

Debate on the mind and scientific method (continued yet again) on <http://forums.philosophyforums.com>.

Quotations are in red and the responses by Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan) unless otherwise noted, are in black. Note that sometimes a quote (in red) contains a previous response. This is usually found at the beginning of the quoted portion (in red) and separated from the actual quote by a horizontal line. This is usually done to provide a context for the quote before responding to it.

I mentioned the Omphalos problem of creationists where God could have made the world last Thursday and only made it look ancient, but an even better example is the appearance of design in living organisms. It just intuitively strikes almost everyone that there must have been an intelligent designer to explain the diversity and complexity of life on Earth.

For the dualists, it's the oh so intuitively heartfelt position that there just has to be something (undetected) more to mind than the brain and it's electrochemical processes. Both positions, like DM's example of H₂O having non-physical properties, are unfalsifiable by science. And yet, since there is no positive evidence for either position- why do both types of supernaturalists cling so strongly to these beliefs?

I suppose a better question for philosophers is: why are these unsubstantiated beliefs so intuitively appealing to creationists and dualists alike?

By Probeman (John Donovan)

Monroe,

Quote:

OK so under this definition consciousness is automatically physical.

Yes. Under this definition *anything* which has observable effects, directly or indirectly, is physical. That is what this definition of physical means. That's the whole point.

Quote:

Here are my reasons. They might not be perfect but I hope it will show I have some rational basis for this position...

1) Statements about mental events seem very different from statements about the brain, hence it seems doubtful that brain-statements could logically entail mental statements.

This may seem to be a good intuitive reason, but it is not a rational one. On the contrary, it is nothing more than an argument from intuition. The same sort of thing could be said for any emergent phenomena of a complex system. How can you categorically deny that statements about mental events are statements about the brain, when we currently have only a very slight understanding of how the brain works? I would be surprised if there were *not* statements about something as complex as the brain that "seem" different than the simple obvious statements about the brain that you are referring to.

Quote:

2) The "What Mary Didn't Know" argument

A circular argument. The thought experiment assumes that there are facts about the experience that Mary will not know. It is simply assuming its conclusion, and relying on people's intuitive preconceptions to justify the assumption. There is certainly no justification within the argument for claiming that there are facts about the experience which Mary will not know. The argument just asserts that there are.

Quote:

3) P-zombies do not seem logically contradictory.

As we have already established in this discussion, they are only possible if we assume supernaturalism. The concept of p-zombies formulated by epiphenomenalists, in which the possibility of them implies that consciousness cannot be a brain process, *is* self contradictory. The only way p-zombies could be possible is if the mental properties the p-zombie lacks are the *actual* causes of people's behavior, and the brain processes which cause the p-zombie's behavior only *seem* to be causing our behavior. Under such a scenario, the possibility of such a p-zombie does **not** imply that consciousness cannot be a brain process.

The non-self-contradictory nature of such a p-zombie scenario does not indicate anything at all about the real world. It is no more relevant than the fact that the world being created 10 minutes ago is not logically self-contradictory.

Remember that the entire point of the p-zombie argument is to show that if p-zombies are logically possible, then consciousness cannot be a brain process. The entire argument *requires* that consciousness be causally inefficacious. A p-zombie argument in which consciousness is not causally inefficacious, does not accomplish this.

Quote:

4) The failure of neuroscience to give any partial explanation at all for why subjective experiences exist

This sounds shaky to me. We certainly don't have a complete explanation, but to say we don't even have a partial one seems rather out of touch with the facts. Besides, we don't have an explanation for how the brain works, so how could you possibly expect an explanation for how subjective experiences work, in terms of brain processes? Give us a chance! We are just now beginning to develop the technology we need to study the functioning of the brain in detail.

In any event, this is a classical argument from ignorance. There are many things which we have no scientific explanation for yet. That does not mean that such an explanation is impossible. Especially when you consider the short period of time that we have been scientifically studying the problem, and the fact that the brain is by far the most complex physical system we have ever attempted to understand. Subjective experiences are, if our theories are correct, the most high-level functions of the brain. It would be foolish to expect us to be able to explain it now, when we are still trying to understand how relatively simple brain functions like pattern recognition work.

Quote:

It is epistemically possible for me that my position is wrong, but as per the above I find it to be more rational than its negation. Also, the position does not predict the death of science in this domain, only that we have come across features of the world that are logically independent of each other. Science encounters these contingencies all the time.

You have presented nothing that in any way indicates that consciousness cannot be a set of brain processes. Only arguments from intuition and ignorance. You may consider such reasons to be rational reasons for

believing what you do, but they are not rational at all.

Quote:

I mean logical necessity, as in the mind is logically implied by all the information about the brain describable by physics and neurobio.

You do not apparently have any evidence that this is not the case, nor any valid arguments for why we should assume or conclude that it is not the case. Indeed, to say that it is not the case, is to claim that the mind is supernatural.

Quote:

Whether or not a third party can tell through casual observation, is irrelevant. It does affect your behavior. I don't need to be able to figure out how it affects your behavior, nor do I need to be able to determine what your mental states were from your behavior. That is a completely separate issue. If it affects your behavior at all, no matter how subtly, then it is physical. Those thoughts are going to influence your decisions. The effects may be so subtle that even you are not completely aware of how they affected your behavior, but they have affected it.

What evidence is there for this position?

Evidence? Like I said, there is no aspect of my mind that I know of that does not affect my behavior in some way. I am just assuming that the same is true for you. Maybe my assumption is wrong. Maybe my mind only consists of brain processes, and you really do have some supernatural ghost in the machine. But if you are like me, then your thoughts do affect your behavior, even if the effects are so subtle that somebody else observing you cannot infer your thoughts from your behavior.

A cannot think of any aspect of my mind that does not affect my behavior. Can you?

Quote:

You seem to say that there isn't any when you say that there is always some subtle difference whether or not we can tell it is there. In any case, there does not seem to be any theoretical reason that there should always be a behavioral difference.

How can there be a theoretical reason without a theory? That doesn't even make any sense. As I have said before, the first observation I make about my own mind is that every aspect of it seems to affect my behavior in some way. That means *my* mind is physical. Science also tells me that my actions are determined by my brain. The conclusion is pretty obvious, my mind is something happening in my brain. As for other people, like you, science tells me that your actions are also determined by your brain. Maybe they are not. Maybe something supernatural is involved. But there is certainly no reason for me to think that there is.

Maybe it's different for you. Maybe you have thoughts which, no matter how much you might want to, you cannot act on in any way. But even if this were the case, the fact that it is could not be influencing this discussion. In fact, no aspect of your mind which does not have physical effects, could possibly be influencing your contribution to this discussion in any way. That right there pretty much illustrates the silliness of such an argument. Even if you *did* know about some aspect of your mind which doesn't have any physical effects, you couldn't tell anybody about it. You couldn't even base any of your voiced opinions on it. Indeed, you would be forced to behave exactly as if you *did not know about them at all*. It would be like being a ghost trapped inside of somebody, but unable to do anything. Is that how you really feel? Don't bother to answer, because even if it is, you couldn't tell me it is.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

Monroe,

Quote:

You just admitted that p-zombies are not logically contradictory. This proves my position that the mind is not logically necessitated by the brain. QED, end of story.

No, that's just the point I was making, which you seem to have completely missed.

The p-zombie argument as presented by Chalmers requires not only that the p-zombie's brain is identical to ours, but also that what he calls the physical world (everything made of ordinary matter and energy) be causally closed. That second assumption is critical to the argument.

Chalmers explains all of this quite clearly in his p-zombie argument.

Quote:

Also, the argument does not require consciousness to be causally inert for us, just that if you think consciousness is not inert, then the causal structure of a p-zombie is very different from ours. But not all causal structures are necessarily the way they are.

Then you cannot conclude the logical impossibility of consciousness being logically necessitated by the brain from the logical possibility of p-zombies.

Maybe this will clarify things. Chalmers' argument is that there is a possible world in which people are identical in every observable way to people in this world, but in which consciousness does not exist. He also claims that the natural laws which govern that zombie world are the same as those which govern this world. If this is true, then consciousness cannot be logically necessitated by the brain, because that would mean that in this other possible world, their identical brains would have to produce consciousness, just like in ours.

Now your scenario is different. You claim that there are *two* possible worlds. One in which people are, in every *observable* way identical to people here, but in which their brains are the cause of all their behavior. And another in which people are also in every observable way identical to people here, but in which some completely undetectable spirit is the actual cause of their behavior, and in which the fact that science indicates that their brains are causing their behavior, is due to the fact that the assumptions of science are not met in that world.

You then go on to *claim* that our world is actually that second one. But you have provided no justification for this claim. Our world could be the first one, in which case my theory is right.

What the people in world (1) call "consciousness" is logically necessitated by their brains, because the natural laws which govern their world work the way they do. What they are calling consciousness does not exist in world (2) because the natural laws of world (1) do not obtain in world (2). In Chalmers' scenario, the natural laws which govern both the real world and zombie world are the same. That is the only way the conclusion that it is impossible for our consciousness to be logically necessitated by our brains, can be reached. If we assume the laws of nature are different in the two worlds, then no conclusions about what the brain necessitates in this world can be drawn from what it does or does not necessitate in another, because those natural laws are what *determine* what brains do and do not necessitate.

We could be in world (1) or world (2) of your scenario. The fact that world (2) is logically possible does not mean that consciousness in our world cannot be logically necessitated by our brains. It just means that if consciousness in our world *is* logically necessitated by our brains, then the natural laws which determine

what is and is not logically necessitated by particular structures and processes, are different in our world and world (2).

Quote:

Evidence? Like I said, there is no aspect of my mind that I know of that does not affect my behavior in some way. I am just assuming that the same is true for you. Maybe my assumption is wrong. Maybe my mind only consists of brain processes, and you really do have some supernatural ghost in the machine. But if you are like me, then your thoughts do affect your behavior, even if the effects are so subtle that somebody else observing you cannot infer your thoughts from your behavior.

A cannot think of any aspect of my mind that does not affect my behavior. Can you?

Yes, I already gave an example: private thoughts that are not acted on never discussed with other people, like sitting in a chair contemplating something intellectual. For example, I thought for a second about responding to other parts of your post but changed my mind. What were they and what was I thinking of saying? I'll never tell anyone and I'll probably forget.

This is really quite silly. Are you seriously claiming that these thoughts have no physical effects? Let me get this straight. You sit and think about something. In order for you to talk about it later, those thoughts have to physically affect you in some way. Are you seriously suggesting that they only physically affect you if, at some point in the future, you are going to act on them? How do they know what you are or are not going to do later?

If it is possible for the thoughts you are having now to influence your overt behavior at some point in the future, then those thoughts must be influencing your brain right now. Clearly this is what is happening. The scientific evidence concerning how memories work supports this. I suppose without that evidence you could claim that the spirit does all the thinking and remembering and decision making, and just drives the brain. But this is simply not the case. And even then, this spirit is clearly physical, as evidenced by its ability to control the body. All you end up with here is supernatural spiritualism. Again, if you assume that the spirit influences the brain in supernatural ways, so that they can never be understood scientifically, then of course that is possible. But this is no more compatible with epiphenomenalism than the mind-brain hypothesis is. The entire point is that no matter how you cut things, the claim that the mind is causally inefficacious, is simply false.

With epiphenomenalism out of the picture, Chalmers' p-zombie argument is null and void. All that is left is arguments from intuition and claims of supernaturalism.
By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

Monroe,

Quote:

We have to be clear about the level of necessity. Yes I suppose there is a 'law of nature' that brain events cause mental events. I am only saying there are possible worlds in which this law does not hold, and all other laws except those relevant to mind-brain interaction hold. All the general laws of physics are the same in both worlds, but the laws governing creatures with minds in this world are different in that they bypass the mental and preserve the same causal structures otherwise.

What I am going for is that the mind-brain causal connection requires special laws which are not reducible to the laws of physics as we know them.

That's fine. But the fact that such a scenario is possible in no way implies that it is not also possible that all aspects of the mind which are knowable, are explainable entirely in terms of brain processes.

As I explained before, to make the leap from the logical possibility of p-zombies to the impossibility of consciousness being a brain process *in this world*, requires that the laws of nature governing how brains work be identical in both worlds. If you add to your p-zombie scenario that this is the case, then it is no longer necessarily true that your scenario is logically possible. Indeed, if I am right, and consciousness can be explained scientifically in terms of brain processes, then such a scenario is not logically possible, because it would logically contradict the laws of nature in this world.

In such a case, all you could claim is that I cannot prove that your scenario is logically impossible. That does not mean that it is actually logically possible. It may or may not be. Neither of us knows. You can claim that *as far as we know*, your scenario is possible, but that is not the same as it being logically possible.

Quote:

no i am claiming that there may not be any effect on overt behavior. there may well be an effect on the brain, and i believe there is.

Then we are in agreement, on this point at least. So epiphenomenalism is out. That kills the p-zombie argument quite dead. What is left?

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

Monroe,

Quote:

But if what is required to logically necessitate consciousness from the brain are special mind-brain laws outside the physical laws we know, then the spirit of my argument holds, that minds cannot be derived from our current conception of what the fundamental physical laws are.

That's a pretty big "if". In any event, it is not one which you have any evidence to support. You cannot claim that it is logically possible that this is the case. At best, you can only claim that I cannot (yet) prove that it is logically impossible.

Quote:

Then we are in agreement, on this point at least. So epiphenomenalism is out. That kills the p-zombie argument quite dead. What is left?

p-zombies in a world with different natural laws, but the same laws as in our current models of physics

Great, but again, is there any rational reason to think that such a scenario is the way things actually are? I did not ask for theoretically possible alternatives to the scientific mind-brain hypothesis. I can invent as many of those as I could ever want, all on my own. What I asked for was some reason why we should think that the current scientific mind-brain hypothesis is wrong? So far, you have presented only arguments from

intuition and theoretically possible alternatives for which there is no supporting evidence.
By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

I think you have misread my post. I did not say that I claim that there is nothing more to the mind than brain processes. I said that there is no evidence that there is anything more to the mind than brain processes, and no reason to think that there is.

Put simply, I do not claim that the mind (or anything else) does not have non-physical properties. I simply see no reason to think that they do.

That seems queer to me. There appears no reason why the mind has non-physical properties? Where and when has there been a scientific theory that identifies sensations, beliefs, and other conscious states with physical properties. Science discusses and studies brain states and their physical properties, not mental states.

Please see above in this thread where I explained to Monroe what I mean by "physical". The question of whether mental properties are reducible (epistemologically or ontologically) to brain states, is quite distinct from the question of whether or not they are physical properties. To say that they are physical properties means only that they have affects on other physical things. Nothing more and nothing less.

The fact that every mental property which I know I have, is physical, is trivial. The question of whether or not they are brain processes is another question entirely.

Quote:

I have claimed only that some properties of the mind are physical properties (meaning that they have physical effects). This is indisputable.

But that is a philosophical position, thus highly disputable. Science tells us about physical states affecting other physical states, but I've yet to hear anything about psycho-physical links.

Again, I just got through specifying that by physical, I mean it has physical effects. You are talking about something else entirely. You are using the term "physical" in the metaphysical sense, referring to some sort of ontological substance. That is not what I am talking about.

Quote:

As to any non-physical properties the mind may or may not have, I can only say that if it does have any, I do not know about them.

Non-physical properties are beliefs and sensations. Surely you know those properties. If anything in this world is indisputable, it is the fact that we know the contents of our minds.

My beliefs and sensations clearly affect my behavior. Thus they are physical.

Quote:

I am quite aware that many scientists make the additional metaphysical assumption that only physical properties exist, and that therefore many of them will tell you that water is nothing over and above H₂O. They cannot, however, legitimately claim that this is implied by the scientific evidence. Their conclusion is based on the combination of scientific epistemology and their metaphysical assumptions, not on science alone.

Bu you to make metaphysical assumptions, viz. that water, ontologically speaking, is not H2O. In fact, I would say most scientists would disagree with your philosophical position.

What?? Where did I make that assumption? I never claimed that water is not ontologically identical to H2O.

Quote:

As to the solution to the epistemological problem of other minds, that is quite simple. The theory that other people have minds, is not only the simplest explanation for the similarities between their behavior and my own, but is also both falsifiable, and well supported by scientific evidence.

But that's precisely wrong for the problem of other minds cannot be falsified, at least not via science or "scientific epistemology." In fact, the simpler explanation is that we have no minds.

Nonsense. The general hypothesis that other people have minds cannot be falsified, because it is too general. It makes no specific testable claims. That does not mean that a falsifiable theory for the existence of other minds is impossible. It just means that to be falsifiable, the theory must do more than just baldly assert their existence.

The hypothesis that other people do not have minds, is not simpler by any stretch of the imagination. It is, indeed, more complicated, because it asserts the existence of something else, a pseudo-mind, which is responsible for the effects on other people's behavior which my mind has on my own behavior. Clearly it is simpler to assume that the reason that other people behave in a similar manner to the way I do, is that their behavior is caused by the same sort of processes as my own.

Look at it this way. I know I have a mind, because I define the term "mind" to refer to my own thoughts and subjective experiences. I also know that my mind strongly affects my behavior. This leaves me with two options:

- 1) Other people also have minds, similar to mine, and that is why they behave similarly to me.
- 2) Other people do not have minds. Something else influences their behavior in a manner similar to the way my mind influences my behavior.

Not only is option (1) the simpler hypothesis to begin with, but it is also the one which is supported by evidence, since there does not appear to be anything special about me.

Quote:

What is a subjective fact? There is no such thing as subjective facts about experiences. There are facts about subjective experiences, but they are still objective facts about the world. Anyway, neither experiences nor memories are facts about experiences, and those are what science cannot provide us with. You have presented neither argument nor evidence to support the claim that there are facts about our experiences which science cannot tell us.

What are subjective facts? Quite simply, they are the fact we come to know by experiencing them. For example, when a human tastes coffee, he learns that coffee has a peculiar taste. It is subjective because one can only know what coffee tastes like by tasting it.

That is not a fact you are talking about. It is the memory of an experience. There are facts about that experience, and facts about the memory, for example, the fact that the coffee tastes bitter. But those are objective facts about the subjective experience.

Quote:

Unless one tastes coffee, one will never know how it tastes like. And it is a fact that coffee tastes a certain way (for humans). They are non-propositional facts; which simply means that they are facts that cannot be understood by propositions, but rather, by experiences.

They are not facts at all. They are memories of experiences. Referring to them as facts is nothing more than an intuitively motivated abuse of language.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

The fact that every mental property which I know I have, is physical, is trivial. The question of whether or not they are brain processes is another question entirely.

On the contrary, ontologically reducing mental properties to brain states is the same thing as stating that mental properties are physical properties for brain states are physical properties.

Only if you are using a metaphysical definition of "physical" which refers to some ontological substance. I have already explained multiple times that this is **not** how I am using the term. When I say that something is physical, I am not asserting that it is reducible to some mysterious ontological substance called "matter". I am simply stating that it has effects on the observable world.

Quote:

Again, I just got through specifying that by physical, I mean it has physical effects. You are talking about something else entirely. You are using the term "physical" in the metaphysical sense, referring to some sort of ontological substance. That is not what I am talking about.

Lets me see if I understand you properly. In his classic paper "The "mental" and the "physical"" (1958), Herbert Feigl distinguishes two senses of "physical": physical1 and physical2. Physical1 is practically synonymous with "scientific" – applying whatever is "an essential part of the coherent and adequate descriptive and explanatory account of the spatiotemporal world." Physical2 means "the type of concepts and laws which suffice in principle for the explanation and prediction of inorganic processes."

It would seem that if Cartesian Dualism were true, supposing that possible, then once an integrated science of the interaction of immaterial souls and material bodies had been developed, concepts for describing the former would count as Physical1.

Are you saying that mental properties are physical1 but not physical2?

Almost. First of all, the definition of physical I am using is not quite as strong as physical1 above. My definition does not require that the thing be scientifically explainable. In other words, physical1 entails my definition of physical, but not vice versa. That said, the assumption that the axioms of science are true would render my definition of physical identical to physical1. The definition itself does not require that those axioms be true, as it is simply a definition, and not a claim about the nature of the world.

As for physical2, the distinction seems pretty meaningless to me. Any set of concepts and laws which are truly *sufficient* for explaining and predicting inorganic processes, must clearly also suffice for explaining and predicting *anything* which has any sort of affect at all on those inorganic processes. This makes physical2 pretty much the same as physical1. I am not sure what Feigl thinks is so special about organic

processes anyway. They certainly seem to function according to the same natural laws as everything else.

What I am saying is simply that I am not talking about any sort of ontological meaning of "physical". Substance Dualism holds that there are two distinct substances, "matter" and "mind", which somehow interact with each other. Even if this is true, under my definition of "physical", all properties of both of these substances which are either observable, or have some sort of effect on other observable properties, are physical properties. Whether they are ontologically "material" or "mind" is irrelevant.

Quote:

My beliefs and sensations clearly affect my behavior. Thus they are physical.

Your beliefs and sensations clearly have different properties from your physical properties, thus they are not physical.

Again, under the definition of physical I am using, the above is simply nonsense. You are simply declaring some set of properties to be "my physical properties", and then claiming that since my sensations and beliefs are not in that set, they are not physical. My point is that my beliefs and sensations are every bit as worthy of being included in the set of "physical things" as anything else which I call physical. They meet exactly the same criteria for being physical that anything else that is a part of the physical world does. Your assertion that they are not physical is based on an archaic and incoherent concept of physicality which was rejected by science as being essentially useless nearly a century ago.

Quote:

What?? Where did I make that assumption? I never claimed that water is not ontologically identical to H₂O.

You said "I see no point in making ontological claims of any kind. They are all blind speculation, with no relevance to anything that actually has any impact on our lives." I said scientists make ontological claims all the time, e.g. H₂O = water. Then you said that you are well aware scientists make this metaphysical assumptions, but there are not justified to make such claim given the evidence. I replied that that's your philosophy of science that water cannot be ontologically reduced to H₂O.

No, what you said was this:

Quote:

Bu you to make metaphysical assumptions, viz. that water, ontologically speaking, is not H₂O. In fact, I would say most scientists would disagree with your philosophical position.

I would think that you would understand the distinction between making the claim that water is not ontologically equivalent to H₂O, and the statement that science cannot *show* that water is ontologically reducible to H₂O. I am not making a metaphysical claim here. I am saying that science, as an epistemological method, cannot be used to justify a metaphysical claim.

Quote:

Nonsense. The general hypothesis that other people have minds cannot be falsified, because it is too general. It makes no specific testable claims. That does not mean that a falsifiable theory for the existence of other minds is impossible. It just means that to be falsifiable, the theory must do more than just baldly assert their existence.

The hypothesis that other people do not have minds, is not simpler by any stretch of the imagination. It is, indeed, more complicated, because it asserts the existence of something else, a pseudo-mind, which is responsible for the effects on other people's behavior which my mind has on my own behavior. Clearly it is simpler to assume that the reason that other people behave in a similar manner to the way I do, is that their behavior is caused by the same sort of processes as my own.

Hardly at all. According to eliminativists, the only thing that exists inside our heads are brains states, not minds. And it is these brain states, not minds, that explain our behavior. Perhaps you're confusing the problem of other minds with the problem of other brains. We know other people have brains because we can see their brains. But do they have minds?

I think you need to make an attempt to understand the eliminativist position better. In any event, I have not claimed to be one, so I fail to see how the above in any way addresses my point.

Quote:

The problem of other minds claims that one cannot jump from other "I have a mind" to "others have minds."

I am not "jumping" from "I have a mind" to "others have minds". I am presenting it as a possible explanation for what I observe, formulating the theory in a specific falsifiable way, and then scientifically testing it.

Quote:

Now, I guess, one could argue that if my mind explains my behavior, then the view that we all have minds is simpler than one person in the world has a mind and the rest of the world does not. I guess the counter argument would be that claiming all persons exhibiting complex behavior have minds is the more complex theory.

And that counter argument would be fallacious, since that is clearly *not* the more complex theory.

Quote:

They are not facts at all. They are memories of experiences. Referring to them as facts is nothing more than an intuitively motivated abuse of language.

Memories are experiences, and experiences are non-propositional facts. So memories are non-propositional facts.

I am not interested in getting into a semantic debate with you. Call them whatever you want. The fact that you choose to stretch the definition of the word "fact" to include things like memories of experiences, does not refute, or even address, any of my arguments.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Monroe**

Until the early-mid 20th century (I think), it was not mainstream in science to say that life doesn't seem to operate according to different principles from nonlife.

The scientific distinction between living (organic) and non-living (inorganic) material was abandoned in the mid 19th century with the advent of chemistry. The carbon atoms in your brain are the same carbon atoms as in a crystal of sugar or silicon carbide.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Monroe**

As for why someone would see life as different from nonlife, it is commonly believed that living things can be described as operating intentionally, while nonliving things cannot.

Here's an intuition pump: if you think that an amoeba and its capacity for avoiding harm (recoil) and seeking of benefit (engulf) has some microscopically larger amount of intentionality than a pebble, then you might begin to understand how intentionality (intentional behavior) could simply be an emergent property of complex chemical reactions (which is pretty much what an amoeba is).

If the amoeba example is too much of a leap, consider a virus. Does a virus have more capacity for intentionality than a pebble?

By Probeman (John Donovan)

Monroe,

Quote:

OK let's refine: laws which are sufficient for explaining inorganic processes not causally interacting with living processes. This is a meaningful distinction. As for why someone would see life as different from nonlife, it is commonly believed that living things can be described as operating intentionally, while nonliving things cannot. Until the early-mid 20th century (I think), it was not mainstream in science to say that life doesn't seem to operate according to different principles from nonlife.

Yes, I get what you are saying. I am just saying that the distinction is moot, since living matter seems to operate according to the same natural laws as non-living matter. Indeed, the distinction is meaningless, since there is no clear distinction between living and non-living. Instead there is a continuum. This is really getting away from the issue of consciousness, too. We don't need any special natural laws to describe how things like cells work, or to understand organic chemistry.

Quote:

Your assertion that they are not physical is based on an archaic and incoherent concept of physicality which was rejected by science as being essentially useless nearly a century ago.

What historically are you referring to?

I am referring to the concept of matter and physicality that was held by materialists and dualists prior to the 1900's. It was largely the discovery of Quantum Mechanics and Relativity that forced both scientists and philosophers to reconsider many of their intuitive preconceptions about the nature of reality, and in particular, about the nature of the observable world. Put simply, I am talking about the concept of matter as an ontological substance, rather than as a label we attach to things which can be either directly or indirectly observed.

Quote:

But I think while we can even give a "mechanical" or "naturalistic" definition of intentionality applicable to many contexts including both biology and computer systems, from what I've seen so far there seem to be too many counterexamples for any of the current candidates to apply to the intentionality of the human mind. If we take the notion of human mental intentionality as primary, the mechanical-reduction versions are seen as merely manners of speaking or metaphors, especially in the case of computers. From my experience, the use of such intentional metaphors mystifies computers and hinders an understanding of how they really work.

Interesting that you should say that. Most neuroscientists would say the same thing about the human mind. Namely that our concept of things like intentionality are so intuitively misguided as to be less than useless. That by trying to understand how our minds work in terms of these artificial and largely imaginary constructs which we intuitively think of as being equivalent to our minds, we actually hinder our ability to understand how the mind actually works. This is, in fact, the entire basis of eliminativism. The idea that our intuitive conception of things like "belief", "sensation", "intention", and so on, are so loaded with intuitive misconceptions and false preconceived notions, that they really cannot be meaningfully said to exist at all. Contrary to the strawman characterization popular among dualists, they do not claim that our minds do not exist at all, but rather that the various concepts we classically use to describe the mind, such as "beliefs" and "intentions", do not accurately represent anything that actually exists, and that if we want to try to

understand the mind as it really is, we need to abandon these misconceptions and poorly defined terms, and instead look at what is really there. Namely brain activity and behavior.
By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Monroe**

I have no problem seeing living processes as reducible to mechanical ones, at least theoretically. However, I read an interesting piece by biologist Hans Drisch circa 1920 arguing against a mechanical explanation of sea urchin embryology. Very interesting really and highly accessible; I recommend it. I don't know how the debate played out over the years though, but I suspect refinements in biochemistry render his arguments much weaker these days.

To say the least. In fact at least one simple bacteriophage has been completely synthesized from basic chemicals:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/scienc...life-usat_x.htm

http://www.economist.com/science/di...tory_id=2224008

There is no question that bacteria are next, it is only a matter of time, but more complicated "artificial" life will more likely be the result of genetic manipulation. Who wants to spend years mixing chemicals together when one can just tweak a few genes?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Monroe**

But I think while we can even give a "mechanical" or "naturalistic" definition of intentionality applicable to many contexts including both biology and computer systems, from what I've seen so far there seem to be too many counterexamples for any of the current candidates to apply to the intentionality of the human mind. If we take the notion of human mental intentionality as primary, the mechanical-reduction versions are seen as merely manners of speaking or metaphors, especially in the case of computers. From my experience, the use of such intentional metaphors mystifies computers and hinders an understanding of how they really work.

This is exactly the intuitive attitude that Dennett argues against in describing his notion of the "intentional stance" as a means to understanding consciousness in a manner that makes scientific sense.

In this argument he argues against the kind of "greedy reductionism" that I describe above, which tries to reduce everything to chemicals or even worse, atoms or quarks. Yes, in principle, everything on Earth could be described in terms of sub-atomic particles and their interactions, but that would not provide the useful kinds of knowledge that we get from geology, biology or cognitive studies.

In science, one should generally try to study a process from the highest level that explains the problem one is trying to understand. For a mundane example, when playing against a chess computer, one would not attempt to understand the computer's game strategy by measuring voltages on various circuits. Instead, one treats the computer as an "intentional" system that only "makes sense" by looking at the emergent behavior (even though it originates from the voltages, chips and wires). Rather, one would say: "If I move there, the computer might take my queen, but not if the computer is fooled by my rook's feint."

So far as science can discern, both the computer and the human chess player are mere mechanisms, but yet, whose behavior can only be understood by treating them as "intentional" systems with reasons to "avoid" harm and seek "benefit."

I realize that these topics are difficult and when it gets personal it really gets difficult. I have a student that recently told me: "I can understand how evolution could apply to plants and even animals, but I have a

problem when it's applied to humans."

This is very understandable- when it gets personal, emotions start to run high. No one wants to think of themselves as a complex chemical reaction, like photosynthesis, but there really is no evidence to the contrary that our atoms or genes are made of anything different than those of plants and animals. The difference is in the arrangements of the material.

Yes, when it comes to intentionality, things get more interesting. Yes, One can see how an amoeba has infinitely more intentionality than a pebble and and we might even see how, by multiplying complexity into new emergent properties, we might eventually obtain the intentionality in a cat, but yet there does appear to be something especially more intentional in a human being.

By analogy, in an evolutionary sense one might argue that even though the offspring of mammals can differ slightly from their parents, there can never be mammals, because no mammal can be born from a non-mammal. But of course, we now know that small changes accumulated over large expanses of time can result in completely new forms and new behaviors resulting in mammal behavior, then primate behavior, and then human behavior.

Those differences in behavior, though still based on the same "chemical intentionality" derived from our lowly amoeba, is what makes us human. Now as far as what specific mechanisms contributed to this explosion of intentionality is still controversial, but most scientists agree that the ability, to talk to one self and others, has been a major factor in providing self-representation and narrative consciousness.

Here where I make my plug for you to read the chapter summaries of Dennett's *Consciousness Explained*, because this is the very topic that he discusses.

<http://forums.philosophyforums.com/...read.php?t=6331>

The last posting I just put up yesterday describes how one might model the subjective and narrative sense of consciousness that we seem to have, a full reading of the chapter summaries would be helpful I suspect.
By Probeman (John Donovan)

Monroe,

Quote:

The problem is that the words "belief", "sensation", etc, have meaning defined in terms of direct observation. They are not theoretical entities whose existence is merely postulated.

I would tend to agree with you, which is why I do not consider myself an eliminativist. But not everybody defines those terms in the straightforward and unassuming way we do. I have, on many occasions, had discussions with people who insist on defining pretty much *every* term we use when discussing the mind, in such a way as to completely load them down with dualistic preconceptions and assumptions. Such people often insist that any attempt to define these terms in a way that does not make such assumptions, is an abuse of the language, and thus refuse to even consider that those preconceptions may be wrong. When faced with such an opponent, my only option is to flat out say "I do not think that what *you* are calling _____, actually exists". And blammo, I am suddenly an eliminativist.

Put bluntly, eliminativists are people who have given up on trying to divorce people's preconceptions about the mind from the terms we use to refer to it, and instead think that the best approach is to simply abandon the archaic language that has classically been used to refer to the mind, and start over from scratch in a completely scientifically oriented way. The *content* of their position concerning the mind is really no

different than that of the scientific reductionists (and I am talking about epistemological reduction here, not ontological reductionism). What differs is the terminology, and the approach in terms of the role psychology should play in the investigation.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Only if you are using a metaphysical definition of "physical" which refers to some ontological substance. I have already explained multiple times that this is not how I am using the term. When I say that something is physical, I am not asserting that it is reducible to some mysterious ontological substance called "matter". I am simply stating that it has effects on the observable world.

Physical does refer to a substance, viz. matter or mass. If you are saying physical simply means having physical efficacy, then you are using Feigl's physica2, which allows for a science of souls so long as they have causal efficacy in the physical world.

Isn't that what I just said? Hence my statement that I am not talking about an ontological substance when I say "physical".

Quote:

I would think that you would understand the distinction between making the claim that water is not ontologically equivalent to H₂O, and the statement that science cannot show that water is ontologically reducible to H₂O. I am not making a metaphysical claim here. I am saying that science, as an epistemological method, cannot be used to justify a metaphysical claim.

And again, that is your philosophy of science. Science does not claim that water is ontologically equivalent or not equivalent to H₂O.

Yes, that is what I said. You said that I was making the metaphysical assertion that science claims that they are not ontologically equivalent. I was not.

Quote:

Philosophies of science, such as realism or instrumentalism, make such claims. You, it seems, fall in the instrumentalist camp. However, in the scientific community, that is the minority camp.

The metaphysical views of scientists are not relevant to the question of what science can and can not do. Most scientists understand the distinction between science, and metaphysical interpretations of science.

Anyway, I don't see your point. The fact remains that, regardless of what metaphysical assumptions individual scientists choose to make about the world, science itself cannot say anything about ontology without making reference to metaphysical assumptions about reality, and science does not require any of those metaphysical assumptions to work.

I really could not care less what additional assumptions about the world specific scientists, or even the majority of scientists, make. So long as they understand the distinction between what science tells us, and

what they infer from what science has told us using their own metaphysical assumptions.

Quote:

I am not "jumping" from "I have a mind" to "others have minds". I am presenting it as a possible explanation for what I observe, formulating the theory in a specific falsifiable way, and then scientifically testing it.

My point is that your explanation does not solve the problem of other minds. Just because your explanation could be true, is not enough. "Could be true" also means "could be false."

Nifty. Then by your reasoning the problem cannot be solved, so what are we even talking about?

The reason I consider my explanation to be a solution to the problem is because it is a scientific theory for which there is substantial supporting empirical evidence. Sure, it could be false. So could any explanation about anything, scientific or otherwise.

Quote:

I am not interested in getting into a semantic debate with you. Call them whatever you want. The fact that you choose to stretch the definition of the word "fact" to include things like memories of experiences, does not refute, or even address, any of my arguments.

If your argument is that you stretch the word "physical" to mean anything with causal efficacy, including souls, then that does not affect my argument that mental properties are not physical properties – which is what physicalism claims because physicalism is an ontological doctrine.

Then I guess I am not a physicalist. At least not by the definition you are apparently using. What this has to do with neuroscience, and the ability to explain consciousness in terms of brain activity, I cannot even imagine. I really could not care less whether you believe that mental properties are a different ontological substance than brains. The simple fact is that I don't know whether they are or not, and neither do you.
By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

But you have it wrong again. Most scientists are making ontological claims

Most *people* make ontological claims. Scientists are people, and in general are no different in this regard. The mere fact that somebody is a scientist does not magically transform every claim they make into a scientific one. And besides, most scientists are able to separate their scientific and non-scientific beliefs and claims.

Quote:

they say your distinction between how things are and what science says is a semantic distinction.

Who says this? Most scientists? Any evidence to back this up? And any explanation why I should care about the non-scientific opinions of people who happen to be scientists any more than I should care about the non-scientific opinions of anybody else?

Quote:

According to them water is H₂O, and physical things really are mass, matter and energy.

Again, even if this is the case, why should I concern myself with the metaphysical speculation of people just because they are scientists?

Quote:

Furthermore, the way these physical things interact with one another is really how they interact with one another. You need stronger arguments other than these scientists are making assumptions. They will tell you that science tells us water is H₂O. And they're right.

You need more than appeals to authority and baseless assertions. I would say that attempting to make any distinction between water and H₂O is *meaningless*, and many scientists would agree with me, because we think that metaphysics is fundamentally meaningless. But this is a philosophical conclusion about the nature of metaphysics, not a metaphysical conclusion about the nature of water and H₂O. And as for those who do think metaphysics is meaningful, and believe that water and H₂O are ontologically identical, they can believe whatever they want. It is still a metaphysical belief, not a scientific fact.

Quote:

You're the one who raised the issue that the problem of other minds has a scientific solution, not me. To say the problem is solved because your theory is both possibly true and possibly false doesn't solve the problem. In fact, it says nothing.

Why do you feel the need to misrepresent my position. I have not claimed that the problem is solved because my theory is both possibly true and possibly false. I have claimed that the problem is solved because my theory provides a solution for which there is extensive supporting evidence.

Quote:

Then I guess I am not a physicalist. At least not by the definition you are apparently using. What this has to do with neuroscience, and the ability to explain consciousness in terms of brain activity, I cannot even imagine. I really could not care less whether you believe that mental properties are a different ontological substance than brains. The simple fact is that I don't know whether they are or not, and neither do you.

But we do know they are different properties. If you can tell that blue is a different property from green, then you can tell a mental sensation is a different property from that of atoms bouncing around.

Non-sequitur. Your conclusion not only does not follow from your premise, but does not even have any logical connection to your premise. And as if that was not enough, even if your conclusion *were* justified, it would not say anything at all about mental properties being a different ontological substance than brains. At most, it would show that they are not ontologically reducible to brains, but that alone does not imply substance dualism.

Anyway, when you can come up with reliable evidence showing that mental properties cannot be explained in terms of brain activity, let me know. If and when that happens, our current scientific theories about the mind will be rejected, and the new evidence can be used to construct better ones. Until then, you can claim to know that substance dualism is true all you want, but you are only fooling yourself.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

If appealing to science is an appeal to authority, then so be it.

You did not appeal to science. You appealed to the *opinion* of *some* scientists on *non-scientific issues*. That is a perfect example of the appeal to authority fallacy.

Quote:

Science claims water really is H₂O. Go read the periodic table.

Saying it over and over again is not going to make it true. Science claims only that water can be described in terms of molecular theory as two hydrogen and one oxygen atoms covalently bonded together. It says *absolutely nothing* about ontology. I have provided extensive justification for my stating this, and you have offered nothing more than the unjustified metaphysical beliefs of *some* scientists to justify your claim that it does.

Quote:

If you say that science makes no claims about water really is, then prove to me where science actually claims this? What journal, theory, or institution has actually claim such nonsense?

You should really read what you just wrote again.

Seriously, this is just silly. I say that science *doesn't* make ontological claims, and you demand that I prove where science claims this? Claims what? What am I claiming that science claims? **You** are the one insisting that science claims something, not I. **You** prove it.

Quote:

Why do you feel the need to misrepresent my position. I have not claimed that the problem is solved because my theory is both possibly true and possibly false. I have claimed that the problem is solved because my theory provides a solution for which there is extensive supporting evidence.

You can claim your theory solves the problem of other minds as much as you want. But no amount of hand-waving, which is all that you're doing, will solve the problem. Simply stating that one has solved the problem does not solve the problem.

I have done far more than hand-waving. I provided a detailed explanation of my theory, and the evidence supporting it. You ignored the evidence I provided, and did not even attempt to address the theory I presented, instead dismissing it solely on the grounds that it "could be wrong".

Quote:

My position is not to establish substantive dualism. All my position states is that we can differentiate one set of properties from another. One example is the difference between sensations and brain states.

This is disingenuous. The fact that we can differentiate between sensations and *some* properties of brain activity, does not imply that those sensations are not also brain activity. What you are doing is no different than asserting that properties like mass, charge, momentum, and the various other obvious properties of atoms, are their *only* properties, and then concluding from this that since the property of being wet is not on that list, and water has the property of being wet, that there must be something more to water than just atoms.

Quote:

Simply calling me a substantive dualist will not help your position. Telling the difference between one set of properties from another set is a separate issue of whether science makes ontological claims or not.

If you think that science makes ontological claims, then provide an argument to support this claim. Something more than just pointing out that some people who happen to be scientists also have metaphysical beliefs. For starters, you could try explaining how *any* claim about ontology could possibly be

inferred from empirical observation using *only* the axioms of science. I say that it cannot be done, and that it is trivially obvious that it cannot be done, since the axioms of science say **nothing** about the ontological status of **anything**.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

In other words, you claim science does not make ontological claims, yet are unable to prove to me where science actually makes such a claim.

What claim?!?!?! I have not claimed that science is making a claim!

This is like me saying that Einstein never claimed that there was life on Mars, and you demanding that I show you where Einstein made such a claim! You are not even making any sense here!

Quote:

Where's my proof? My proof is the practice of scientists. When a scientist tells us that "water is H₂O," then water is really H₂O.

Or you could actually understand enough about scientific epistemology to realize that the scientist is not talking about metaphysics at all, and is simply saying that the observable properties of the two are identical. Science only makes reference to observable properties. That's all it *can* talk about.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

Quote:

Why should I think otherwise that water is not H₂O? You, on the otherhand, would have us believe that a scientist says "water is H₂O (but it's really not H₂O ::wink:: ::wink::."

Complete nonsense. Science does not say that they are *not* the same either. It does not say *anything* about their hypothetical non-physical properties. The reason that scientists say things like "Water is H₂O", instead of "The physical properties of water can be described in terms of molecular physics as H₂O", is because (1) those who understand how science works will know that the latter is what is meant, and (2) those who do not understand the epistemological and metaphysical issues we are discussing (which is most people) would just be confused by the distinction anyway.

Quote:

I have done far more than hand-waving. I provided a detailed explanation of my theory, and the evidence supporting it. You ignored the evidence I provided, and did not even attempt to address the theory I presented, instead dismissing it solely on the grounds that it "could be wrong".

But your theory fails to show we have other minds.

Theories do not *show* anything. They provide a possible explanation for things. *Evidence* shows that theories are, or are not, accurate. I have presented evidence to support my theory, and you have, yet again,

ignored it.

Quote:

All that you said was that your theory is based on the fact that you have a mind and it being a simpler theory. I responded that (i) it is not simpler if we accept an eliminativist view, where behavior is explained strictly by brain processes rather than sensations and beliefs and (ii) that you unwarrantedly jumped from "I have a mind" to "others have a mind" under the color of parsimony. Furthermore, the problem of other minds extends to non-humans as well. Do insects have minds? Germs? Primates? Bats? If so, prove it.

You either completely misunderstood, or simply ignored, the theory and argument I have presented. At this point I cannot even attempt to determine which. First of all, eliminativists do not deny the existence of the mind, so your objection in that regard is nonsensical. Secondly, if one were to adopt the position you suggest of assuming that no minds exist at all, then the problem of other minds goes away too. The very problem of other minds begins with the premise that your own mind exists, so appealing to the possibility that this premise may be wrong has absolutely no bearing on the validity of a method for solving the problem. Thirdly, I have not made any unwarranted jumps. My so-called jumps are justified by supporting evidence. As for non-human minds, once we establish that the human mind is something that the human brain does, the question of non-human minds simply becomes a question of how we define "mind". Clearly they do not have human minds. Whether or not they have minds depends entirely on what characteristics of the human mind you consider to be necessary components of a mind.

Quote:

This is disingenuous. The fact that we can differentiate between sensations and some properties of brain activity, does not imply that those sensations are not also brain activity. What you are doing is no different than asserting that properties like mass, charge, momentum, and the various other obvious properties of atoms, are their only properties, and then concluding from this that since the property of being wet is not on that list, and water has the property of being wet, that there must be something more to water than just atoms.

No. What I am saying is that the property of being transparent and fluid is a different property from that of charge and momentum. That's it. Water is always H₂O, and in some cases, fluid and wet too. Another example: the property of being a brain state is different from the property of being a sensation or belief.

First of all, let's get one misconception you are repeatedly voicing out of the way. Beliefs and sensations are not brain states, nor is anybody suggesting that they are. I am suggesting that they are brain *processes*. There is a difference.

Now, if that is what you meant, then you have no justification for this claim. You can only assert that the property of being a sensation or belief is not some *particular* property of brain activity, such as "neurons firing", or "being a gray lump of meat". You have absolutely no evidence, nor any logical argument, to support the claim that beliefs and sensations are not emergent properties of brain activity, in the same way that properties like wetness are emergent properties of molecular dynamics.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

What claim?!?!?

The claim that science only makes reference to observable properties and does not make ontological claims. If there is no claim, then you cannot say science does not ontologically identify substances and properties.

That is a philosophical claim *I am making* about the scientific method, not a scientific claim. Your demanding that provide references to support this from scientific journals, is simply nonsensical. I am presenting a philosophical argument here. Can you address my argument?

Quote:

Or you could actually understand enough about scientific epistemology to realize that the scientist is not talking about metaphysics at all, and is simply saying that the observable properties of the two are identical. Science only makes reference to observable properties. That's all it can talk about.

We refer to things we do not observe all the time. What do you think talk of H₂O is about. It's certainly not just talk of the properties of fluidity and transparency.

No, but it is just talk about other physical (observable) properties. Molecular physics and chemistry are completely defined in terms of observable properties. This is one reason why many scientists, like me, think that it is simply meaningless to talk about whether or not non-physical properties of things like water and H₂O are identical. To do so presumes that they *have* non-physical properties, when terms like "hydrogen" and "oxygen" are completely *defined* in terms of physical properties.

Quote:

Complete nonsense. Science does not say that they are not the same either. It does not say anything about their hypothetical non-physical properties. The reason that scientists say things like "Water is H₂O", instead of "The physical properties of water can be described in terms of molecular physics as H₂O", is because (1) those who understand how science works will know that the latter is what is meant, and (2) those who do not understand the epistemological and metaphysical issues we are discussing (which is most people) would just be confused by the distinction anyway.

You're not even making an argument that when a scientists says "water is H₂O" he really means "The physical properties of water can be described in terms of molecular physics as H₂O". You're just saying that people who do not interpret the former as the latter are "confused." That's not an argument. Make an argument.

I made an argument, and have repeated it several times now. Quite frankly, I am tired of repeating myself only to have my arguments completely ignored.

Quote:

But how do you show your theory is a better theory than, say for example, than a theory that explains our behavior via brain processes rather than sensations and beliefs (which is what eliminativism is)?

I don't. For one thing, my theory is completely compatible with a theory which explains our behavior in terms of brain processes, because my theory does not foolishly assume that my mind cannot be explained in terms of brain processes.

Quote:

Is parsimony the rule of thumb? If yes, then eliminativism is the more parsimonious theory.

Eliminativism is not only compatible with my theory, my theory is a part of it. I repeat again, eliminativism does **not** claim that minds do not exist. That is a strawman position based on a superficial misinterpretation of what eliminativism actually claims.

And no, parsimony is not the rule of thumb. A simpler theory is still discarded if it is not consistent with the facts. What *you* think eliminativism is may be more parsimonious than my theory, but it is inconsistent with the facts. Each of us knows that his or her mind exists.

Quote:

Secondly, if one were to adopt the position you suggest of assuming that no minds exist at all, then the problem of other minds goes away too. The very problem of other minds begins with the premise that your own mind exists, so appealing to the possibility that this premise may be wrong has absolutely no bearing on the validity of a method for solving the problem.

Not necessarily. It may just lead to solipsism.

Huh??? I don't even understand what part of what I said you are disagreeing with here. Your response seems to have no logical connection with what I said.

Quote:

Thirdly, I have not made any unwarranted jumps. My so-called jumps are justified by supporting evidence. As for non-human minds, once we establish that the human mind is something that the human brain does, the question of non-human minds simply becomes a question of how we define "mind". Clearly they do not have human minds. Whether or not they have minds depends entirely on what characteristics of the human mind you consider to be necessary components of a mind.

In other words, you don't know if non-human animals have minds.

This habit of yours of paraphrasing everything I say in a way that has completely different meaning to what I said, is becoming extremely tiresome. I meant what I said, and said what I meant. I did not say that I don't know if non-human animals have minds, so you can rest assured that this is not what I meant. If you would like to know what I meant, I suggest you try reading what I said.

Quote:

First of all, let's get one misconception you are repeatedly voicing out of the way. Beliefs and sensations are not brain states, nor is anybody suggesting that they are. I am suggesting that they are brain processes. There is a difference.

I am using "brain state" to mean "brain processes." A process is a state. Now, my point still holds. Beliefs and sensations have different properties from brain states/processes.

OK. Where is your evidence to support this claim? Note that as I said before, simply giving a list of *some* properties of brain processes (namely the simple low-level ones), and then saying "look, they aren't on the list", does not suffice. Please explain to me how you know that beliefs and sensations do not meet the necessary and sufficient criteria to be considered brain processes?

Quote:

But I do believe experiences are emergent properties of brain states/processes. I merely deny that the higher-level properties are the lower-level properties, but I do not deny the former's dependency on the latter.

Nobody is claiming that the higher-level properties are the lower-level properties. That would be silly.

Quote:

This sensible position is called "non-reductive physicalism."

How is that non-reductive? If the higher-level properties can be explained in terms of the lower-level properties, then that is epistemological reductionism.

Quote:

Similarly, the property of being transparent and fluid is different from the property of being a certain charge or momentum. Yet the former pair of properties depends or "supervenes" on the latter pair, but not vice versa.

This is *exactly* the type of relationship I am suggesting for the mind and brain. By the way, that is epistemological reductionism. Are you now going to say that chemistry is non-reductive? That wetness is not reducible to quantum mechanics?

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

But this is not a good argument. I never said water has any non-physical properties.

I never said that you did. I just said that science does not address hypothetical non-physical properties. Is that so difficult to understand? It simply does not make any reference to them at all.

Quote:

In fact, it doesn't. Nor am I saying that "non-observable" means "non-physical." All I said is that when a scientist tells us water is H₂O, we have no reasons to think otherwise. The fact that atoms are not directly observable is irrelevant.

The issue here is not whether we have any reason to believe or not believe what the scientist tells us. The issue is what the scientist actually *means* by the statement, and what claims can be logically justified by empirical evidence using scientific epistemology.

Quote:

I don't. For one thing, my theory is completely compatible with a theory which explains our behavior in terms of brain processes, because my theory does not foolishly assume that my mind cannot be explained in terms of brain processes.

Eliminativism is not only compatible with my theory, my theory is a part of it. I repeat again, eliminativism does not claim that minds do not exist. That is a strawman position based on a superficial misinterpretation of what eliminativism actually claims.

Eliminativism claims that mental terms such as "sensations" and "beliefs" are dispensable (hence, eliminated) and replaceable with neuroscientific terms. So if your theory attempts to solve the problem of other minds by using minds as tools that explain our behavior, then your theory is not as simple and clean as an eliminativist theory which uses brain processes.

Complete nonsense. Your entire argument is based on the assumption that minds are not brain processes. That is part of the eliminativist theory, that minds can be explained entirely in terms of brain processes.

Quote:

If, e.g., we were to explain by DM got up to drink water, then an eliminativist would make no reference to mental terms, e.g., desires for water and sensations of thirst. Instead, they would say that the reason why DM got water is because his C-fibers fired.

A gross oversimplification, but also completely irrelevant. Whether or not I use terms like "desire" and "sensation" in my explanation, has absolutely no relevance to whether or not I think minds exist. I repeat again, eliminativism does not claim that the mind does not exist.

Quote:

Huh??? I don't even understand what part of what I said you are disagreeing with here. Your response seems to have no logical connection with what I said.

You said if we assume that no minds exist, then the problem of other minds disappears. Yet, I never made such a claim.

I never said you did.

Quote:

I merely said that the problem of other minds is really an argument for solipsism, the view that my mind is the only mind that I can know truly exists.

What is your point? So my theory contradicts solipsism. So what?

Quote:

This habit of yours of paraphrasing everything I say in a way that has completely different meaning to what I said, is becoming extremely tiresome. I meant what I said, and said what I meant. I did not say that I don't know if non-human animals have minds, so you can rest assured that this is not what I meant. If you would like to know what I meant, I suggest you try reading what I said.

But philosophical problems do not disappear just by stipulating definitions.

In order for your question to represent a philosophical problem, it must mean something. Until you define your terms, the question is meaningless, and cannot be answered.

Quote:

The term "mind" means, among many other things, things such as sensations and beliefs. These experiences do not have to be identical to ours, but the question is whether they have any experiences at all. Personally, I do not think you can answer this question.

Of course not, because none of the terms you have used have been formally defined in a specific enough way for an answer to be possible. Give me some specific, well-defined property, and maybe then I can tell you whether I think particular animals have it or not.

Quote:

Well, if that's the relationship you are suggesting, then we have similar philosophies of the mind. How is non-reductive physicalism still reductive if emergent properties are dependant on base-level properties?

How is it not? I am not sure what you think reductionism means, but in the context of science, reductionism means explaining a complex phenomenon in terms of its simpler constituent parts. For example, chemistry is reducible to quantum mechanics. There is no property of "adhesion" in QM. It is an emergent property, like wetness. But it is reducible to QM.

Incidentally, this is exactly why people like Chalmers talk about the issue of emergent properties being "logically necessary consequences of structure and dynamics". Property dualists claim that there are two different types of emergent phenomena. There are emergent phenomena like wetness, which are not identical to any low-level physical properties of H₂O, but are logically necessitated by them. And there are emergent phenomena like phenomenal consciousness, which they claim are not logically necessitated by any low-level physical properties.

Think about it, if your view of mental properties is the same as that of things like wetness, then how is that dualistic? Basically you are just agreeing that the mind is something that the brain does. That is physicalism.

Quote:

In the sense of distinctness. As you said, it would be silly to claim the higher-level properties to actually be the lower-level properties.

I have never heard anybody make such a claim. I do not know of anybody who actually believes that mental properties are identical to simple low-level properties of brain activity. For one thing, such a hypothesis is easily scientifically falsified.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Yes, it is difficult to understand. What on Earth is a hypothetical non-physical property" of H2O? Obviously science does make reference to such entities.

That's the whole point. Science does not make reference to non-physical properties, but to claim that to things are ontologically identical requires one to do exactly that. One must either claim that their non-physical properties are identical, or that they have no non-physical properties at all. Science can do neither.

Quote:

The issue here is not whether we have any reason to believe or not believe what the scientist tells us. The issue is what the scientist actually means by the statement, and what claims can be logically justified by empirical evidence using scientific epistemology.

And I'm telling you that when a scientist tells us water is H2O, he means it. You expect us to believe that the scientist is really saying "water is H2O -- but really it's not" ::wink:: ::wink::

Am I just wasting my time here?

Quote:

Complete nonsense. Your entire argument is based on the assumption that minds are not brain processes. That is part of the eliminativist theory, that minds can be explained entirely in terms of brain processes.

Yes, my argument is based on the proposition that minds are not brain processes. Minds are emergent properties of brain processes.

Meaningless word games. The term "brain processes" refers to what the brain is doing. These processes have properties. Some of them are low-level properties, such as the property of neurons firing and the property of neurotransmitter concentrations changing over time. Others are high-level (emergent) properties, such as the property of information being processed, or the property of experiencing pain.

Mental processes are brain processes. Mental properties are properties of mental processes, and therefore properties of brain processes. See how simple that is? Mental processes are emergent *phenomena*, but they are still brain processes, just as fluid dynamics are emergent phenomena, but are still molecular activity. Mental properties are properties of emergent phenomena, and therefore are emergent properties.

Minds are not properties of anything. Mental properties are properties of the mind. The mind is an emergent phenomenon, not an emergent property. The properties of the mind are emergent properties. The

mind is something your brain does. Your mental properties are properties of that brain activity. It's really not that complicated.

Quote:

What is your point? So my theory contradicts solipsism. So what?

Your theory neither solves the problem of other minds nor does it disprove solipsism. You merely claim it does. You're merely hand-waving again.

I am not going to continue repeating my arguments just so that you can continue to ignore them.

Quote:

Of course not, because none of the terms you have used have been formally defined in a specific enough way for an answer to be possible. Give me some specific, well-defined property, and maybe then I can tell you whether I think particular animals have it or not.

The belief that there is food on the table. That's a well defined property.

It is not even remotely close to being well defined, but I will humor you for now.

I would say that all vertebrates are capable of having such beliefs. I would say that I am unsure about where in the evolutionary ladder of invertebrates this becomes true. I would say that most invertebrates are probably not capable of such a thing at all. I would make this claim based on the role that cognition appears to play in the behavior of such animals. It is clear that many, if not all invertebrates are incapable of cognition at all.

It is also important to note that there is not absolute line between having it or not. Rather, as you move from animal to animal you will find mental processes which are similar to those of humans, and become less and less similar as you go. There is no fixed criteria for where to draw the line. The location of such a line would depend to the specific formal definition for "beliefs" that you are using. A specific formal definition which you have not provided.

Quote:

I am not sure what you think reductionism means, but in the context of science, reductionism means explaining a complex phenomenon in terms of its simpler constituent parts. For example, chemistry is reducible to quantum mechanics. There is no property of "adhesion" in QM. It is an emergent property, like wetness. But it is reducible to QM.

What you're talking about is methodological reductionism. I'm talking about ontological reductionism, which is what reductive physicalists and eliminativists attempt to show.

I already told you that I was talking about epistemological (or methodological, if you prefer) reductionism. As to whether physicalists and eliminativists are claiming some sort of ontological reductionism, that is debatable. I would not be surprised if some did make such a claim. I know for a fact that many do not. I also know that there is absolutely no way such a claim can be justified by science.

Quote:

Incidentally, this is exactly why people like Chalmers talk about the issue of emergent properties being "logically necessary consequences of structure and dynamics". Property dualists claim that there are two different types of emergent phenomena. There are emergent phenomena like wetness, which are not identical to any low-level physical properties of H₂O, but are logically necessitated by them. And there are emergent phenomena like phenomenal consciousness, which they claim are not logically necessitated by any low-level physical properties.

I do not see how any higher-level properties, phenomenal properties or not, are logically necessitated by any lower-level properties. Are you saying that water cannot possibly appear as black, rather than transparent?

Under the same conditions? You're damn right I am. It is transparent because its low-level molecular properties are such that visible light tends to propagate through it with very little absorption.

Do you really think that it is logically possible for H₂O to have exactly the same low-level molecular properties as it does in our world, but different high-level properties? The high-level properties determined by the low-level ones. In principle, they can be logically derived from them.

Quote:

Think about it, if your view of mental properties is the same as that of things like wetness, then how is that dualistic? Basically you are just agreeing that the mind is something that the brain does. That is physicalism.

Dualistic in the sense that we have a genuine ontological distinction (a dualism) of different properties.

Wait a minute. Are you now saying that water is *not* ontologically reducible to H₂O?

Quote:

I have never heard anybody make such a claim. I do not know of anybody who actually believes that mental properties are identical to simple low-level properties of brain activity. For one thing, such a hypothesis is easily scientifically falsified.

Here's an excerpt from the "physicalism" entry from Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: "[ontological] reductionism means that the properties expressed by the predicates of (say) a psychological theory are identical to the properties expressed by the predicates of (say) a neurological theory -- in other words, this version of reductionism is in essence a version of type physicalism or the identity theory.

I don't see any claim that mental properties are identical to low-level properties of brain activity there. On the contrary, anybody who knows anything about neurological theories knows that they regard mental processes as emergent phenomena of the simple low-level brain processes.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

Quote:

Originally Posted by **TecnoTut**

Your arguments are that we must look at what the scientist really means when he says "water is H₂O." I'm saying he really means it. If he didn't, then he would have made some type of a disclaimer such as "H₂O is just a theoretical model." And if he means the latter (which is most scientists don't mean), then he needs to give a good argument for such a position that's in contrast with most scientist's views.

H₂O is exactly JUST a theoretical model. It's based on the atomic theory. No scientist will disagree with that statement. It's also an accurate and reliable explanation, yet it will always remain (JUST) a theory (though it may be improved or replaced at a future time by a better theory that describes water more accurately).

By Probeman (John Donovan)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

But there's absolutely no connection between (i) "science does not make reference to non-physical properties" to (ii) "science does not make ontological claims." I agree with you on (i), but it doesn't show, e.g., that water is really not simply H₂O.

The logical connection is this. There are exactly two possibilities:

1) Non-physical properties exist. If this is the case, then since science cannot make any reference to them, it is impossible for science to make ontological claims. By this I specifically mean that it is impossible for science to tell us whether or not one thing is ontologically reducible to another, because that would depend on any non-physical properties they may have.

2) Non-physical properties do not exist. If this is the case, then epistemological reducibility implies ontological reducibility, but again, since science does not make reference to non-physical properties, there is no way for science to tell us that this is the case.

So either way, science cannot tell us anything about ontological reducibility.

Quote:

Am I just wasting my time here?

Your arguments are that we must look at what the scientist really means when he says "water is H₂O." I'm saying he really means it.

What is "it"? What is "it" that he really means? You seem to be asserting that what he really means is that they are ontologically reducible. You have not presented any argument for you think this is the case. You have merely presented your assertion as though it were somehow the obvious intention, by referring to it as "it" instead of specifying what you are really claiming you think he means.

[quote]If he didn't, then he would have made some type of a disclaimer such as "H₂O is just a theoretical model." And if he means the latter (which is most scientists don't mean), then he needs to give a good argument for such a position that's in contrast with most scientist's views.[/quote]

H₂O *is* just a theoretical model, as any scientist will tell you. Of course, the "just" is rather misleading there. It is an extraordinarily successful and well-supported theoretical model, but that is still all it is. I do not know where you got the idea that this is in contrast with most scientist's views.

Quote:

Mental processes are brain processes. Mental properties are properties of mental processes, and therefore properties of brain processes. See how simple that is? Mental processes are emergent phenomena, but they are still brain processes, just as fluid dynamics are emergent phenomena, but are still molecular activity.

Yes, just about everything physical is reducible to molecular activity. The property of being a calculator or computer program can be realized by an abacus, by gears and levers, vacuum tubes, silicon chips or many other physical arrangements. But this kind of reduction is what is normally called "physical realization" or "physical constitution" reduction. It is not the reduction of strict identity. We are interested in the latter. Ontological reductionists of the mind do not merely claim that mental properties are physically realized by brain processes, but in fact are, strictly speaking.

Sorry, never met such a beast. Sounds like a rather unfalsifiable, and extremely unscientific, approach to the problem.

Quote:

Like most sane people on the Earth, I believe humans and some non-human animals have minds. But I can't point to their minds to prove that they have minds. The only thing I can really do is point to their behavior. I do not think that this proves they have minds, but rather, that they have behavior. This is just one reason why many people are eliminativists.

I am not sure what you mean by "proves", but if you mean more than supporting evidence for a theory, then I am afraid you are looking for something that doesn't exist. I will content myself with supporting evidence, which observations of behavior are quite capable of providing me with.

Quote:

Do you really think that it is logically possible for H₂O to have exactly the same low-level molecular properties as it does in our world, but different high-level properties? The high-level properties determined by the low-level ones. In principle, they can be logically derived from them.

Logically? Yes, H₂O could appear black and gooey (that doesn't mean it ever will). Nominally? No, I think water, in this world, will always be clear and fluid.

Well then, I think you need to brush up on your basic science. There is a logical reason why water looks the way it does. It would have to have very different low-level properties for it to look black and gooey.

Quote:

Wait a minute. Are you now saying that water is not ontologically reducible to H₂O?

Well, the properties of transparency and fluidity are merely phenomenal properties that we use to identify the physical substance H₂O (water). If chemists are right, water is merely a collection of atoms that is identified or associated with phenomenal properties.

You are getting mixed up. The word "water" is defined in terms of phenomenal properties. The word "H₂O" is defined in terms of molecular physics. Our theories explain how the observed properties of water can be explained in terms of molecular physics. They say absolutely nothing about any non-physical (and thus unobservable) properties that the water may or may not have.

Quote:

I don't see any claim that mental properties are identical to low-level properties of brain activity there. On the contrary, anybody who knows anything about neurological theories knows that they regard mental processes as emergent phenomena of the simple low-level brain processes.

Look again. Substitute "psychological" with "mental" and "neurological" with "physical.": "[ontological] reductionism means that the properties expressed by the predicates of (say) a [mental] theory are identical to the properties expressed by the predicates of (say) a [physical] theory -- in other words, this version of reductionism is in essence a version of type physicalism or the identity theory."

Again, there are many physicalists and reductionist who say that higher-level properties are the lower-level ones.

And again, that is not what your quote says. It says absolutely nothing about high-level properties being identical to low-level properties. Even with your suggested word substitution, it says only that mental

properties are identical to *some set* of physical properties (namely those of a neurological theory). It does **not** assert that the set of physical properties they are identical to is some set of low-level physical properties. And indeed, since the types of properties which are discussed by neurological theories of the mind are high-level properties, the implication is exactly the *opposite*.
By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

Quote:

Originally Posted by **TecnoTut**

With respect to H₂O, there are no non-physical properties. So science can ontologically reduce water (when I say water, I do not mean the phenomenal properties – as I've said, water is no the phenomenal properties we associate it with) to H₂O. Water is nothing over and above H₂O. That's an ontological statement.

Yes it is, and just like your ontological statements that the mind is something over and above brain processes, it is an unfalsifiable metaphysical assertion based on mere intuition.

Actually there are many people who would disagree that water has no non-physical properties. Followers of homeopathy, believe that water can "remember" the medicinal molecules that it were once in contact with it during the 10³³ dilution process. And just like your "mental properties", there is no evidence for these non-physical properties of water either.

By Probeman (John Donovan)

Quote:

Originally Posted by **c**

An interesting (scientific) fact that might be of interest to the general discussion of this thread:

I were attending a public philosophical lecture about the illusion of a free will where a neurologician presented his theories of both the innecearity as well as the inability of the existance of a free will. One of the interesting facts he brought up was that if a person was told to flex his finger in a while and was asked to tell when he decided to do it (by for example looking at a clock). One may then show that once they person is to flex the finger, the activity of the brain starts about half a second (which he claimed was a lot) before the consious' decition.

Libet's experiment, to which you are almost certainly referring, has been debunked in its interpretation by a variety of neuroscientists and scientifically savvy philosophers, who have entirely contrary interpretations of the actual data.

An extensive treatment of the issues involved occurred when Probeman and myself tried to start a discussion group dedicated to reading and analyzing Daniel Dennett's book, *Consciousness Explained*. We took turns summarizing the book's chapters, sort of as an online "Cliff Notes". The chapter addressing Libet's interpretation—and an alternative—occurs here (scroll down to post #27, the beginning of that chapter summary):

<http://forums.philosophyforums.com/...31&page=2&pp=20>

By Faustus (Brian Peterson)

TecnoTut,

Quote:

With respect to H₂O, there are no non-physical properties. So science can ontologically reduce water (when I say water, I do not mean the phenomenal properties – as I've said, water is no the phenomenal properties we associate it with) to H₂O.

No, it can't. Because while H₂O is, by definition, only a collection of physical properties, science cannot claim that water is as well. Science cannot claim that water does, or does not, have non-physical properties.

Quote:

Water is nothing over and above H₂O. That's an ontological statement.

One which science cannot legitimately make. This should be painfully obvious by now.

Quote:

Second, just because science does not make reference to non-physical properties, it does not follow that there are none. After all, science says nothing about a bat's experiences are like, but it doesn't follow that the bat doesn't have any.

That's the whole point!!!!

Science cannot claim that water has non-physical properties, but it can also not claim that it does not. It cannot address such properties at all. As long as it is possible that water has non-physical properties, science cannot claim that there is nothing more to water than just H₂O, because that is nothing less than the claim that water has only physical properties!!!

Quote:

H₂O is just a theoretical model, as any scientist will tell you. Of course, the "just" is rather misleading there. It is an extraordinarily successful and well-supported theoretical model, but that is still all it is. I do not know where you got the idea that this is in contrast with most scientist's views.

And I'm telling you that most scientists do not believe H₂O is just a useful model for water. Most believe that water really is H₂O. Where's my proof? By the fact that when a scientists say "water is H₂O" he really means it. Although some scientists say that it's just a useful model, they really have no presented any arguments.

You are the one who has not presented any argument. I am not going to waste my time trying to refute your claims of what scientists really do or do not believe. It does not matter. I have presented an argument for why science cannot justify such beliefs. If, as you claim, the majority of scientists not only hold such beliefs, but also think they are justified by science, then they are simply wrong. Simply asserting that they do does not negate my argument.

Quote:

I am not sure what you mean by "proves", but if you mean more than supporting evidence for a theory, then I am afraid you are looking for something that doesn't exist. I will content myself with supporting evidence, which observations of behavior are quite capable of providing me with.

I just gave you an example of proving minds exist. By pointing at them (if such a thing is even logically possible, which it's not). Proof by ostension.

How about an example that isn't logically impossible? What you are calling proof doesn't exist in the real

world, so why even bring it up?

Quote:

Well then, I think you need to brush up on your basic science. There is a logical reason why water looks the way it does. It would have to have very different low-level properties for it to look black and gooey.

On the contrary, because it is conceivable that water can be black and gooey, then it is logically possible that water is not clear and fluid.

You are confused. I am not sure what you mean by "conceivable" here, but conceivability in the sense you seem to be using it does not imply logical possibility. At best, it means that you simply do not know enough about what you are talking about to recognize where the logical contradiction is.

Quote:

No, no, no, no. We define natural kinds by their atomic constituents. Take nephrite and jadeite. Both have the same exact phenomenal properties, but different atomic constituents. If we defined them by phenomenal properties, then they would be the same thing, which is false.

Clearly they do not have *exactly* the same phenomenal properties, or we never would have figured out that they are different.

Quote:

And again, that is not what your quote says. It says absolutely nothing about high-level properties being identical to low-level properties. Even with your suggested word substitution, it says only that mental properties are identical to some set of physical properties (namely those of a neurological theory). It does not assert that the set of physical properties they are identical to is some set of low-level physical properties. And indeed, since the types of properties which are discussed by neurological theories of the mind are high-level properties, the implication is exactly the opposite.

Mental properties are high-level properties and neurological properties are low level properties.

Says who, you?

Neurological properties are simply properties of neurological systems. If property X is a property of a neurological system, then it is a neurological property. Some of these properties are low-level, and some are high-level.

Quote:

When a reductionists says mental properties are physical properties, he then is strictly identifying the higher-level with the lower-level. That's the beast that you claim you've never met.

Your ridiculously oversimplified strawmen do not interest me.

Quote:

But if you're of the stripe where mental properties are emergent properties if and only if they're just atoms bouncing around, then you do not believe mental properties are genuine novel emergent properties -- and by doing so, you then make more than just a physical realization argument; you are also strictly identifying the higher-level properties with the lower-level ones. So by "novel," I do not just mean that the whole object has powers its simpler parts do not. Mental properties (higher-level properties) are not just molecular motions (lower-level) properties because mental properties make a difference to the object that has them. That is, the object would be different from the way that it would have been if it just had its non-emergent property.

The above makes absolutely no sense to me. Answer this simple question: Do you think that mental properties are emergent properties in the same sense that properties like wetness and transparency are? Or

do you think that they are some fundamentally different type of emergent property?

Anyway, I think maybe you should try learning a little bit about how science works before you try to understand how it applies to this kind of research. Your above comments about emergent properties of simple things like water seem to pretty clearly indicate to me that you just don't know what you are talking about.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

Minty,

Quote:

Can you tell me how the wetness of water is derived from atoms? How do atoms make me experience wetness when I place my hands in water?

Those are two very different questions.

To answer the first question, wetness is a property of materials which is defined in terms of other high-level properties, such as viscosity, cohesion, and adhesion. These properties are themselves derived from atoms because they are determined by how the atoms making up the water interact both with each other, and with those of other materials they touch.

As to the second question, you are now asking for an explanation of how subjective experiences can be derived from atomic physics. I do not have the answer. That is a question scientists are still trying to answer. It is also completely irrelevant to the point I was making, since the experience of feeling wetness is not an emergent property of water.

Quote:

But I do believe experiences are emergent properties of brain states/processes. I merely deny that the higher-level properties are the lower-level properties, but I do not deny the former's dependency on the latter. This sensible position is called "non-reductive physicalism."

Are these higher-level properties causally efficacious in themselves?

The question is nonsensical. As emergent properties, it does not mean anything to talk about them "in themselves". They have no existence independent of the low-level processes that they emerge from. They are properties of those processes.

Quote:

In other words the explanation for our behaviour needs to make reference to mind states in addition to physical states of the brain?

Again, a meaningless question. If they are emergent properties of the brain's activity, then a reference to the brain's activity *is* a reference to those emergent properties.

Quote:

If you acknowledge that you are talking about "wetness" as that physical substrate which gives rise to the actual experience of wetness, then I am in agreement with the above. If not, then I'm in disagreement.

I am not sure what you mean here. By wetness I am referring to a physical property of a substance such as water. I am not talking about any experiences at all.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)

Monroe,

Quote:

What reasons do we have for thinking that phenomenal consciousness is logically necessitated by the lower level properties, rather than not?

Several reasons:

- 1) There are no known examples of any phenomena which are not reducible to basic physics. For phenomenal consciousness to not be, would require that there be something other than physics involved, and interacting with the brain. Not only is there no evidence that this is the case, but there is extensive evidence indicating that such interactions are not present.
- 2) As a scientific theory, it has been very successful. Considerable progress has been made in attempting to understand how high-level mental phenomena arise from low-level brain activity. There is therefore considerable supporting evidence for the theory.
- 3) There is no reason to posit the existence of some fundamentally different type of phenomena when it is possible that phenomenal consciousness may be explainable in terms of known phenomena. This is nothing more than a basic application of Occam's Razor. We will continue to assume that nothing more than brain processes are involved until such time as evidence is presented to indicate otherwise. That's how science works.

Quote:

What helps us decide this issue?

Scientific investigation. And it is helping us to decide the issue. New supporting evidence for the scientific theory of the mind as brain processes is being found all the time.

It's not like we are just making idle speculation here. The scientific paradigm that dualists are so convinced *can't* work, *is* working. That is why they are forced to continuously move the goalpost. Every time scientists learn a little bit more about the mind, the dualists insist that what they have learned about isn't the mind at all, and redefine "mind" to mean whatever is left that hasn't been explained yet.

By Death Monkey (Kevin Dolan)