conscious in what has it and, if so, what sort of "in" is this (spatial or non-spatial)?

*Moreland's Question* (5) becomes (5\*):

If the property of being conscious exists, can it exist even if no concrete particulars exemplify it?

*Moreland's Question* (6) becomes (6\*):

If the property of being conscious is

universal, what account can be given of the individuation of two entities that have all their pure properties in common?

To make progress in answering (1\*), we would need to approach it in two phases. First, we need to tackle *the existence question*, and second, we should take up *the nature question*. This is a proper order of inquiry taken from an ontological standpoint. It also gives us a base level or foundational understanding of the issue we are dealing with.

Suppose that the property of *being conscious* exists. Let's call this *a realist view of consciousness*. In this case, realists give an affirmative answer to (1\*). But why do realists think that the property of being conscious exists in the first place? In response, realists might ask us to consider how we classify things. We carry out our classificatory activities in two main ways, namely subjectively and objectively. Our classificatory practices are said to be subjective if they are guided by our preferences or interests. In this case, subjective classifications aim to satisfy certain pragmatic goal(s) one sets out to achieve.

For example, some computer scientists tell us that some sophisticated robots or computers that play, say, a chess game can be said to be conscious. Hence, they can be said to be conscious agents. Similarly, following Daniel Dennett, it could be said that one can take an "intentional stance" toward any object, whether animate or inanimate, thereby expressing frustration or appreciation.<sup>57</sup> But realists claim that a subjective classification method fails in establishing in non-arbitrary ways the existence of the property of being conscious.

On the other hand, an objective classification is said to be dictated by a mind-independent reality, in the sense of being constrained by the way the world is. For instance, we say that human beings are conscious living things, but

we say that plants are not conscious, despite being living things. However, here a defender of panpsychism could say that everything, animate or otherwise, has a *potential* for consciousness. Yet whether or not a panpsychist metaphysics is true, it is hardly plausible to maintain that rocks have the potential for consciousness in the same sense that this term is used in relation to human beings. This is because we cannot establish a genuine comparison in question on the basis of arbitrary or subjective preferences. For example, in saying that "Smith is conscious," given the realists' view, we are making a true statement about Smith being a conscious being. That is, Smith has the property of being conscious. The point here is that by classifying things in terms of their properties, realists claim that we are simply acknowledging that the features in question are rooted in mind-independent facts or reality.

Of course, it could well be said that objective classification works for properties in general but it is an open question whether it works for consciousness in particular. It could be said that consciousness is real and intrinsically subjective. If so, consciousness could be said to defy "objective classification." For example, this is one reason why we can't know what it is like to be a bat. While this is true, the objective classification problem in question arises only at the experiential level. For example, we can't objectively classify Mary's headache since it is intrinsically subjective. For all we know, Mary is a conscious being, that is, she is a subject of experience(s). However, the fact that Mary bears the property of being conscious as a human being itself is an objective metaphysical truth about her. In light of such considerations, we have excellent reasons for thinking that a realist view of consciousness is defensible and hence, *the existence question* can be answered affirmatively.

But if the property of being conscious exists, is it universal or particular? This is *the nature question* that lies at the heart of (2\*). Realists answer this question by taking the property of being conscious as a universal. Taken this way, the property of being conscious turns out to be multiply exemplifiable. One way to show this would be to compare any two given human beings, say, Smith and Mary. Both Smith and Mary share in common the property of being conscious. Hence, they can be said to agree in their attributes. In this case, the property of being conscious is a *type* of which Smith's consciousness and Mary's consciousness are both individual *token* instantiations. In this case, the property of being conscious can be said to be a repeatable entity in the sense of being simultaneously exemplifiable by multiple human beings. So realists can claim that the property of being conscious allows us to account for phenomena such as *predication*, *exact similarity*, and *abstract reference*.

Consider, for instance, a subject-predicate statement, "Smith is conscious." Such a subject-predicate statement has two components, namely a linguistic structure and a non-linguistic structure. A linguistic structure refers both to a subject term and a predicate term. As realists see it, each of these terms plays a referential role. That is, the subject or a singular term "Smith" refers to a particular human being. Similarly, the predicate term "is conscious" refers to a universal, *being conscious*. For realists, Smith's bearing the property of being conscious is something that is determined by the way the world is. Similarly, the referent of a predicate term "is conscious" is a non-linguistic entity. Since a predicate is a general term, it is said to apply to multiple things at the same time. For instance, the predicate "is conscious" applies to Smith, Mary, Mark, Clinton, and so on. In this case, the property of being conscious can be said to ground class membership in that all human beings in virtue

of having such a property can be said to belong to *the class of conscious human beings*. In this way, the realists can claim that an adequate account of the phenomenon of attribute agreement can be established.

Similarly, the realists claim that the property of being conscious (taken as a universal) allows us to account for exactly resembling human beings. Human beings resemble each other in more than one respect. But in any respect in which any given two or more humans resemble each other, the realists argue that universals are being presupposed. Consider, for example, ten human beings who are exactly resembling in being conscious. According to the realists, the property of being conscious attributed to one person is identical to the property of being conscious attributed to the other. That is, all of the ten human beings in question share in common a numerically identical property of *being conscious*. Furthermore, the property of being conscious does not have spatio-temporal restrictions, given that it exists wherever its instantiators, human beings, happen to be.

In the case of *abstract reference*, the property of being conscious is said to refer to other properties as opposed to objects. Taken this way, the property of being conscious can be related to other properties. For example, the property of being conscious resembles cognition more than it resembles physiology. That is, the property of being conscious resembles the property of having cognition more than it does the property of having physiology. Unlike most (if not all) physical objects confined to spatio-temporal locations, properties are said to have no such limitations. I said "if not all" to leave room for certain strange quantum phenomena (e.g., quantum non-locality) that are said to violate spatio-temporal constraints. In any case, as the realists see it, properties can also be exemplifiable by multiple other properties.

Yet the previous discussion of the realists' view of the property of being conscious raises more questions than it settles if it is seen in the light of (3\*)–(6\*). Setting aside the details, let's look at this matter within the framework of the two dominant approaches discussed earlier, namely, broadly Aristotelian and broadly Platonistic. If we follow the Aristotelians, we would have to accept the property of being conscious as being immanent in the spatio-temporal domain. That is, the property of being conscious can only be said to exist wherever its exemplifiers are—human beings. The property of being conscious cannot exist without being instantiated. In other words, the property of being conscious is inseparable from the concrete particulars that instantiate it. Or as defenders of constituent ontology claim, the property of being conscious is a metaphysical constituent or part of the concrete particulars that instantiate them.

If we adopt a constituent ontology, our answer to (3\*) must be to deny that the property of being conscious is an abstract object existing outside of space and time. In response to (4\*), we could say that the concrete particulars, in this case, human beings and the property of being conscious, are inseparable from each other. In this case, the concrete particulars exemplify the property of being conscious. Some Aristotelians also claim that properties are inherent in the concrete particulars that instantiate or exemplify them.<sup>58</sup> Other Aristotelians claim that the concrete particulars and universals stand to each other in formal ontological relations.<sup>59</sup> In light of such considerations, the Aristotelians respond to (5\*) by saying that the property of being conscious cannot be said to exist without being instantiated.

Lastly, we come to individuation, which makes up (6\*). As we recall, individuation deals with the question of what makes a certain

individual, say John, distinct from other individuals of the same kind, e.g., other human beings. Applied to the property of being conscious, the question becomes: What makes an individual's (e.g., John's) having the property of being conscious distinct from another individual's (e.g., Mary's) having the property of being conscious? Here we must reintroduce the key distinction that the Aristotelians draw between a *property universal* such as whiteness and a *kind universal* such as humanness. The immediate challenge we face here is to determine whether the property of being conscious is a kind universal or a property universal. If it is a kind universal, then we must suppose that there are two sets of kind universals, namely the property of being human as well as the property of being conscious.

But this seems to be wrong, given that the property of being conscious seems to be supervenient on the property of being human. That is, it is the latter, not the former, that is ontologically fundamental. In this case, being human is constitutive of being conscious. I don't think that it takes having the property of being conscious to be a human. I must admit that this is a controversial point.

For example, in the context of bioethical discussions, some philosophers argue that a fetus or even newly born babies are not conscious, although they are human beings. Similarly, people who are in a comatose state are said to be not conscious, yet they are said to be humans. But if their situation becomes irreversible, i.e., they are deemed never to have a chance to regain their consciousness, they are said to have ceased being humans and to have become human vegetables. In any case, my point here is not to get into these controversies. At the least such discussions seem to presuppose that one must be a human first, to develop the capacity for consciousness. This is because consciousness

is something that develops naturally from beings that are humans. However, as briefly mentioned above, some particular humans may lack consciousness. If I am right about this, there is only a single *kind universal*, which is, *being human*. In light of such considerations, it seems reasonable to conclude that the property of being conscious does not play a central metaphysical role in individuation.

Similarly, taking the property of being conscious as *property universal* turns out to be even less promising for individuation. As Lowe argues, a property universal such as whiteness does not determine the specific identity conditions for the concrete particulars that exemplify properties.<sup>60</sup> Suppose that John and Smith are both conscious. Given Lowe's point, the property of being conscious that John and Smith are said to share in common does not put any constraint upon the correct answer to the question: Is it or is it not the case, that John is identical to Smith? In contrast, given Lowe's view, a *kind universal* such as humanness imposes constraints upon the identity question. This is because, as Lowe argues, unlike the predicate "John and Smith are conscious," the predicate "John and Smith are humans" carries with it both a criterion of application and a criterion of identity.

For Lowe, a criterion of application fixes the extension of a predicate, thereby telling us a set of entities that apply to it, whereas a criterion of identity fixes whether or not a certain entity to which it applies is identical to another entity to which it applies. So for the Aristotelians, it must be kind universals, as opposed to property universals, that play the metaphysical role in individuation. Individuative universals such as human beings determine the identity condition of individuals that belong to them. They also fix the essence of individual entities by answering the question of *what a certain entity is*, whereas

property universals only tell us how an individual is, that is, characterize entities as opposed to fixing their nature or essence.<sup>61</sup>

By contrast, in the Platonists' model, the property of being conscious is taken to be an abstract entity that exists outside of the spatio-temporal domain. It is also said to be causally inert. In the Platonists' view, "human beings" and "the property of being conscious" stand in an exemplification relation. But the exemplification relation in question must not result in an infinite regress in the sense discussed in section 2. One way Platonists try to end the threat of such regress is by taking the relation between, say, John and the property of being conscious to consist in the *nexus* of exemplification relation which does not require further relations. Taken this way, the property of being conscious does not exist in the concrete particular, John, who exemplifies it. This claim, as we shall see, proves to be highly puzzling more than illuminating.

In any case, for now, it seems clear that given Platonic realism, the property of being conscious cannot have, as van Inwagen claims, "ontological structure."<sup>62</sup> In this case, the property of being conscious is not a metaphysical part or constituent of, say, Smith. Since for Platonists, the property of being conscious does not inhere in the objects that exemplify it, it can exist without being instantiated. If so, this forces us to entertain the idea of a generic consciousness which is no one's consciousness. But it is hard to make sense of consciousness that isn't someone's consciousness.

Lastly, we can also talk about the issue of individuation within the Platonists' model. In this case, for some Platonists, bare particulars play a role. Bare particulars are said to be propertyless bearers of the properties of concrete particulars. However, as pointed out earlier, there is a lot of disagreement over this doctrine. Some Platonists do not endorse characterizing

bare particulars as being propertyless. In any case, the issue of individuation within Platonic realism requires us to get into other metaphysical issues involving, say, mereology, which is the study of part and whole relations. But for now, I put these issues aside.

Summarizing the foregoing remarks, we can say that there remains to be a deep division between the Aristotelian and Platonic models when it comes to answering (3\*)–(6\*).

We also see similar differences of opinions when it comes to the various models of nominalism. In this case, nominalists reject two central claims, namely: (i) that the property of being conscious is a universal; and (ii) that human beings and the property of being conscious belong to two distinct ontological categories.

*Extreme nominalism* only endorses human beings while rejecting the property of being conscious. It also rejects the ontological distinction between human beings and the property of being conscious as described in (ii). For extreme nominalists, the property of being conscious does not exist. So whatever statements that refer to such a property can be paraphrased away. For example, the statement “John is conscious,” despite referring to the property of being conscious, is nothing but a disguised way of talking about only John. But there are good reasons to doubt that such Quinean-inspired eliminative moves can succeed.<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, *moderate nominalists*, or trope theorists (see the discussion of trope theory above), embrace the property of being conscious. But properties are not universals, as stated in (i). For trope theorists, the property of being conscious is particularized, that is, unshareable. No given two objects (say, John and Smith) can be said to share in common the property of being conscious. However, John and Smith can be said to have an exactly similar property of being conscious and hence stand to each other in exact

resemblance relation. Within trope theory, John’s property of being conscious is entirely separate from that of Smith’s. Each has his own property of being conscious. But trope theorists grant that since John and Smith have an exactly similar property of being conscious, they both belong to the same class of *conscious beings*. But given a trope theory model, no members of any class in question can be said to share an identical or single property in common.

On the assumptions of trope theory, since the property of being conscious is particularized, it has primitive “thisness” (haecceity). This fact is better explained under a trope theory than, say, in Aristotelianism. In the case of the latter, having consciousness as an immanent universal does not explain why each property instance is distinct from every other one. Unlike redness, which is numerically identical in all of its instances, consciousness is necessarily numerically non-identical in all of its instances. So trope theorists reject the claim stated in (i) above.

Given a trope theory model, (ii) is also rejected. Consequently, the ontological distinction between human beings (concrete particulars) and the property of being conscious no longer holds. That means that on a trope theory model, the property of being conscious and human beings belong to a single ontological category. Taken this way, the property of being conscious is particularized. The particularity of the property of being conscious consists in its instance. For example, John’s being conscious is an unshareable trope with, say, a similar property that Mary has. The property of being conscious (including other properties) that belongs to John is said to be located only where John is. This is the sense in which a trope theory refers to John’s particularity.

*Metalinguistic nominalism* also rejects (i) and (ii). Metalinguistic nominalism endorses only concrete particulars. So, the reality of the



property of being conscious is denied. As discussed in section 2, any talk of property on a metalinguistic nominalistic model is nothing more than a linguistic expression.

Similarly, *fictionalism* also rejects the reality of the property of being conscious. In this view, sentences that appear to be referring to, say, John's having the property of being conscious are all false if taken outside of the context of fictional discourses. So fictionalists rule out the property of being conscious as described in (i) and (ii) above.

Up to this point, I have taken an experimental approach in my discussion of the PCQ. That is, I tested the PCQ against the foregoing various schools of thought on the metaphysics of properties. As we have seen, trying to spell out the nature of consciousness within the framework of the different conceptions of properties left us with more questions than answers. In the remainder of this chapter, I will identify the sort of problem the PCQ gives rise to and a potential solution to such problems.

#### 4. Stage Three: The Location Problem<sup>64</sup>

On the basis of the *subjectivity feature* (see section 1 above), subjectivity is said by some to be the essence of phenomenal consciousness. To make sense of the PCQ, there must be a way to show whether the subjectivity feature can be located within the framework of a conception of property advocated by one or all of the views discussed above. But if we fail to locate the subjectivity feature, then we will face the location problem. Consequently, the PCQ will be left unanswered. Such failure in turn will force us to look for a solution elsewhere.

Regardless of which conception of properties we adopt, one of the most challenging aspects of the subjectivity feature concerns its emphasis on experiences and subjects (i.e.,

human beings). That is, the subjectivity feature seems to presuppose that experiences require subjects. But if we think otherwise, then there has to be a way to divorce a particular experience from its subject. Can the different approaches taken to properties help us do just that?

On the Aristotelian realist approach, the property of being conscious is a numerically identical property that can be exemplified by multiple human subjects. One of the advantages of this approach is that it does locate the property of being conscious in a human subject. However, the problem with this approach is that it does not give us any insight whatsoever into how subjectivity is connected to the property of being conscious. Unless we get a handle on this very crucial issue, it remains impossible to give an informative answer to the PCQ.

In the case of a Platonic realist approach, separating consciousness from the subjectivity feature associated with it does seem to be *prima facie* possible. This is because, on the Platonic view, the property of being conscious can be said to exist even if it is uninstantiated. If so, the Platonic view does give us an impression that subjectivity is peripheral to consciousness. Unfortunately, this is a very unwanted outcome, given that the subjectivity feature lies at the very heart of consciousness.

In the case of a trope theory, it could be said that separating consciousness from the subjectivity feature associated with it wouldn't be possible given that the theory endorses a one-category ontology. In this case, phenomenal consciousness and its subject stand or fall together. But trope theory does very little, if at all, in terms of shedding light on what differentiates phenomenal consciousness and its subject given its one-category ontology. Unless we get clarity over this important matter, it remains difficult to see what locating the subjectivity feature in trope theory is supposed to look like.

Extreme nominalism entirely rules out the subjectivity feature that is central to consciousness. It does this by embracing only a subject. Similarly, for reasons we already discussed, metalinguistic nominalism and fictionalism deny subjectivity. An extreme nominalist can claim that statements that refer to subjective experiences can be paraphrased away in Quinean fashion. Metalinguistic nominalists can also say that talk of subjective experiences is nothing but talk about the linguistic expressions involving subjectivity. Fictionalists can declare that any statement that refers to subjective experience(s) can only be taken seriously in their fictional sense (i.e., the truth of the statement of a particular subjective experience is confined to a particular fictional discourse to which it is tied).

If extreme nominalism, metalinguistic nominalism, and fictionalism are true in their assessment of the subjectivity feature, then it is possible to verbally deny the existence of subjective experience(s), say, pain. But does any amount of verbal denial undermine the truth of a particular person's subjective experience of an excruciating headache? What it feels like to have an excruciating headache seems to be independently true regardless of what one thinks about it. On the other hand, the Aristotelian, Platonic, and trope approaches raise serious metaphysical issues about the nature of consciousness which they cannot handle. Thus, the best we can say regarding the subjectivity feature is that none of the approaches we have surveyed so far succeed in locating it. So our effort to answer the PCQ must continue.

### 5. Stage Four: The PCQ and Bearer-Dependent Model of Consciousness

PERHAPS THE location problem discussed earlier arises from our misguided characterization of

phenomenal consciousness in terms of (1\*)–(6\*). In this case, our central mistake could be said to consist in equating phenomenal consciousness with a universal. It could well be the case that phenomenal consciousness is entirely a unique breed of property. To this effect, elsewhere, I have argued extensively defending the claim that phenomenal consciousness is a strongly emergent property.<sup>65</sup> In what follows, I aim to show that if phenomenal consciousness is taken to be an emergent property, then it is necessarily and ontologically dependent on its bearer, that is, a human person. This conception of consciousness is strongly entailed by the subjectivity feature. In this case, phenomenal consciousness is inseparable from its subject, which is precisely what the subjectivity feature strongly presupposes. I will call this view the *bearer-dependent model of consciousness*.

To get a gist of this view, let's look at the notion of emergence. Philosophers talk about the notion of emergence in two main senses, namely *weak* and *strong*. Taken in its weak sense, as David Chalmers points out, a high-level phenomenon is weakly emergent in relation to a low-level domain, when the high-level phenomenon arises from the low-level domain. In this case, truths concerning that phenomenon are unexpected given the principles running the low-level domain. On the other hand, taken in its strong sense, a high-level phenomenon is strongly emergent in relation to a low-level domain when the high-level phenomenon arises from the low-level domain, but truths concerning that phenomenon cannot be deduced even in principle from truths in the low-level domain.<sup>66</sup>

The question whether phenomenal consciousness is a weakly or strongly emergent property continues to divide philosophers.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, some philosophers take the self or the bearer of phenomenal consciousness itself to be an emergent entity.<sup>68</sup>

Since I take phenomenal consciousness as a non-physical, strongly emergent property, following Chalmers and Moreland, I too propose that consciousness is irreducible to complex brain activities.<sup>69</sup> I also take the bearer of consciousness to be a non-physical or an immaterial substance. Here, by “substance,” I have in mind a traditional notion of substance as a concrete individual thing or continuant. An example of substance, here, would be an individual Socrates. A substance is said to be continuous if it persists through qualitative changes. For example, if Socrates’s skin color goes from being white to being black, say, via cosmetic surgery, then the very same individual Socrates must be said to have endured and persisted through such a change. Understood in this way, a substance underlies any change a property undergoes. A lot can be said here, but for now, I want to focus only on some aspects of the relationship between the self and an irreducible phenomenal consciousness.

Notice that on the *bearer-dependent model of consciousness* proposed here, there is a distinction between the self (hereafter, substantial self) and the phenomenal consciousness. But since a substantial self is the bearer of phenomenal consciousness, it assumes ontological priority over the latter. That is, unlike the phenomenal consciousness, a substantial self is not *in* other things, nor is it *had* by other things. In contrast, phenomenal consciousness exists in a substantial self that has it. In other words, it is correct to say that phenomenal consciousness is *in* a substantial self, in the sense of being exemplified by it. However, it is a mistake to say that a substantial self is *in* the phenomenal consciousness in the sense of being exemplified by the latter.

As a strongly emergent property, phenomenal consciousness necessarily needs the self to exist. It is, to be sure, hypothetically possible

that phenomenal consciousness could exist without needing a bearer or a substantial self, but given the view proposed here, phenomenal consciousness cannot exist independent of its bearer. To think otherwise would require us to assume that subjective experience(s) can exist without being someone’s experience. I simply can’t see how such a possibility can be established. To feel the absurdity of such a proposal, try to imagine how your headache could exist independently of you.

On the view proposed here, following some substance dualist philosophers, I take a substantial self to be an emergent, suitably unified mental subject. The unity of a substantial self consists in our basic awareness of the self. We are aware of our center of consciousness as being distinct not only from our bodies but also from other particular mental experiences we have. In light of this, we know ourselves as simple, uncomposed, immaterial selves that have bodies and conscious mental life. If I am right about this, then whatever experiences we have, it is not the case that they exist without a bearer. Such considerations in turn presuppose that we cannot be identified with our experiences. Rather, we are conscious and enduring mental substances.

Moreover, the unity of a substantial self can also be captured via the first-person perspective. Here the first-person perspective is the vantage point that we use to describe the world from our point of view. For example, indexicals, i.e., words like “I,” “here,” “now,” “there,” and “then” fix their reference depending on the context in which they are being used. But the indexical “I” is directly linked to the expression of the first-person perspective and unifies other indexicals around it. The indexicality of “I” is unique in that it rigidly refers to whoever uses it. That is, one cannot use the first-person pronoun “I” to refer to someone else other than oneself.

Philosophers like Lynne Baker even claim that the capacity for first-person perspective via the use of “I” is constitutive of one’s personhood. For Lynne, persons are both essentially embodied and essentially first-personal. Lynne makes a distinction between a non-conceptual capacity of the first-person perspective which involves conscious subjects (e.g., infants who interact with the world around them), and a conceptual capacity of the first-person perspective which is rooted in mastery of a natural language. From a metaphysical standpoint, for Lynne, both of these kinds of capacities play a pertinent role in establishing the fact that a person essentially has a first-person perspective.<sup>70</sup> So given a capacity for first-person perspective, we can think of ourselves as ourselves from the inside.

It seems that there are good reasons to think that a substantial self and an irreducible phenomenal consciousness are interdependent. One of the implications of such interdependence is that an irreducible phenomenal consciousness cannot be divorced from its bearer, a substantial self. It is no wonder why the Aristotelian, the Platonic, and a variety of nominalistic views failed to provide us with ways to separate phenomenal consciousness and its bearer. This is further evidence of why the subjectivity feature resists any accommodation within such theories of properties. In this regard, the subjectivity feature’s uniqueness among all other features of properties has to do with its being necessarily dependent on its bearer.

So far I have intentionally avoided the issue of the origin of consciousness, which is directly related to the subjectivity feature. Elsewhere I defended a view I called the *non-causal account of the spontaneous emergence of phenomenal consciousness*.<sup>71</sup> Central to this view is the idea that the origin of phenomenal consciousness could be spelled out in a non-causal sense. In this regard, scientific theories that require causal

accounts fail to give us an adequate account of the origin of consciousness. The spirit of my skepticism in this regard does not emanate from failing to recognize the extraordinary progress made in cognitive neuroscience concerning the physical basis of consciousness. Rather, my claim is that matters related to the origin of consciousness are primarily metaphysical and only secondarily empirical. As some consciousness theorists noted, the most mysterious aspect of the origin of consciousness has to do with the fact that it does not seem to have anything to do with the arrangement of brute matter.<sup>72</sup> In this case, the physical processes of physics and chemistry fail to account for the emergence of consciousness. As Moreland insightfully claims:

... the emergence of consciousness seems to be a case of getting something from nothing. In general, physico-chemical reactions do not generate consciousness, not even one little bit, but they do in the brain, yet brains seem similar to other parts of organisms or bodies (e.g., both are collections of cells totally describable in physical terms). How can like causes produce radically different effects? The appearance of mind is utterly unpredictable and inexplicable. This radical discontinuity seems like an inhomogeneous rupture in the natural world.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to the emergence of consciousness, we also have to account for the emergence of the bearer of consciousness. In this case, we have two big issues on our table to account for. In section 6, I will briefly point out what such an account would look like if we were to offer one.

### *Objection*

The bearer-dependent model of consciousness defended above is a dualist position, since it

takes both the phenomenal consciousness and its bearer to be non-physical.<sup>74</sup> Against this view, defenders of a physicalist theory of mind of one stripe or another could raise objections. They could object to my characterization of both the phenomenal consciousness and its bearer, a substantial self, as non-physical. This objection is not new. In its modern form, it has been with us since the time of Descartes. For present purposes, I will focus on a challenge coming from non-reductive physicalists.

According to a non-reductive physicalist, Nancey Murphy, human beings are biological organisms.<sup>75</sup> Murphy claims that neurobiological complexity, among other things, gives rise to higher-level human capacities such as rationality and creativity. Murphy states that as we go up the hierarchy of increasingly complex organisms, the soul or mind, which was once thought to be responsible for all of the other capacities, will no longer be needed. Instead, higher-level capacities are just products of a complex organization as opposed to being properties of a non-material entity.<sup>76</sup> Murphy and Warren Brown also claim that nearly all of the human capacities once understood to be an integral part of the soul are now seen to be functions of the brain. They argue that it is the brain, not the mind, that allows us to think.<sup>77</sup> They reject any additional metaphysical entity, i.e., the soul or the mind, to account for human non-physical capacities. In ruling out the existence of the soul or the mind, Murphy and Brown are endorsing ontological reductionism, according to which objects of certain kinds (e.g., the human person) are identified with objects of other kinds (e.g., the body or the brain).

For Murphy, consciousness exists yet does not require an immaterial entity, such as a substantial self, as its bearer. As Murphy puts it, “the human nervous system, operating in concert with the rest of the body in its environment

is the seat of consciousness.... Consciousness and religious awareness are emergent properties, and they have a top-down causal influence on the body.”<sup>78</sup> Murphy claims that consciousness allows us to know things about our environment as well as to know what we know. But we still lack knowledge as to how consciousness arises from brain function. Hence, its emergence remains a hard problem, waiting to be explained. However, Murphy claims that it is not entirely impossible to “de-mystify the mystery of consciousness” in light of our knowledge of how the human brain functions.<sup>79</sup>

### *Reply*

Two prominent points in Murphy’s characterization of the non-reductive physicalism are relevant to the present discussion. First, Murphy locates the emergence of consciousness, as well as other higher-level capacities, in neurobiological complexity/brain function. Second, given the central role that the brain is said to play in sustaining mental life, Murphy claims that no non-physical bearer of mental properties in general and of consciousness in particular is needed. Each of these claims, if true, will pose a direct challenge to the bearer-dependent model of consciousness sketched out and defended in this paper. Unfortunately, both of Murphy’s claims face serious problems.

First, it is not the case that complexity at any level of its advancement is capable of bringing about consciousness or other mental capacities. The best we can get from the extreme complexity of the matter is extreme complexity itself, nothing like a *sui generis* or novel emergent property. I developed and defended this line of thought in great detail elsewhere.<sup>80</sup> Colin McGinn understood this problem well when he says:

Some people like to harp on the complexity of the brain, as if this gave a clue to its mental productivity. But sheer

complexity is irrelevant: merely adding more neurons with more synaptic connections doesn't explain our problem a bit. The problem is how any collection of cells, no matter how large and intricately related, could generate consciousness. The trouble is that neural complexity is the wrong kind of thing to explain consciousness; it is merely a matter of how many cells a given cell can causally interact with. If our kidneys had as many cells as our brains, that would not make them conscious. Nor is a galaxy conscious just because it has a tremendous number of interacting parts. If complexity is to play a role in generating consciousness, then we need to be told what kind of complexity is involved.<sup>81</sup>

In light of McGinn's remarks, Murphy's appeal to complexity does nothing but reinforce the problem of the origin of consciousness.

Second, Murphy's claim that the brain is the sole bearer of both mental properties, as well as physical properties, lacks both tangible empirical evidence and compelling philosophical arguments.<sup>82</sup> If, as Murphy argues, the brain is indeed the sole source of physical as well as mental properties (including consciousness), then non-reductive physicalists owe us an explanation regarding how, from the same physical substrate, two such radically different properties emerge. It is one thing to assume that the brain bears mental properties; it is entirely a different matter to show that it does. Here it could be said that brain lesion studies show why, when the brain malfunctions, a person's mental capacities are disrupted, exhibiting minor limitations or major ones depending on the extent of the injuries. Unfortunately, this line of response,

despite being popular both in the neuroscientific and philosophical literature, fails to establish the brain as the cause of mental properties. The best we can learn from lesion studies is intimate correlations that obtain between brain functions and mental states.<sup>83</sup>

## 6. Stage Five: The PCQ and Co-Emergent Entities

THE BEARER-DEPENDENT model of consciousness briefly discussed so far shows that the relationship that exists between phenomenal consciousness and its bearer, a substantial self, is asymmetric. It is asymmetric in that the existential status of the phenomenal consciousness is ontologically rooted in its bearer. Consciousness is always someone's consciousness. Consequently, consciousness cannot be shared by more than one individual, or exist uninstantiated. In short, it is part of the very nature of the phenomenal consciousness that its existence is ontologically interwoven with its bearer. But it is an open matter whether the converse is also the case. I say this because it could be argued that (as some philosophers do) if human zombies are genuinely metaphysically possible, then there could be such beings without consciousness or any kind of inner subjective experience despite behaving in all other respects indistinguishably from those human beings with robust consciousness. But were such a class of zombie human beings without consciousness ever to be encountered, what would justify our describing them as human beings? For now, I leave this matter for readers to judge.<sup>84</sup>

My insistence that consciousness needs a bearer can be said to face serious challenges. For example, certain Buddhist schools either try to eliminate the self from their ontology altogether or reduce it to some sort of series of

events.<sup>85</sup> In light of such eliminative or reductive views of the self, certain contemporary philosophers, most notably Derek Parfit, have advanced sustained arguments to convince us why we should not take seriously the importance of self-identity in the future survival of our continued existence.<sup>86</sup> These philosophers also draw a great deal of inspiration from David Hume, who passionately argued against the reality of the immateriality of the self or soul or substance.<sup>87</sup> Here is Hume's much-quoted passage from the *Treatise of Human Nature*:

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death, and could I neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate, after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect nonentity.<sup>88</sup>

Hume's claims in this passage continue to generate intense philosophical debates. Hume is not sure whether the self or the bearer of subjective experience(s) exists. For him, no such bearer is known to exist, because he is unable to find or observe one via introspection. Yet Hume, in the process of trying to establish his skepticism about the bearer of his experiences, indisputably presupposes the ontological centrality of himself as the bearer of his own experiences. A careful study of the quoted

passage above cannot fail to show us a deep irony in Hume's denial of the self as a distinct bearer of its own subjective experiences. Thus, Hume's denial of the self hardly establishes an ownerless conscious experience(s).

In any case, what makes the phenomenal consciousness unique is its necessary ontological dependence on its bearer. The subjectivity feature that underlies consciousness necessarily requires a subject. There cannot be such thing as subjectivity without a subject. This is equivalent to saying that there cannot be a movement without an object that moves. However, it is one thing to say that phenomenal consciousness and its bearer, a substantial self, relate to each other in the way supposed here, but quite another thing to account for what I call a *co-emergence of the phenomenal consciousness and its bearer*.

It is not uncommon in the philosophy of mind to look for a solution for the origin of the phenomenal consciousness independently of its bearer. Here Chalmers's highly influential works are a good case in point.<sup>89</sup> But if, as I have argued, phenomenal consciousness is ontologically inseparable from its bearer, then our account of the origin of one must also include the origin of the other.

Of course, from a practical standpoint, it would be much easier to work on only one problem at a time. But in this case, I suggest that we take a compound approach. We can show that what we are dealing with here is one big, complicated question with two facets. The first facet concerns the question of the origin of the phenomenal consciousness. The second facet concerns the question of the origin of the bearer of consciousness. In this case, unlike Chalmers, who introduced what he calls "the hard problem of consciousness," I want to claim that the problem must be "the problem of the co-emergence of the phenomenal consciousness and its bearer." If my observations here

are in the right direction, then highly influential contemporary works on the nature of consciousness seem to be guilty of ignoring the most ontologically central problem.

If, as asserted earlier, consciousness has primitive “thisness,” then it is inconceivable that consciousness should emerge in the absence of a bearer. That is to say: it could not happen that consciousness first appeared and then a bearer. To think otherwise would be for us to treat consciousness as if it could exist at first as a regular property, say, redness, in which case consciousness would be identical in all its instances. But this is not the case, for all the reasons that we have already talked about.

In this chapter, I have not set out to solve the problem of the co-emergence of the phenomenal consciousness and its bearer. But I have done some effort to raise awareness that such a problem exists. So getting any satisfactory solution for Chalmers’s “hard problem of consciousness” does not seem to be possible unless the problem of the origin of its bearer is also taken into account. A fuller account of the nature of this problem and its possible solutions will have to wait for another time. But given the bearer-dependent model of consciousness, phenomenal consciousness seems to be thoroughly first-personal in that the very essence of the property of consciousness is its subjectivity. This is precisely the sort of answer that does justice to the PCQ.

## 7. Future Considerations

BEFORE ENDING this discussion, it is worth nothing that the most promising framework to make sense of the subjective nature of consciousness is the one that is summed up in section 1 (a) above, that is, the *ontological thesis*. As we stated there, the thesis asserts an ontological distinction between mental and physical properties. Similarly, it makes an ontological

distinction between physical substance and non-physical substance. Taken this way, the bearer model of consciousness defended in section 5 is compatible with the ontological thesis, given that the bearer model also makes an ontological distinction between consciousness and its bearer.

However, unlike the ontological thesis, my bearer model of consciousness is incompatible with the other theses discussed in section 1, namely the *conceptual thesis* (b), the *identity thesis* (c), and the *eliminativist thesis* (d). The conceptual thesis recognizes only a conceptual distinction between mental and physical properties; the identity thesis draws a numerical identity between mental properties and physical properties; and the eliminativist thesis denies the reality of mental properties altogether.

Similarly, the most promising conception of the metaphysics of properties, the one that provides us with conceptual resources to deal with the subjectivity feature, is a realist conception of properties. This also includes certain modestly nominalist conceptions of properties. However, setting forth a full realist account of properties has not been the goal of the present discussion. That is something that can be explored in future work. For the present, I am content to have established that there are conceptions of properties discussed in this chapter which are incompatible with the bearer model of consciousness—extreme nominalist, metalinguistic nominalist, and fictionalist conceptions—all of which deny an ontological basis for properties.

## 8. Conclusion

In this paper, after having framed and located the propertyhood of consciousness question (PCQ) within the broader debates on the nature of mental properties, I attempted to tackle it in five stages. In stage one, I tried to answer the propertyhoodness of consciousness question



within the framework of some of the core theories of the metaphysics of properties. In stage two, I explored ways to make sense of the nature of consciousness against the backdrop of the metaphysics of properties. In stage three, I discussed the location problem. In stage four, I suggested and discussed an alternative model of consciousness I called the bearer-dependent

model of consciousness. Finally, in stage five, I argued that the bearer-dependent model of consciousness provides us with an excellent conceptual framework to account for the co-emergence of consciousness and its bearer. I then concluded that consciousness cannot be treated like any other regular property given its irreducibly subjective nature.<sup>90</sup>

## NOTES

1. The details of each of these conscious states raise controversial issues. See E. J. Lowe, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and Susan Schneider and Max Velmans, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017).
2. Elsewhere I adopted this approach to answer the question of the origin of consciousness. See Mihretu P. Guta, "The Non-Causal Account of the Spontaneous Emergence of Phenomenal Consciousness," in *Consciousness and the Ontology of Properties*, ed. Mihretu P. Guta (New York: Routledge, 2019), 126–151.
3. The atomic number is the number of protons in the nucleus of an atom, whereas the atomic mass is the total mass of all the protons and neutrons in the nucleus.
4. See T. Maudlin, *Philosophy of Physics: Space and Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), xi–xii.
5. See P. Davies, *The Fifth Miracle: The Search for the Origin and Meaning of Life* (New York: Touchstone, 1999); J. W. Schope, *Life's Origin: The Beginnings of Biological Evolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and I. Fry, *The Emergence of Life on Earth: A Historical and Scientific Overview* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000).
6. If taken collectively, these theses generate genuine conflicts. For example, embracing (a) and any combination of (b)–(d) potentially results in a contradiction. For now, I ignore all the subtle ways (a)–(d) can be said to relate to each other.
7. See René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4th ed., trans. Donald A. Cress, (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 1998). For the discussion of a well-known contemporary defender of a Neo-Cartesian view of the mind, see Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of The Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), and "Mental Causation Is Really Mental Causation," in the above-cited *Consciousness and the Ontology of Properties*, ch. 10.
8. For philosophical discussions on the mind-body problem in neuroscience see the following: Mark J. Cain, *The Philosophy of Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016); J. Bickle, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Neuroscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); M. R. Bennett and P. M. S. Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003); R. Cummins and D. D. Cummins, eds., *Minds, Brains, and Computers: An Historical Introduction to the Foundations of Cognitive Science* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000); R. J. Stainton, ed., *Contemporary Debates in Cognitive Science* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006); S. P. Springer and G. Deutsch, *Left Brain, Right Brain: Perspective from Cognitive Neuroscience*, 5th ed. (New York: W. H. Freeman & Co., 1998); W. Bechtel et al., eds., *Philosophy and the Neurosciences: A Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001); and John R. Anderson, *Cognitive Psychology and its Implications*, 5th ed. (New York: Worth Pub, 2000).
9. See D. Papineau, *Philosophical Naturalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), and again Papineau, *Thinking about Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 97; see also H. Taylor, "A Powerful New Anomalous Monism," in the previously cited *Consciousness and the Ontology of Properties*, ch. 3.
10. For a helpful survey, see Leopold Stubenberg and Donovan Wishon, "Neutral Monism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, eds. Zalta and Nodelman, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/neutral-monism/>.
11. In recent years, this view of property is gaining attraction, especially among those philosophers who work on the metaphysics of dispositions.

12. See J. Heil, "The Mystery of the Mystery of Consciousness," in *Consciousness and the Ontology of Properties*, 20–22, and again Heil, *Philosophy of Mind* (New York: Routledge, 2013) and *The Universe As We Find It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); see also Taylor's previously cited, "A Powerful New Anomalous Monism."
13. See J. J. C. Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes," *Philosophical Review* 68 (1959): 141–156; H. Feigl, "The 'Mental' and the 'Physical,'" *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 2 (1958): 370–497; and U. T. Place, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?," *British Journal of Psychology* 47 (1956): 44–50.
14. See e.g., J. L. Bermudez and A. Cahen, "Mental Causation and Counterfactuals: A New Argument for the Type-Identity Thesis," in *Consciousness and the Ontology of Properties*, ch. 9; Papineau, *Philosophical Naturalism*; and B. Loewer, "An Argument for Strong Supervenience," in *Supervenience: New Essays*, eds. E. E. Savellos and Ü. D. Yalçın (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See also three works by J. Kim: *Mind in a Physical World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); *Physicalism or Something Near Enough* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); and *Philosophy of Mind*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2006).
15. See e.g., E. J. Lowe, *Personal Agency: The Metaphysics of Mind and Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); J. P. Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God* (London: Routledge, 2008); Koons and Bealer, eds., *The Waning of Materialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); M. P. Gula, "Frank Jackson's Location Problem and Argument from the Self," *Philosophia Christi* 13, no. 1 (2011): 35–58. See also the three previously cited volumes by Kim, as well as C. McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), and J. Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).
16. An often-used example is that of the evening star and the morning star. This example shows how a single object can be a referent of two distinct descriptive expressions. Say the evening star and the morning star are being used of a single object, the planet Venus. The claim is that although the expressions "evening star" and "morning star" at the surface may appear to be referring to two different celestial objects, they only function as two distinct ways of describing a single object.
17. See Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1988), 43–49ff.
18. D. Lorca and E. LaRock, "Eliminative Materialism and Ordinary Language," *Philosophia Christi* 21, no. 2 (2019): 419–426.
19. See A. Menuge, *Agents Under Fire: Materialism and the Rationality of Science* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), ch. 2. I arrived at a similar conclusion on eliminative materialism in an unpublished paper entitled: "Neuroscience and Philosophy with Implications for Personal Identity."
20. D. Chalmers, "The Hard Problem of Consciousness," in the previously cited *Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, 226.
21. See Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* [1974] (New York: Oxford, 1986).
22. See J. Levine, *Purple Haze: The Puzzle of Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also Michael Tye, "Philosophical Problems of Consciousness," in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, ch. 2.
23. For details, see the following: David M. Rosenthal, ed., *The Nature of Mind* (New York: Oxford, 1991); Rosenthal, "Two Concepts of Consciousness," *Philosophical Studies* 49 (1986): 329–359; Rosenthal, "State Consciousness and Transitive Consciousness," *Consciousness and Cognition* 2 (1993): 355–363; Peter Carruthers, *Phenomenal Consciousness: A Naturalistic Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Carruthers, "The Problem of Animal Consciousness," *The American Philosophical Association* 92 (2018): 179–181; D. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Chalmers, *The Character of Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Mihretu P. Gula, "Non-Causal Account of the Spontaneous Emergence of Consciousness"; Gula, "Consciousness, First-Person Perspective, and Neuroimaging," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 22, nos. 11–12 (2015): 218–248; and José Luis Bermúdez, "Self-Consciousness," in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, ch. 34.
24. For now, I do not belabor such discussions. See Koons and Bealer, *Waning of Materialism*, and Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).
25. There are ongoing controversies over this issue that need not concern us here. See, e.g., M. J. Loux and M. T. Crisp, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2017), chs. 1–2; G. Galluzzo and M. J. Loux, eds., *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015); D. Edwards, *Properties* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014); E. Conee and T. Sider, *Riddles of*

- Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), ch. 8; D. W. Zimmerman, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, Volume 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), sect. II; J. P. Moreland, *Universals* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); D. H. Mellor and A. Oliver, eds., *Properties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); M. Jubien, *Contemporary Metaphysics: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), ch. 3.
26. However, it could be said that although fictional entities, such as unicorns, do not exist in reality, it is perfectly possible to talk about their nature; see E. M. Kalderon, *Fictionalism in Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Similarly, one could invoke Meinongianism, which states that there are objects which do not exist to which we can refer, which we can quantify, and about which we can make true statements; see F. Casati and N. Fujikawa, "Nonexistent Objects as Truth-Makers: Against Crane's Reductionism," *Philosophia* 44, no. 2 (2016): 424, and Maria Reicher, "Non-existent Objects," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/nonexistent-objects/>. Discussing the details of this view is beyond the scope of this paper. But it is worth pointing out that Meinongianism presents us with a tough ontological question: What fixes the gulf between the existence of real objects and those objects which do not exist but are referred to as if they do exist (e.g., Pegasus or Sherlock Holmes)? Of course, one could argue that the alleged ontological gulf in question would in no way affect our grip on the nature of nonexistent objects. But such a response can only be embraced if proponents of nonexistent objects show us how a stable account of such objects can be established.
  27. Moreland, *Universals*, 2.
  28. I will discuss only a handful of these varieties. For an excellent survey on these and other issues concerning properties, see Edwards, *Properties*.
  29. Yet it may be asked why the realists think that properties exist in the first place. In response to this question, realists ask us to consider how we classify things. In this case, it is said that we undertake a classificatory task in question in two ways, namely subjectively and objectively. In the case of subjective classification, our classificatory practices are said to be guided by our preferences or interests. Taken this way, subjective classifications aim to satisfy certain pragmatic goal(s) we set out to achieve. But realists claim that a subjective classification does not give us a strong basis to establish the existence of properties in non-arbitrary ways. By contrast, in the case of an objective classification, it is said that our classificatory practices are said to be dictated by a mind-independent reality. In this regard, Loux and Crisp claim that objective classificatory practices are constrained by the way the world is. For instance, we group things according to their color (e.g., red things, white things), shape (e.g., circular things, round things), and kind (e.g., oak trees, horses). Realists claim that such groupings are not guided by arbitrary or subjective preferences. If we say "X is red," realists tell us that we are making a true statement about X being a red thing. Similarly, if we say "X is a circular thing," we are making a true statement about X being a circular thing. By classifying things in terms of their color properties, shape properties, or kind properties, realists claim that we are acknowledging that the features in question are real in the sense of being rooted in mind-independent facts. So for realists, objective classification manifests the way a mind-independent world or reality is. As Loux and Crisp remark, "there is little, if anything, that we can think or say, little, if anything, that counts as experience, that does not involve groupings of these kinds" (Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 17–18); see also Peter van Inwagen, "A Theory of Universals," in Zimmerman, *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, ch. 5.
  30. Here the question is ontological in nature.
  31. The universals invoked here are monadic or one-place universals that admit of a relation between a universal and a particular that exemplifies it. In addition to monadic universals, there are also many place or polyadic universals, i.e., relations. For example, X is five meters apart from Y. Here a relation of distance holds between two objects, X and Y. The realists' ontological characterization of properties as universals is also said to provide further ground in establishing their genuine existence.
  32. Realists claim that invoking universals allows us to make sense of the phenomena of (i) predication, (ii) exact similarity, and (iii) abstract reference. Regarding (i), realists argue that an adequate account of a subject-predicate statement of the form, "a is F" requires universals. Here an example of such a statement would be, "an apple is red." Realists argue that such a statement consists of both a linguistic structure and a non-linguistic structure. A linguistic structure consists of a subject term and a predicate term, each of which is said to play a referential role. For example, the subject term "an apple" refers to a particular apple, whereas the predicate term "is red" refers to a universal, redness.

But realists also argue that a particular apple's being red is something that is not determined by its linguistic structure. Rather, what determines an apple's being red is the way the world is. Hence, for realists, a referent of a predicate term is a non-linguistic entity. Besides properties, kinds and relations are also said to be referents of predicates. For details, see Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 23.

Regarding (ii), universals are said to be needed to account for exactly resembling objects. Of course, objects resemble each other in more than one respect. But in any respect in which any given two or more objects resemble each other, realists claim that universals are being implied. Consider, for example, one hundred exactly resembling white coffee cups dispersed all over the state of California. According to realists, the whiteness of one coffee cup is the same as the whiteness of the rest of the other cups. That is, all of these cups share in common a numerically identical property, whiteness. The hundred coffee cups simultaneously exemplify or instantiate a single whiteness. On the realists' view, a universal such as whiteness does not have spatio-temporal restrictions. That is, whiteness can be wholly present wherever its instantiators happen to be.

Regarding (iii), realists claim that universals enable us to account for the phenomenon of abstract reference. This is the notion that shows referential relations between properties. That is, abstract singular terms refer to properties or kinds, as opposed to objects. Properties are said to have other properties. That is, they can be predicated on other properties. Here is David Lewis's popular example, taken from his *Philosophical Papers, Volume I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983):

- (a) Red resembles orange more than it resembles blue.
- (b) Red is a color.

In the case of (a), the property of redness is said to resemble the property of orangeness more than it does the property of blueness. Similarly, in (b) the property of redness is said to be a color. Redness is said to be a first-order property that has a second-order property of being a color. Unlike an object like, say, a particular table, which is confined to a certain spatio-temporal location, properties are said to have no such limitations. Hence, as realists see it, properties are multiply exemplifiable entities. Understood this way, a predicate is a general term that is said to apply to multiple things at the same time. For instance, the predicate "is red" can be predicated of a red car, a red flag, a red fire engine, and so on. In this case, universals are said to ground

class membership. That is, all red things belong to the class of red things in virtue of sharing a common property, redness. So, realists think that by invoking universals, an adequate account of the phenomenon of attribute agreement can be given. However, I do not subscribe to the problematic claim that all predicates can be said to have referents. For example, "John is 15 feet tall." The extension of this predicate is empty, since no human being satisfies it; the statement does not pick out a particular human being that satisfies it.

33. Readers with extra motivation are encouraged to pay extra attention to the details given in endnotes.
34. Contemporary debates over these approaches are evolving from time to time.
35. Some philosophers do not use the terms "instantiate" and "exemplify" interchangeably; see E. J. Lowe, "In Defense of Substantial Universals," in the previously cited collection of Galluzzo and Loux, *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy*, ch. 3. But for present purposes, I continue using these terms interchangeably.
36. For details, see D. Armstrong, "How Do Particulars Stand to Universals?," in Zimmerman, *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, 141ff.; Edwards, *Properties*, 28–37; and E. J. Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), chs. 19 and 20.
37. For details, see Michael J. Loux, "An Exercise in Constituent Ontology," in Galluzzo and Loux, *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy*, ch. 1.
38. See for example, Lowe's above-cited "In Defense of Substantial Universals"; see also Gabriele Galluzzo, "A Kind Farewell to Platonism: For an Aristotelian Understanding of Kinds and Properties," in Galluzzo and Loux, *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy*, ch. 4.
39. See, e.g., Loux's previously cited "An Exercise in Constituent Ontology."
40. See, e.g., Lowe, "In Defense of Substantial Universals."
41. See Lowe, "In Defense of Substantial Universals," 73.
42. See also Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 110, and Galluzzo, "A Kind Farewell to Platonism," 86.
43. See P. van Inwagen, "Against Ontological Structure," in *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy*, ch. 2.
44. See van Inwagen, "Against Ontological Structure," 48–52; also see Moreland, *Universals*, and Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, ch. 1.
45. But in what sense the uninstantiated properties can be said to exist, as well as whether such entities should

- only be postulated in some restricted sense, continues to be a subject of intense discussion in metaphysics. For now, this issue need not concern us. For details, see Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, ch. 1.
46. For details, see Moreland, *Universals*, 7.
  47. See, e.g., Edwards, *Properties*, chs. 3–4.
  48. See, e.g., Willard Van Orman Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), ch. 1, esp. pp. 15–17.
  49. See, e.g., Edwards, *Properties*, ch. 4.
  50. See Keith Campbell, *Abstract Particulars* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1990), and again Campbell, “The Metaphysic of Abstract Particulars,” in *Properties*, eds. D. H. Mellor and Alex Oliver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), ch. X.
  51. Campbell, “The Metaphysic of Abstract Particulars.”
  52. See Moreland, *Universals*; Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, ch. 2; John Heil, “Universals in a World of Particulars,” in the previously cited *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy*, ch. 5; and Robert K. Garcia, “Is Trope Theory a Divided House?,” again in *The Problem of Universals in Contemporary Philosophy*, ch. 6.
  53. See Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 60–69.
  54. Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 61.
  55. Other brands of nominalism, such as predicate nominalism and concept nominalism, also echo the central claim of metalinguistic nominalism. See e.g., Edwards, *Properties*, ch. 5.
  56. See Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 77–79.
  57. See Daniel C. Dennett, “Intentional Systems,” *Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 4 (1971): 87–106.
  58. See, e.g., Loux, “An Exercise in Constituent Ontology.”
  59. See, e.g., Lowe, “In Defense of Substantial Universals.”
  60. See Lowe, “In Defense of Substantial Universals,” 73.
  61. See also Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 110; Galluzzo, “A Kind Farewell to Platonism,” 86.
  62. See van Inwagen, “Against Ontological Structure,” 50ff.
  63. See again Edwards, *Properties*, ch. 4.
  64. I owe this phrase to Frank Jackson’s *From Metaphysics to Ethics: A Defense of Conceptual Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
  65. See Guta, “The Non-Causal Account of the Spontaneous Emergence of Phenomenal Consciousness.”
  66. See D. Chalmers, “Strong and Weak Emergence,” in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion*, eds. Philip Clayton and Paul Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 244.
  67. See, e.g., John Searle, “Reductionism and the Irreducibility of Consciousness,” in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, eds. Mark A. Bedau and Paul Humphreys (Cambridge, MA: Bradford/MIT Press, 2008), ch. 3; Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God*.
  68. See, e.g., W. Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).
  69. See Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, and Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God*.
  70. See, e.g., Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God*, 182, and Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics*, 80–82. For an extensive discussion on the indexicality of “I,” see I. Brinck, *The Indexical “I”: The First Person in Thought and Language* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1997). See also L. R. Baker, *Persons and Bodies: A Constitution View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and again L. R. Baker, “Autism and ‘I,’” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 22, nos. 11–12 (2015): 180–193, esp. 183–185. I must note that I do not entirely endorse Baker’s characterization of what it means to be a person. However, for present purposes, I fully take on board her account of the importance of the first-person capacity.
  71. See Guta, “The Non-Causal Account of the Spontaneous Emergence of Phenomenal Consciousness.”
  72. Cf. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, and McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame*.
  73. J. P. Moreland, “The Argument from Consciousness,” in *The Rationality of Theism*, eds. Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser (New York: Routledge, 2003), 208.
  74. For now, identifying the precise type of dualist theory of mind is not pertinent.
  75. N. Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 120–121.
  76. Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?*, 57.
  77. N. Murphy and W. S. Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It? Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.
  78. N. Murphy, “Nonreductive Physicalism: Philosophical Issues,” in *Whatever Happened to the Soul?: Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, eds. W. S. Brown, N. Murphy, and H. N. Malony (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 130–131.
  79. Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?*, 60–69.
  80. See, e.g., Guta, “The Non-Causal Account of the Spontaneous Emergence of Phenomenal Consciousness,” and Guta, “Consciousness, First-Person

- Perspective, and Neuroimaging,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 22, nos. 11–12 (2015): 218–45.
81. McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame*, 11.
  82. See, e.g., M. R. Bennett and P. M. S. Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2022).
  83. See, e.g., Guta, “The Non-Causal Account of the Spontaneous Emergence of Phenomenal Consciousness,” 147–48; see also M. Owen, “Neural Correlates of Consciousness and the Nature of the Mind,” in *Consciousness and the Ontology of Properties*, ch. 14.
  84. For an interesting discussion on conceiving zombies and the modal issues associated with it, see D. O’Conaill, “What We Conceive of When We Conceive of Zombies,” in *Consciousness and the Ontology of Properties*, ch. 4.
  85. See for details, R. Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), ch. 16.
  86. See D. Parfit, “Personal Identity,” *The Philosophical Review* 80, no. 1 (1971): 3–27. For a book-length argument on this and related issues, see Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), esp. part 3. For problems regarding Parfit’s reductionist view, see Sorabji, *Self*, ch. 15.
  87. See, e.g., Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1991), ch. 13.
  88. See Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Dent, 1964), 239.
  89. See Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, and again Chalmers, *The Character of Consciousness*. Chalmers agreed with my observations in a face-to-face conversation at the Science of Consciousness Conference held at Arizona University in 2016.
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