

## Preface

The presence of sentience in a basically material reality is among the primary mysteries of existence. How does it fit? How could it have come about? What could be the point of it? Working cognitive scientists, psychologists, biologists, and neural researchers in general tend to ponder such questions only in their off hours. To carry on, they need only acknowledge that material states, typically brain states, *subserve* conscious ones. Further detail about the character of this loosely specified relation will neither accelerate nor impede their inquiries, nor will it require any reformulation of carefully studied conclusions. This is not to say that their work has never been integrated with such inquiries, but that is not because it is unfinished without it, but because they have caught the philosophy bug. Empirical studies require no more to proceed than something suspended tentatively between causal dependence and identity.

Philosophers, on the other hand, are passionate about these differences. They cannot leave the issue in a suspended state. In the present philosophical climate many have been hard at work to show that conscious states and properties really are, at bottom, nothing over and above the matter that brings them about. For some time those well-motivated efforts have struck me as less than satisfactory, and thus I have undertaken to try to find the source of my discomfort and to see whether it withstands careful scrutiny. I have come to no more helpful a conclusion than that there is little more to be said than that material configurations can give rise to uncharted consequences. The result I arrive at is that conscious properties and states are *emergents*, and that, although they depend for their existence on their material bases (a dependence summed up by supervenience or realization relations to the material), there are no further details to explain that dependence. The more general message is that there need be nothing

straightforwardly expectable about the gizmos that may result if one builds with enough materials in enough different configurations.

Not every serious philosopher shares the view that this is the best way to go about studying the nature of mental life. For example, even among those who agree that our mental life depends empirically on the physical, some affirm that once the mental takes off into complex emotions, moods, attitudes, humors, aspirations, or even grand ideas, it should be studied not by mucking about in our gray matter, but through the interrelations among such states or between them and our behavioral life. "It is simply wrongheaded to continue treating the mental as simply an exudation of matter!" There is no need to deny that there is something to this reaction. Given the less than stunning past performance of radical reductionisms, it is perfectly reasonable to map our mental lives in terms of relations such as those between longing and effort, inspiration and creation, frustration and desperation, hardship and motivation, and passionate affection and choices. Neural support may have only a minor part in such inquiries. However, that we have any conscious life at all calls for spade work that can't be carried out by starting from complexities within mental lives. Even if the critics to whom I have alluded think this general approach to mentality misguided, there are lessons to be learned from that enterprise.

Whether or not my assumption about the right starting point for this sort of inquiry is as plausible as I believe, I set out to show that conscious properties cannot be reduced to the physical reality on which they depend, identified with that reality, or given the right kind of materialist explanation in terms of that reality on which they nonetheless depend. In that sense, conscious properties have identities in tension with unconditional physicalisms. It is worthwhile to demonstrate that a measure of their autonomy survives even under those conditions. Any less of a defense of emergentism would be vulnerable to the charge that it is victorious only over a straw opponent. Thus, for argument's sake it may be conceded that conscious properties and states are realized by or strongly supervene on the physical. Indeed, I do not even rely on zombie or inverted-spectrum cases, in which conscious properties depend on the physical with only nomological necessity. Opposition to physicalism based on those cases has contrasted nomological with a more exacting metaphysical necessity. I raise no objection to the view that the sort of reliance the mind has on its physical base is only nomological. If that is the case, the dispute may continue on those grounds. However, there has been heated controversy over the intelligibility of thought experiments

involving zombies and inverted spectra, which my approach is able to avoid. I am wagering that emergentism can be shown to be defensible under yet more stringent debating conditions. Should conscious properties metaphysically depend on their material bases, my claim is that the grounds for distinguishing the conscious from its base do not disappear.

The state of the current literature has made it convenient to state the emergentist's claims negatively, as a way to assail orthodox physicalism. That is but a partial picture. I hope emergentism is also viewed as a contribution to our understanding of conscious aspects. It strikes me that emergentism does a better job of coming to grips with conscious phenomena than the competing doctrines reviewed in part II. Of course, many will be unsettled by the fact that this leaves us with a primitive, brute relation between the conscious and the physical. Claims of simple, brute, or primitive relationships between entities have not fared well historically. But then neither have the classical alternatives: infinite regresses or vicious circularity. On the other hand, as I sketchily explore in the epilogue, the generic dismissal of brute relations may itself be no more than a bit of trade lore that has been carelessly taken on board. Moreover, the ensuing account is not intended as an analysis. Rather, it should be understood as a mapping of logical geography between the conscious and the mental. No effort has been made to lay out that relation in a sanitized vocabulary, or to avoid circularities. Indeed, I believe that, if conceptual circularities are broad enough and incorporate sufficiently diverse nodes, instead of being marks against an account they may be symptoms that we have reached rock bottom.

No one seems to me to have done more to advance our understanding of these issues over the past forty years than Jaegwon Kim. Nevertheless, his views bear much of the burden of the criticism I level against physicalism. However, I can do no better than to repeat a remark I recall reading somewhere. Although I disagree sharply with some of his views, if it weren't for Kim I would have no views at all on the subject.

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