

After Physicalism, by Benedikt Paul Göcke (ed.). Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 2012. Pp. ix + 374. P/b \$42.00

Henry Taylor

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Correspondence: jht30@cam.ac.uk

Physicalism, in one form or another, is still the dominant position in the metaphysics of mind today. However, it is fair to say that its popularity is not as strong as it once was, with many philosophers either embracing weak forms of the doctrine such as nonreductive physicalism, or abandoning physicalism altogether. This provides an opportunity for exploring alternative approaches to the mind/body problem, particularly dualism.

It is this opportunity that the present volume intends to take. The introduction describes physicalism as a 'vain agenda' (p.1) and aims to offer plausible alternatives. There are eleven essays in the collection, nine of which are original. Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5 and 9 (by Uwe Meixner, John Foster, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne and Benedikt Göcke respectively) are concerned in the main with giving negative arguments against physicalism (chapters 4 and 5 represent the only non-original essays in the collection). Many of these thinkers accept some version of theism, and the links between philosophy of mind and philosophy of religion are most obvious in chapter 11, where Thomas Schärfl examines the connection between dualism and the doctrine of resurrection.

In an ingenious and wide-ranging essay (ch.2) E.J. Lowe expands on and develops his unique 'non-Cartesian substance dualism', the view that persons are simple substances, distinct from the body, but possessing physical properties (such as height and mass). In

Chapter 6, William Hasker argues that the most plausible version of physicalism 'emergence materialism' is simply equivalent to a version of dualism. Chapter 7 (by A.D. Smith) is the only essay that defends a version of physicalism. This may seem odd in the present collection, but I suspect that most physicalists would reject the claim that the view that Smith defends is in fact physicalism at all, given that he claims that the connection between the brain and the mind is *causal* rather than one of identity, supervenience, constitution or emergence (p.212). Smith also states that this version of physicalism is in fact 'philosophically somewhat uninteresting' (p.225). Chapter 8 is an insightful and rigorous examination of the knowledge argument, where Howard Robinson argues that the argument can be extended to show that conscious experience is required in order to fully understand normal mind independent macroscopic objects such as chairs and tables. Chapter 10 (by Stephen Priest) argues that physicalism is the product of 'conditioned' thinking, and that 'unconditioned' thinking can liberate us from belief in the doctrine. As well as the negative arguments against physicalism, some particularly interesting ideas in the book come from the positive proposals that the authors give, most of which are based around some form of dualism.

Personally, I was not convinced by the attacks on physicalism. One occasionally feels as though the physicalism that is being argued against is something of a straw man. For example, Meixner defines physicalism as the view that every concrete entity is physical, where 'physical' is taken to mean (among other things) 'mind-independent' (p.32 and ftn.8). Meixner then argues that there are some concrete entities (such as pains) which are not mind-independent, and thus not physical. Thus, physicalism is false (p.32). However, contemporary physicalists would say that physicalism is *not* the view that every concrete entity is mind-independent, but rather the claim that every entity (whether mind-

independent or not) is either identical with or supervenient upon physical entities. So the mere existence of mind-dependent concrete entities such as pains will not constitute an argument against their view. Similarly, Priest's argument against materialism consists in the claim that 'the body is only billions of atoms moving in empty space. It is absolutely self-evident that there is more to a human being than that. I think, therefore materialism is false' (p.327). Of course, to a physicalist, it is not self-evident that there is more to a human being than that, so this argument is unlikely to convince anyone sympathetic to physicalism.

I cannot discuss all of the issues raised in this collection, but I will make some comments about Plantinga's and Göcke's arguments against physicalism. Plantinga starts with the assumption that human beings can at least sometimes determine the modal status of a certain proposition, and assess it as either necessary, contingent or impossible (p.105), though Plantinga insists that this ability is nothing to do with *conceivability*. Plantinga then makes the following argument, which I paraphrase as follows:

- (1) It seems possible that my body could be instantaneously replaced with an exact replica of it and the original body annihilated by God (pp.105-109).
- (2) If this happens, it seems possible that I could survive the replication (p.106).
- (3) (Therefore) I am distinct from my body.

This argument seems most powerful against versions of physicalism that *identify* the physical body (or some subsection of it, such as the brain) with the self, so let us assume this version of physicalism. Of course, many physicalists would reject (1), but let us accept that also. The main difficulty with Plantinga's argument is that I see no reason to accept that (2) is true. Only someone already convinced that the self is not identical to the body would accept (2), whilst someone convinced that the self *is* identical to the body would simply

reject it. Indeed, in the personal identity debates, intuitions about such 'replication' scenarios are notoriously divided. So I see no reason for an opponent to accept (2).

Plantinga also puts forth another argument against materialism, which is based around the following claim:

...electrons and quarks are simple, without parts. Presumably neither can think- neither can adopt propositional attitudes... But then a proton composed of quarks won't be able to think either... If electrons and quarks can't think, we won't find anything composed of them that can think by way of the physical interaction of its parts. (p.118).

Indeed, Plantinga claims that we can see that a brain just *can't* be responsible for thought, in the same way that 'we can see that an elephant can't be a proposition' (p.125). My difficulty with this argument is much the same as the difficulty I had with the previous one, which is that it is based upon an intuition that Plantinga's opponents simply will not share. No one attracted to physicalism is likely to feel the intuition that a brain cannot be responsible for thought.

A related difficulty is that Plantinga does not address those thinkers (such as Papineau, Millikan, Dennett and Dretske) who have attempted to give physicalist accounts of intentionality, and thus ultimately of thought (Plantinga does mention Dretske in a footnote (ftn. 22) but does not enter into detailed analysis of his views). Ultimately, both of Plantinga's main arguments rely on intuitions that his opponents will not share, and thus it is unlikely that anyone who was previously sympathetic to physicalism will be swayed by them.

Göcke's argument against physicalism is also based upon the claim that we have insight into the modal status of propositions and states of affairs, though unlike Plantinga, he couches this in terms of conceivability, and ultimately in our knowledge of essence (pp.267-270). One difficulty with Göcke's view of modality is that he is forced to deny the claim that a-posteriori identities are necessary (pp.282-287), which many will find far too bitter a pill to swallow. However, let us grant this and examine Göcke's actual argument against physicalism.

Göcke asks us to imagine that the very same physical body that he actually has also exists in another possible world, say w , and that this body is exactly like his body is in the actual world in all respects, including in terms of its psychological life (p.275). Göcke then argues that if physicalism were true then *he* (Göcke) must exist in w (since his body exists in w , and by physicalism, he is identical with his body). However, there is no contradiction in supposing that Göcke does not exist in w . For this reason, it is *possible* that Göcke does not exist in w , and thus Göcke is not identical with that physical body or psychological life (p.276).

There are at least two plausible responses to this. Firstly, a physicalist could deny trans-world identity, stopping the argument in its tracks. Secondly, the physicalist could insist that Göcke really *does* exist in w . In the latter case, we will be back to simply having a war of rival intuitions, with little prospect of reaching a resolution.

This volume contains much interesting material, and it is important to examine and carefully evaluate both the problems that physicalism has as well as the prospects of rival positions, although I am unsure how convinced physicalists will be by the arguments against their view. The volume certainly constitutes an important contribution to the debate.

