

## **CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ULLIN PLACE AND TEED ROCKWELL**

1. [15 June 1996](#), letter from Place to Rockwell (Comment on “On what the mind is identical with”)
2. [17 January 1998](#), Place answering Rockwell (On experience)
3. [23 January 1998](#), letter from Place to Rockwell (Sensory experience and behaviourism)
4. [17 February 1998](#), letter from Place to Rockwell (The sensation/perception issue)
5. [16 July 1998](#), letter from Place to Rockwell (Evidence as the function of conscious/phenomenal experience)
6. [21 December 1998](#), letter from Rockwell to Place (Publish the Gibson correspondence?)
7. [27 January 1999](#), letter from Place to Rockwell (Comments on ‘Causality, Senses and Reference’)

15 June 1996

15 June 1996

Dear Teed Rockwell,

I have read your paper 'On what the mind is identical with'<sup>1</sup> with interest, though not, as you can imagine with agreement. You state that, according to Smart and myself, "every mental state or event is identical with some material state or event." That is not and never has been my view. My contention was and is that it is a reasonable and, when fully spelled out, empirically testable hypothesis that a particular aspect of the mental life of the more highly developed of complex free-moving living organisms (animals) which I refer to as 'consciousness' is a particular process or pattern of activity in the brains of such creatures. Consciousness in this sense is essentially an ongoing process. It is neither a mental state, if by that is meant a dispositional state, nor an event, if by that is meant an instantaneous event, such as a decision or the occurrence of a thought.

Dispositional mental states such as beliefs and desires, though they may have inward manifestations in the form of the individual's private thoughts, are no more inside the brains of their owners than is the magnetic field of an iron bar inside the bar. Like all dispositional properties, mental dispositions depend for their existence on a state of the structure, usually the microstructure of the property-bearer. In the case of mental dispositions this is invariably a state of the microstructure of the brain, presumably a pattern of 'weights' at the synapses in the brain. But these states of the brain microstructure stand as cause to the dispositional states as effect. It follows, in accordance with Hume's principle, that they are 'distinct existences'. Contrary to the view expressed by Searle, you can't have it both ways. If two things are causally connected, they can't be the same thing. If they're the same thing, they can't be causally connected. Think of the relation between the cubic capacity of the cylinders of an internal combustion engine and its horsepower.

Instantaneous mental events are more difficult. They occur at the interface between an antecedent mental process and a subsequent and consequent dispositional mental state. The antecedent mental process, according to me, is a process in the brain; whereas the subsequent and consequent disposition depends on, but is not, a state of the brain. Consequently the instantaneous event at the interface between the two can be thought of either as completing a process in the brain or as initiating a brain state which in turn gives the organism whose brain it is a dispositional property it did not have before, and which is something over and above the state of the brain on which it depends. On balance, since they only initiate dispositional mental states by producing the relevant changes in the brain microstructure, it seems right to view such events as

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<sup>1</sup> Rockwell, W. T. (1994). On what the mind is identical with. *Philosophical Psychology*, 7(3), 307-323.

brain events simpliciter.

Turning to the phenomenon of consciousness considered as an ongoing process a part of which (the individual's private conscious experience) is susceptible to description by the introspecting human subject and which, according to me is almost certainly identical with some as yet unspecified process in the brain. All the evidence both from neurology and from brain imaging makes it pretty clear that in mammals the cerebral cortex is the seat of consciousness in this sense. Although there are many processes and events in the cortex which are not represented in the subject's introspective reports, if we take consciousness to consist, as the evidence suggests, in the process whereby inputs which are identified as problematic by the subconscious system in the midbrain are categorized and an appropriate response selected, there seems to be no activity in the cortex that does not subserve this basic problem-solving function. Subconscious centres in the mid- and hind-brain, not to mention the spinal cord, have important coordinating functions both in relation to the execution of complex skilled and habitual behavior, as well as in relation to the involuntary attraction of attention to problematic inputs; but when the organism is running on 'automatic pilot' in this way, the brain imaging evidence shows that cortex is almost completely quiescent. What becomes of the the mind in all this? It's just not a useful concept.

Kind regards,

Ullin Place

**17 January 1998**

1/17/98

I have some reactions to some questions you raise at the end of your paper<sup>2</sup> where you ask:

>Are you personally willing to give up the idea of sense data as a  
>foundation for knowledge?

I gave up that idea fifty years ago when I heard John Austin give his 'Sense and sensibilia' Lectures in Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1947.

>What would you lose by doing this?

Nothing.

>If you did give up this idea, would something like the pragmatist  
>concept of experience be an effective substitute?

If I understand it which I probably don't, the pragmatist concept of experience is an attempt to capture the notion of experience in the phrase 'learning from experience'. This is no substitute in my view for the notion of sensory or phenomenal experience as that which we describe when we describe what it is like to be aware of this or that, of undergoing this or that or of doing this or that. The two notions are connected; but nevertheless distinct. We need both.

>For those of you who are trained in Neuroscience, which concept of  
>experience seems more biologically plausible?

I am not sure that I can claim to be trained in Neuroscience; but response of some eminent neuroscientists to what I have been writing recently on these topics encourages me to think that I can speak with some authority on this matter. As soon as I read the late Donald Broadbent's 1971 book DECISION AND STRESS, it seemed to me obvious that his concept of a "state of evidence" on the basis of which the brain categorizes sensory inputs corresponds rather precisely to the notion of raw uninterpreted sensory experience. This notion I take to be implicit both in James' description of the consciousness of the child as a "big blooming buzzing confusion" and in Wilhelm Wundt's distinction between Immediate and Mediate Experience, where Mediate Experience is experience interpreted as a sensory encounter with external reality and Immediate Experience is the same experience interpreted as what it really is, a process taking place within the observer's own consciousness. In ordinary language it is implicit in the distinction we draw between 'physical' pleasure and pain which does not depend on how the stimulus is interpreted and 'mental' pleasure and pain which DOES so depend.

Regards,

Ullin

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<sup>2</sup> Two Concepts of Experience: Empiricism vs. Pragmatism. <https://cognitivequestions.org/cqmail1.html>; last seen 22 May 2024.

23 January 1998

23 January 1998

Dear Teed,

A few points in response to your 'Beating of an undead horse'<sup>3</sup>. The first relates to the difference between James' "big blooming buzzing confusion" and my Wundt and "physical" v. "mental" pleasure and pain cases. What is true is that James identifies what he takes to be an actual case where experience (as a whole - yes) remains uninterpreted, because the child hasn't yet developed the required concepts. Wundt's two forms of experience do not involve uninterpreted experience in this sense. It's simply that according to him there are two different ways in which the SAME experience can be interpreted which implies that the experience and its interpretation are two different things. There is no reason to hold on to this view that any uninterpreted experience exists, except perhaps momentarily before an interpretation is arrived at or when switching from one interpretation to another.

The pleasure/pain case is slightly different. Here the suggestion is that in the case of "physical" pleasure and pain the emotional response DOES NOT DEPEND ON the way the experience is interpreted. Again there is nothing that requires the actual existence of uninterpreted experiences.

My second point relates to Broadbent's use of the

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<sup>3</sup> Place is responding to Reply to Commentaries on "Empiricism vs. Pragmatism" by Teed Rockwell, <https://cognitivequestions.org/cqmail2.html>; last seen 22 May 2024.

These are the comments on Place:

"Ullin Place remarks:

*I gave up that idea { of sense data as a foundation for knowledge} fifty years ago when I heard John Austin give his 'Sense and sensibilia' Lectures in Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1947.*

So if everybody assumes that Sensationalistic Empiricism is a dead horse, why am I bothering to bring this topic up?"

And

"The question is: What is it that privileges certain "experientially" derived beliefs? Despite all its many problems, Sense Datum theory has an answer to that question, and until we can come up with a better one, we cannot stop ourselves from thinking in terms of the old theory. Ullin Place, after stating that he himself had abandoned sense datum theory years ago, makes this comment.

*As soon as I read the late Donald Broadbent's 1971 book DECISION AND STRESS, it seemed to me obvious that his concept of a "state of evidence" on the basis of which the brain categorizes sensory inputs corresponds rather precisely to the notion of raw uninterpreted sensory experience. This notion I take to be implicit both in James' description of the consciousness of the child as a "big blooming buzzing confusion" and in Wilhelm Wundt's distinction between Immediate and Mediate Experience, where Mediate Experience is experience interpreted as a sensory encounter with external reality and Immediate Experience is the same experience interpreted as what it really is, a process taking place within the observer's own consciousness. In ordinary language it is implicit in the distinction we draw between 'physical' pleasure and pain which does not depend on how the stimulus is interpreted and 'mental' pleasure and pain which DOES so depend.*

I think that there is an important difference here between James' concept and the other two, because James believed only that uninterpreted experience \*as a whole\* was a blooming buzzing confusion. As Elizabeth Minnich pointed out in her CQ post, There were no uninterpreted bits of experience for James; for him the act of interpretation was what broke the whole into bits. (Marcel Kinsbourne proposed a similar theory at his presidential address last year at the Society for Philosophy and Psychology meeting. There was no reference to James in it, however, apparently it just seemed to him to be the best theory to explain the data. Did anyone get a copy of that paper?)

From Place's description, however, it appears that both Broadbent and Wundt did accept something like Sense Datum theory, and that this theory shaped and conditioned how they interpreted their experiments. If philosophers decide a theory is dead, that won't necessarily stop scientists from accepting its assumptions. And this can happen even when the data is crying out to be interpreted with an alternative theory, unless the scientists are themselves philosophically sophisticated, or remain in dialogue with philosophers."

term "evidence". When I use this term in my own work, I always put it in quotation marks. This is because, according to me, it is not evidence in the ordinary sense of that word. It is precisely because the use of the term 'data', together with the phenomenalist theoretical framework in which it is embedded, treats sense-data as evidence in the ordinary sense that leads me to say that sense-data do not exist. The same incidentally goes for qualia, if it is taken to be part of the definition of a quale that it is a functionless epiphenomenon. But if you say that sense-data are data only in metaphorical sense or if you allow that qualia have a vital function in the process that leads to sense perception, I am happy to use both expressions and say that a sense datum is a private sensory experience and that a quale is a property of such an experience by which we recognise the stimulus situation confronting us as one of this or that kind.

What is wrong with treating sensory experience as evidence for the belief that one is confronted by a situation of this or that kind in one's external environment is that we ordinarily use the term 'evidence'

- (a) when talking about the relation between two statements or sets of statements, the evidence on the one hand and the hypothesis it is evidence for on the other,
- (b) where the evidence consists in one or more observation statements and where the hypothesis for which the observation statements provide evidence is something that cannot itself be directly observed.

In the case of the relation between sensory experience and the categorization of it as an encounter with a situation of this or that kind, neither of these conditions apply.

- (a) In the categorization of sensory input there are no statements involved. Sensory experience and the categorization for which it provides the evidence are neural processes which occur in the brains of animals just as much as in the brains of humans. Even in the human brain identifying the kind of object or situation with which one is confronted is a distinct process both from that of naming the object or situation and putting what is observed into words in the form of a statement.
- (b) Contrary to the opinion of the phenomenologists, in the ordinary sense [of] that word we DO directly perceive the objects and situations in our stimulus environment for whose presence sensory experience and its qualia provides "evidence".

Contrary to the view expressed by Ryle in THE CONCEPT OF MIND, there are cases where we can quite properly be said to observe our sensations and other private experiences. After filling a particularly deep cavity in one of my teeth recently, my dentist asked me to check any pain I might subsequently have to see whether it was caused equally by hot and cold stimuli (good) or only by hot (bad, particularly if throbbing). This, however, is a rather sophisticated form of observation which we learn only AFTER we have already

learned to observe what is going on in the world around us. When I say I rejected the doctrine of sense-data more than fifty years ago, what I rejected was the idea that in observing what is going on around us, we begin by observing our sensory experience, formulate those observations in the form of a sentence in a private sense datum language and then use those private observation sentences as evidence for the existence and nature of what we NEVER observe, namely the objects and situations in the world around us.

That, of course, means that I rejected - here following Wittgenstein - the notion that the observation sentences which provide the foundation of empirical knowledge are sentences in a sense-datum language describing the private sensations of a single individual. What it did not mean is that I denied either the possibility of describing private experience or the idea that empirical knowledge has to be anchored to observation statements. With regard to the former, I have been insisting for more than forty years that our ability to describe our private experience is parasitical on a prior ability to describe what is going on in the public world. With regard to the latter, I have long assumed, but rather more recently begun to insist, that the observation statements which anchor our language to the reality it enables us to depict are statements describing a publicly observable state of affairs (events disappear too quickly) on whose correct description any competent speaker of the natural language or technical code in current use will agree. It is because I take this principle as axiomatic that I describe myself as a behaviorist. See [`A radical behaviorist methodology for the empirical investigation of private events' BEHAVIOR AND PHILOSOPHY, 1993, 20, 25-35.](#)

One final point in this connection. The relation between a sensory experience and the categorization of the current state of the stimulus environment for which it provides the "evidence" is a straightforward causal relation; whereas the relation between evidence in the ordinary sense and the hypothesis for which it provides evidence is a logical relation. Logical relations such as this can, of course, act as causes in persuading an individual to accept (or sometimes reject) the hypothesis for which it is evidence. But that does not alter the fact that logical relations, as such, are not causal relations. The analogy between the two cases is that in both, it is important for the individual to GET IT RIGHT. The difference is that in the experience-categorization case what the individual has to get right is what it is he or she is currently observing; whereas in the evidence-hypothesis case what the individual has to get right is a verbal description of something that is NOT currently available for direct inspection.

Another difference is that all the might of natural selection is mobilised to ensure the conformity of our perceptual categorization to the way things are; whereas, except in a handful of cases where getting it right is a matter of life or death, there are only a few relatively weak social sanctions to ensure that our

hypotheses are and remain consistent with the available evidence.

Sergio Chaigneau's mention of J. J. Gibson<sup>4</sup> reminds me of my own excitement when, as a very inexperienced psychology teacher at the University of Adelaide, I read Gibson's first book THE PERCEPTION OF THE VISUAL WORLD when it appeared in (?) 1951 [1950]. Here for the first time was a psychologist doing experimental work within a conceptual framework entirely consistent with what I had learned from Austin's 'Sense and Sensibilia' lectures - so different from the ghastly conceptual confusion of the Gestalt Psychologists, whose work had been endlessly thrust down my throat during my psychology course at Oxford in 1947-9 and which was the principle target of my critique of the phenomenological fallacy in '[Is consciousness a brain process?](#)'.

During the winter of 1955 after I had returned to Oxford from my four years at Adelaide and while I was waiting for 'Is consciousness a brain process?' to appear in print, I had the privilege of getting to know Gibson personally. He had a visiting appointment at the Institute of Experimental Psychology where I was registered as a candidate for the D.Phil., a degree which I never managed to obtain. I tried to persuade him, unsuccessfully as it turned out, that his position would be more consistent if he dropped the phenomenological veneer and stated it in a straightforward behaviorist way. Interestingly, I was supported in this by his wife, Eleanor Gibson, who not only worked on perception in animals, but had been a student of Clark Hull at Yale. I have a copy of my correspondence with J.J.G. during this period on file on my computer and could e-mail it to you, if you're interested.

You might also be interested, in connection with Ruth Millikan's deployment of Ryle's 'knowing how' and 'knowing that' distinction<sup>5</sup>, in a section of my chapter on '[Ryle's behaviourism](#) [sic]' in W. O'Donohue and R. Kitchener (eds.) HANDBOOK OF BEHAVIORISM which is forthcoming from Academic Press. In it I discuss the distinction and suggest that it marks a failure on Ryle's part to study the grammatical objects of psychological verbs with the same thoroughness with which he explored their aspectual characteristics. This left room for Roderick Chisholm to introduce his linguistified version of Brentano's intentionality, thereby generating a new piece of conceptual confusion for philosophers to pick over.

This, of course, needn't undermine Ruth's thesis which I would express in my behavioristic way by saying that getting one's propositions right depends on a great deal of contingency-shaped learning of semantic conventions which in turn depends on the, part contingency-shaped, part innate, pre-linguistic categorization ability found in animals. But please don't feel under any obligation to ask to see either of these documents. You've got enough on your plate as it is.

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://cognitivequestions.org/cqmail1replies.html#Sergioconnect>; last seen 22 May 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Place is probably referring to Ruth Garth Millikan, Some Different Ways to Think, <https://cognitivequestions.org/millikanthink.html>; last seen 22 May 2024.



Regards  
Ullin

17 February 1998

2/17/98

Dear Teed,

I would like to comment on the sensation/perception issue.<sup>6</sup>

The traditional view of this matter to which I subscribe holds that sensation + concept = perception. This formula implies that there can be such a thing as a 'raw', i.e., uninterpreted, sensory experience. As evidence that such a notion is needed, I would cite the distinction we draw between 'physical' pleasure or pain, where the pleasure or pain reaction is a response simply to the quality of the sensory experience, and 'mental' pleasure or pain, where it is a response, sometimes to the very same experience, once it has been conceptualised or interpreted, e.g., as a symptom of some fatal illness.

This notion of 'raw' unconceptualised experience is anathema to the Kantians and the phenomenologists; and there are at least three sets of considerations which lend support to their view. One is the relatively trivial point that you can't say anything about an experience until it has been conceptualised in SOME way. Another is the point that the qualia merchants are in danger of overlooking, namely, that an unconceptualised experience is like a unfertilised egg, an entity that has failed to fulfill its biological function. But it is the third consideration which, to my mind, is the most interesting. It is a point which is suggested by a lot of recent neurological and neuropsychological work, particularly the work that has been done on the functions of the extra-striate visual areas, V2-V5. Contrary to what is suggested by the adjective 'raw', it is now becoming clear that a great deal of complex processing has to go on in assembling the experience, BEFORE it becomes what Broadbent (1971) calls "a state of evidence" capable of suggesting an interpretation/conceptualisation/categorization. What seems to happen in visual areas V1-V5 is that there are specific neurons in these areas which are "tuned" to respond to features of the input which become more and more abstract and are triggered by retinal stimulation over wider and wider areas the further removed they are from V1. These features are things like an edge, a gradient of texture (interpreted as a surface at certain angle of slope relative to the horizontal - Gibson 1950) or a stationary object with a background moving to the right (interpreted as watching an object moving to the left - Gibson op. cit.) which are seldom, if ever, conceptualised as such, but which, when "bound" together with other such features result in a recognisable "image" of an object of some identifiable kind. When one way of "binding" a set of features together fails to yield an identifiable object, another way of "binding" the features may be tried and, failing that, the standard reaction is to look again, this time more closely.

Moreover, the phenomenon of simultanagnosia which results from lesions of this so-called "ventral stream" and which consists in an inability to perceive the relations between different objects in a visual array, even though the objects themselves are recognised normally, suggests that the interpretation of a complex visual array proceeds in two stages. In the first stage the individual objects are identified. In the second the experience/"evidence" is revisited in order to conceptualise the relations between them.

The complexity of this process and that of the processes of response-selection and response execution which ensue, not to mention the linguistic processes of assigning a name to a concept or a concept to a name and of organizing and deciphering complex sentence structures, explains why it is that only PROBLEMATIC INPUTS (i.e., those that are either unexpected or significant relative to the organism's motivational concerns) are processed in this way. The task of separating the problematic from the unproblematic, alerting consciousness to the former, while either ignoring the latter or routeing them automatically and unconsciously along well-worn channels to output, falls to the automatic-pilot or "zombie-within" as I call it.

Regards,  
Ullin

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<sup>6</sup> This is the second response of Place to Reply to Commentaries on "Empiricism vs. Pragmatism" by Teed Rockwell, <https://cognitivequestions.org/cqmail2.html>

**16 July 1998**

[Comment on a thought experiment that was incorporated into Teed Rockwell, *The Hard Problem is Dead; Long live the hard problem*, <https://cognitivequestions.org/hardproblem.html>; last seen 22 May 2024]

Dear Teed,

16 July 1998

If, as seems reasonable, your criterion for the presence and absence of consciousness is the presence or absence of conscious/phenomenal experience, we now have conclusive empirical evidence showing that the function of conscious/phenomenal experience is to provide what Broadbent (1971) calls the "evidence" on which the categorization of problematic inputs (inputs which are either unexpected or significant relative to the organism's current or perennial motivational concerns) is based. This evidence comes from the work on the effect of lesions of the striate cortex in man (Weiskrantz 1986) and in monkeys (Humphrey 1974; Cowey & Stoerig 1995). We know from the "blindsight" evidence assembled by Weiskrantz that the effect of lesions of the striate cortex in man is to abolish visual conscious experience in the affected part of the visual field. Some visual discriminations are still possible to objects in the affected part of the field, but are described by the subject as "pure guesswork". The Cowey & Stoerig experiment shows that the principal effect of a near total ablation of the striate cortex in a monkey is to deprive the animal of the ability to categorize its visual inputs. The work of Broadbent (1958; 1971) on the so-called "cocktail party effect" in the auditory modality shows that the function of selective attention, both involuntary and voluntary, in relation to the initial processing of sensory input is to protect the perceptual categorization mechanism from overload by focusing on the problematic at the expense of the non-problematic. Subsequent work by Pashler (1991; 1997) and Posner (Posner & Petersen, 1990; Posner & Dehaene 1994) shows that the selective attention which controls the processing of sensory input (the posterior attentional system - superior colliculus; pulvinar and posterior parietal cortex) is to be distinguished from another such system (the anterior attentional system - anterior cingulate and basal ganglia) which controls access from the output of the perceptual categorization system into another limited capacity channel whose function is to select a response appropriate to a situation of the type that has been identified by the categorizer as being currently present.

In the light of this evidence I have no hesitation in concluding that the Rodney Brooks machine is conscious and that the Minsky machine is not. Sadly, I have to say that the argument on which this conclusion is reached owes virtually everything to empirical neuropsychology

and almost nothing to philosophy. This, so it seems to me, is the end of the line as far as the philosopher's involvement in the mind-body problem is concerned. Just as the problem of the origin of the universe has ceased during our lifetime to be a problem in theology and become an empirically decideable issue within astronomy; so, as I foresaw in 1956, the mind-body problem is ceasing to be a philosophical problem and becoming an empirically decideable issue in neuroscience.

Regards,

Ullin

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**21 December 1998**

21-12-1998

Dear Ullin,

First, many thanks for your long and thoughtful responses to my CQ posts. I've read them all several times, and they always get better with every reading. I wanted to ask you if you would be willing to let me post some of those comments on my website<sup>7</sup>, as well as some of the related papers you sent me. I would especially welcome the opportunity to be the first to publish the correspondence between you and Gibson<sup>8</sup>, which you mentioned, but never sent me. If it's not available as computer text, I would be willing to transcribe some of it myself, if you could send me paper copies.

All the best,

Teed

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<sup>7</sup> <https://cognitivequestions.org/>

<sup>8</sup> Now available at <https://utplace.uk/correspondence/#gibson-correspondence> and <https://cognitivequestions.org/gibsonplace.html>.

27 January 1999

27-01-1999

Comments on 'Causality, Senses and Reference'. - U.T.Place

This section of Rockwell's paper<sup>9</sup> raises the important issue of distinguishing between cases where we are dealing with two descriptions differing in sense which refer to one and the same thing and cases where we are dealing with a causal relation between distinct existences. He points out quite rightly that as we move away from paradigm cases of identity such as 'Water is H<sub>2</sub>O' and 'The Morning Star is the same object as the Evening Star' the more difficult this distinction is to draw. What he does not discuss is the direction in which we are moving when we move away from the standard cases he mentions. This is something we pick up only from the examples he discusses beginning with a particular instantaneous event, the death of Socrates.

Now it appears to be the case that if, for the time being, we put aside cases such as 'Water is H<sub>2</sub>O' where we are dealing with a type or kind of thing and focus on cases where we are dealing only with tokens or particulars, we find that if we put cases of particular substances in Aristotle's sense of that term such as the planet Venus at one extreme, there is progression through particular processes and activities, such as the mental process which produced this piece of prose, instantaneous events such as the death of Socrates, to at the other extreme a particular relation such as that between a particular dog and its owner or a particular dispositional state such as my belief that it's not going to rain this afternoon. Along this dimension we find that the number of predicates that are true of the particular diminishes as we move from particular substances to particular dispositional states. Moreover, although types in general have far fewer predicates true of them than do the corresponding tokens/particulars, the same diminution in the number of predicates that are true can be observed as we move from substance types, such as billiard balls in general or water in general, to dispositional property types, such as brittleness in general.

That said, I cannot accept the death of Socrates and Xanthippe's becoming a widow as two descriptions of the same event. These are descriptions of two distinct and causally related events. Becoming a widow is a matter of acquiring a social status with distinctive legal and social rights and obligations, a status which a woman acquires on and by virtue of the death of her husband. The relevant causal counterfactuals which show that this is a causal relation are:

'If Socrates had not died when he did, Xanthippe would not have become a widow when she did'

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<sup>9</sup> Teed Rockwell, A Defense of Emergent Upward Causation, <https://cognitivequestions.org/causeweb.html>; last seen 22 May 2024.

`If Xanthippe had predeceased (or been divorced from) Socrates, she would not have become a widow on his death'.

What is wrong with

`If Xanthippe had predeceased (or been divorced from) Socrates, Socrates would not have died as and when he did'

is that it inverts the causal relation, and makes an effect into the cause.

If you want an example of a genuine case of another description of the same instantaneous event as the death of Socrates, how about the event whereby Socrates' heart stopped beating, given that no attempt was made to re-start it? Although it's a slightly odd way of putting it, it is still true that if the event whereby Socrates' heart ceased to beat had not occurred when it did, Xanthippe would not have become a widow as and when she did.

You will see from this that I agree with Kim and Goldman in thinking that Socrates' death and Xanthippe's widowhood are discrete events; but reject their view that there are NO cases of different descriptions of the same event. I have some sympathy with Goldman's view that "only two SYNONYMOUS (I would prefer to say `conceptually connected') descriptions can refer to the same event." But the reason for this, I believe, is connected to the relatively small number of predicates that apply in the case of instantaneous events, even particular ones. The number of predicates that go with a particular ontological category appears to be a function of the number of spatio-temporal dimensions involved. Thus substances both in the Aristotelian and in the modern sense are located and extended in both the three spatial dimensions and one temporal dimension. Processes and activities are similarly located and extended; but their spatial location and extension is parasitic on the spatial location and extension of the participating substances. Think of a telephone conversation between someone in the US or the UK and someone in Australia. Where is that? Instantaneous events, such as the death in which the process of dying terminates, are located, but not extended in time and located, but hardly extended, in space. Relations are extended and with some qualifications located in time and located, but not extended, in space. Dispositional states are extended in time within certain often undeterminate temporally located limits, but to my intuitions it makes no sense to talk of either spatial location or extension in such cases.

This latter is part of the reason for thinking, as I do, that dispositional states cannot be the same thing as the underlying structures on which their existence depends. But that in no way diminishes my conviction that in the case of substances and processes macro-and micro-descriptions relate to one and the same thing. To raise the question whether mental and neurological PROPERTIES are or are not identical rides roughshod over a distinction on which I have

insisted since 1956, but which no one else appears to recognize, the distinction between the story we tell about mental processes/consciousness and the story we tell about mental dispositions, particularly propositional attitudes.

The status of instantaneous events such as the death that ends the process of dying is, of course, a problem for a view such as mine that construes the reductionist issue differently in the case [of] processes and dispositional states. For it would seem that in the biological and mental cases instantaneous events are constituted by the temporal interface between an antecedent process and a subsequent and consequent dispositional state. That means that, on my view which holds that processes are, but dispositional states are not, identical with their structural composition/underpinning, no simple answer can be given to the question 'Are instantaneous biological/mental events identical with the structures that underlie them?'

To take Kim's stabbing and killing case, I would certainly want to agree that in so far as Brutus' stabbing Caesar caused Caesar to die, the stabbing and the killing refer to the same action on the part of Brutus. But whereas the 'stabbing' mentions only what Brutus did, 'killing' mentions the effect of what he did, namely the event whereby Caesar died. There is no contradiction involved in saying that Brutus stabbed Caesar but failed to kill him. This is just another case of a particular of which more than one predicate is contingently true. It is not remotely comparable with the case of a belief and the underlying state of the brain. The analogy here is between the state of being dead and the cessation of the metabolic processes which keep an organism alive. That, according to me, is a causal relation between distinct existences. The same is true of the relation between a belief and the underlying state of the brain. In the case of the stabbing and the killing both are descriptions of an action, an action of Brutus. In the dispositional cases the belief and the state of being dead are states of the person. The cessation of the metabolic processes and the state of synaptic connections that underlie a belief are states of those structures. Identity between events and states for my money requires identity between the substances involved.

Turning to the issue of causality, to suppose that causal relations hold between objects, i.e. substances, is clearly a mistake - though I can't think of a causal relation that doesn't involve some kind of interaction between two or more substances. On the other hand to speak of causation as a relation between events is to ignore the whole domain of statics where causal relations are between states, not events. Moreover, in the case of an event it also ignores, as the paper implicitly points out, all those multiple contributory causal factors which need to be in place as persistent states before the effect is finally set in motion by the triggering event (e.g., the lighting of the touch paper).

While I very much endorse the emphasis on the invariable multiplicity of causes, I think, it's important in talking of the causes of an event or state of affairs to distinguish between those causal factors that are still



operative so long as the state persists or when the event occurs and those that are part of the complete causal story of how the event or state of affairs came to be, but which have ceased to exist or to operate by the time the effect comes to exist. Talking of "the metaphysical cause of an event ... as everything in the universe that was responsible for that event taking place" strikes me as over-inclusive.

I will forbear to comment on the appalling quotation from Kim 1993. Trying to disentangle the conceptual confusions it contains would take an essay as long again as this is already.

That causes have effects that are epiphenomenal in the sense illustrated by Dennett's example of the shadow, must be granted. But it's important to note that such effects are only epiphenomenal RELATIVE to some intention of an agent or some interest on the part of an investigator. In themselves they are just as much effects as those that are intended or in the focus of interest.

There's a lot I could say about causal laws and laws of nature. I would confine myself to three dogmatically stated points:

1. As is stated in the paper, causal laws (i.e. verbal formulae) are invariably subject to a CETERIS PARIBUS (other things being equal) clause.
2. Causal laws cannot be adequately represented by a proposition of the form 'If p then q'. The conditional relation they express is between the existence/occurrence of states and events, not between the truth of propositions.
3. The truthmakers (the events or states of affairs whose existence or non-existence makes the proposition true) for causal law statements are the dispositional states of particular substances. There are no universal substantive laws of nature in general as envisaged e.g., by David Armstrong.

I note finally that I haven't said anything about the concept of a property, and whether or not there are emergent properties. On this I will say only two things. Firstly, I hold that the only genuine properties are dispositional properties. Secondly, I hold that the dispositional properties of the whole are invariably emergent relative to the parts and THEIR dispositional properties on which the properties of the whole depend in a causal sense. But here the direction of causation is upward rather than downward.