

**Benedikt Paul Göcke, ed.** *After Physicalism*. University of Notre Dame Press 2012. 384 pp. \$42.00 USD (Paperback ISBN 9780268030001).

*After Physicalism* is a collection of eleven essays addressing the mind-body problem from a non-physicalist point of view. Some contributions are mainly devoted to arguing against physicalism, whereas others are more focused on the exploration of theoretical options. In what follows, I will give a brief examination of the main arguments and an overview of some of the proposed alternatives.

In his introduction, Göcke criticizes the causal arguments for physicalism by embracing Papineau's point that all of them presuppose the completeness of physics, i.e., that every physical event has only physical causes, which, according to him, is question-begging. Göcke seems to suggest that this principle must be taken as a basic assumption, but he forgets that Papineau himself argues that, though not self-evident, it is supported by modern science. Even if this analysis of causal arguments is correct, it is not obvious that they are question-begging.

Notoriously, Moore argued against idealism by demonstrating his hands, but his argument is open to the objection that the demonstrated hand may be a mind-dependent entity, which is compatible with (some versions of) idealism. Meixner offers a similar argument against physicalism by demonstrating a pain, and adds that this is safe from analogous objections, since it would be absurd to claim that the demonstrated pain is a physical mind-independent entity, where an entity is mind-independent if it '... could exist even if no realm of consciousness existed.' (32). I suggest that this line of reasoning only shows the inadequacy of the employed definition of mind-independence, which makes physicalism trivially false. A more sensible definition might explicate mind independence as existing without being represented, or as not being composed by purely mental entities (like Berkeley's ideas), and none of those definitions would fall to Meixner's strategy.

Lowe outlines a version of substance dualism rejecting Descartes' view that mental and physical substances have incompatible attributes. His sharp point is that Cartesian dualism arises from confusion over the scopes of modal operators: one thing is not to have any physical property necessarily, another thing is to necessarily have no physical property. That said, Lowe's proposal is that the mind is a psychological substance, namely a substance which essentially has mental states as modes and, nonetheless, also has contingent physical properties, which supervene on the features of the body it is related with.

Foster argues that the best version of physicalism ultimately collapses into Cartesian dualism. A plausible physicalism should attribute to the body both physical and non-physical, mental features, but a physical object cannot have mental features: for instance, that a pen has a mental aspect beside the physical one is nonsensical; the only alternative is to posit a further object bearing mental properties. The first problem is Foster's discussion of mainstream physicalism, which discards options like functionalism after a hasty examination. The second problem is his rejection of property dualism: that a pen has a mental aspect is, at the most, metaphysically impossible, if its physical properties cannot co-occur with a mental aspect, but that doesn't mean that it is nonsensical. That said, why should we exclude the possibility that different physical features could co-occur with mental features?

Plantinga argues for substance dualism by imagining a quasi-instantaneous replacement of each cell of a human body with another cell of the same kind: no matter the speed of the replace

ment, there will be a temporal leap when the new cells have not interacted yet, thus are not integrated and don't constitute a body. Plantinga's intuition is that although the old body passes away, the person persists through the replacement, and is therefore distinct from the body.

This argument needs strong assumptions: it presupposes a non-obvious endurantist account of persistence and intuitions about personal identity that physicalists are unlikely to share. Furthermore, even if one grants those assumptions, Plantinga's thought experiment still relies on a disputable diagnosis of organic assimilation: to use an Aristotelian jargon, an object having the potentiality to play a certain role might be integrated into a system as soon as that potentiality has passed into first actuality, such that the object is disposed to play that role, despite not playing it (a similar point is made by Biggs-see <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/32777-after-physicalism/>). Whether the time required for the replacement of constituents is shorter than the time required for this first actualization is an open question.

Swinburne vindicates a Cartesian line of reasoning by appealing to the concept of informative designator, i.e., a designator such that '... someone who knows what the word means ...knows a certain set of conditions necessary and sufficient (in any possible world) for a thing to be that thing...' (151), 'H<sub>2</sub>O' being an obvious example. If a world involves no contradiction when described by informative designators, then it is metaphysically possible.

'I', according to Swinburne, is an informative designator, since I cannot fail to identify myself and recognize my experiences as mine. Therefore, the conceivability of myself not having a body but having a mental life captures a genuine metaphysical possibility: I am a mental substance having an essential part, namely my soul, which is needed for my mental life, while my body is a contingent proper part of me. The problematic step is the diagnosis of first person term: 'I' seems utterly different from 'H<sub>2</sub>O', which provides a description of the essential structure of its *de-signatum*. Swinburne insists that I have an intuitive, infallible ability to identify myself in this world, and I have that ability essentially, but that doesn't mean that (at the actual world) I have the infallible ability to identify myself in other possible worlds: necessary infallibility is not infallibility about necessity.

Haskell examines emergent materialism, the view that consciousness is a new aspect of a physical system. Is this materialism, indeed? He observes that developments in physics have enlarged the physical domain with forces, fields and waves, so that aspect may be just another addition.

Haskell suggests that such a materialism might turn out to be 'near enough' to emergent dualism, the view that the mind is a new substance generated by a physical system. The new substance is supposed to be distinct from the physical system; likewise, according to emergent materialism consciousness is not distributed among the constituents of the system, but belongs to it as a whole. Furthermore, in both cases emergence amounts to contingent causal dependence. Ultimately, the difference seems to lie only in the ontological categories invoked, since a new aspect is not a new substance.

Smith and Robinson start from a poorly argued dissatisfaction with mainstream physicalism, but they offer interesting investigations of the territory of neutral monism and panpsychism. Smith discusses a 'benign' physicalism taking experiential states as the intrinsic nature of the physical properties whose causal role is described by physics. This is, he argues, the only kind of

physicalism respecting his intuition that consciousness is irreducible; thus, Smith concludes that

physicalism is either false or philosophically irrelevant, because its only plausible version deals with the contingent causal structure of the world.

Robinson argues that standard physicalism admitting only measurable magnitudes is unable to account for the qualitative aspect of reality. One could try to accommodate that aspect either (i) by maintaining that fundamental physical objects have conscious properties, or (ii) by positing a brute emergence of proper consciousness on proto-conscious properties. According to Robinson both these views are untenable, therefore there is no way to improve physicalism.

Göcke claims that it is conceivable, hence possible, that my body has a mental life I am not the subject of; therefore, there is no particular I am identical to. If we restrict talking about identity to the domain of particulars, it follows that I am neither identical nor non-identical with anything, thus I am 'indistinct' with everything. That said, what is the *I*? Göcke suggests that we conceptualize it as the Absolute, intended as what is beyond affirmation and negation.

Göcke defends his appeal to conceivability as a guide to metaphysical possibility by claiming that Kripke's views on *a posteriori* necessary truths rest on a confusion between semantic and metaphysical matters, but he doesn't explain what this alleged confusion amounts to and doesn't discuss Kripkean intuitions about natural kinds. Another difficulty is that, despite talking about particulars in general, he actually restricts his discussion to physical particulars: even if we accept his *a priori* method and concede that I am not identical to any physical particular, it doesn't follow that there is no particular I am identical to. Finally, he never defends the categorial restriction of identity to the domain of (physical) particulars, which is vital for his thesis of indistinction: ultimately, his appeal to the Absolute seems entirely unmotivated.

Overall, the essays are interesting in so far as they explore a range of theoretical options, whereas they are less successful in arguing against physicalism, since they mostly rely on strong assumptions and on a controversial conceivability-based approach to modality. The volume is valuable for metaphysicians as a source of alternative perspectives on mind-body problem, but it would be less suited as reading for students, since the discussion of opponent views is often uncharitable, when not misleading.

**Matteo Benocci**, University of Reading