

the worm recalls what it is yet to be and dreams
the flight that only seems to set it free. Thank
you very much.

APPLAUSE

MARK SIDERITS

00:37.01 Thank you. Do you want to- You don't want to. Ok.
We've got about 25 minutes left for general
questions from the audience. Since our target
essayist is proposing to continue to stand as a
target for everyone else.

00:37.27 So, how shall we do this?

ROBERT VAN GULICK

00:37.32 There are lot of pink cards coming up.

MARK SIDERITS

Let's collect some cards. Chris? Stephen wants
one.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

00:37.57 This is a question for Van Gulick or any of you.
I'm confused.

MARK SIDERITS

00:38.03 I think you have to hold it closer to your mouth.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

00:38.05 I'm confused. I understand physicalism as centrally a causal thesis. And if you take this downward, I mean the upward causality away from it, I don't know what's left. And so, the phenomena that we focus on in consciousness discipline such as the ability of consciousness to alter its various (unintell) to control anger, to quiet the mind, to lower blood pressure, et cetera, et cetera -

00:38.44 these all seem- These locate causality in consciousness and so, this seems to me- I mean, it's just all this talk of oh, for example, emergent downward causation. This is just the

most confused of concepts where- Please,
enlighten me.

ROBERT VAN GULICK

00:39.21

That's to me? Well, I mean I am not one who advocates downward causation if that means that the patterns or properties or structures that arise can actually violate the laws of the underlying physical structure. If it means something that's not that, but means more like what Evan was talking about - namely, that the system properties actually can structure which of the underlying components act in which ways in a way that's consistent still with non-violation of the physical laws.

00:39.59

So, I mean, I guess what I'm trying to do is, I mean, I'm trying to be a realist about consciousness. I'm trying to be a realist about consciousness having causal efficacy, but still wanting it to somehow be part of the physically realized world. So, I don't, you know, I mean-

Now, maybe you say, you know - can't have that. I mean, you're gonna- you can't have your cake and eat it, too. I mean, you gotta give up physicalism if you want consciousness to be real and causal. That's not my inclination. I want it to be real and causal and I want it to be physically realized.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

00:40.27

But, we admit that it has effects on the physical world, I mean, that's obvious, right?

ROBERT VAN GULICK

Obviously.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

00:40.32

So it's definitely connected, but- Why- I mean, why have as your fundamental thesis that it itself is an effect.

ROBERT VAN GULICK

00:40.46

Well, I mean I- to use the standard example, I mean, it's like life. I mean, think about, you know, biology. I mean, we now understand, I think we understand that living organisms are complex physical systems. Incredibly intricate, incredibly organized. The result of a long process of evolution and selection and such that yet, we don't feel as vitalists did a hundred years ago that life is something over and above the physical.

00:41.13

It's not another constituent. We add to it. Life, it's a fascinating part of the physical world. But the fact that there is life and living organisms is part of the physical world and I think that's how most people within the kind of perspective I'm operating within want to think about consciousness. They want to think of it as if it's just as real as life is, but it's still as physical as life is.

QUESTIONER

00:42.00 I'm still not convinced that you can uphold the position of non-reductive physicalism and the distinction you made between reductive physicalism and non-reductive physicalism. For example, if you don't attribute properties to the system, that is not shared by the individual components of that system, then why, how is it that it's not a reduction?

00:42.38 Because, I mean the way in which I understood your explanation is that the reason why the position that you prefer is non-reductive physicalism is because it's not trying to reduce all the properties to the constitutive elements. How would you characterize-

ROBERT VAN GULICK

00:42.59 Yeah. Well, I mean, first of all I hope there'll be some questions to the other panelists, as well. But I mean, the short answer- there is, I mean, I hate to direct (unintell), but a longer answer would just be this special issue of the

Journal of Consciousness Studies, where there's-
I mean, the overview article at the beginning, of
which I contributed, sort of lays out the space
of reduction and emergence and non-reductive
materialism.

00:43.25

But the short answer is I don't deny the reality
of these properties. These are properties. I
mean, none of the molecules of this card are pink
and yet, the card is pink. I mean, so the whole
can clearly have properties that are very
different. It can be colored. The card can be
colored and yet, there's a complete explanation
of why the card is colored that could appeal to
the way in which the molecules of this card
interact with photons of light, selective
absorption.

00:43.48

So, yes, the whole has properties that the parts
don't have and yet, they're not spooky or
mysterious. They're explicable in a certain way
and you and I are living things, even though our

parts - maybe our cells are alive, but certainly lots of our parts aren't alive. Yet you can take things that aren't alive and put them together in a way where you get a living thing.

00:44.06

The livingness of the organism is a real property, just as the color of the card is. So, I don't deny that wholes have real properties that are different than the properties of the parts. It's just that there's a way that, in principle, you could understand how they have that thing. If you could close the explanatory gap, there would be some kind of explanation, which may be beyond our cognitive capacities.

00:44.27

It's not guaranteed that human beings have the right cognitive capacities for understanding this. But in principle, there's gotta be some story that can be told about how the parts, plus their very intricate mode of combination, produce the property of the whole. Now, can we prove that or is that a working hypothesis? It's a working

hypothesis of physicalism at this point. No one would claim physicalism has been shown or established because there's too much work to do.

WILLIAM WALDRON

00:44.55

I have one short response to that. Parrots can speak single words, or at least they can make the sounds that are like words, but they're not speaking language. The words together and in a regular pattern of syntactical relationships and used in human communication make up language. And there's an emergent property there that is not present within just the parts itself. It's like a parrot making human sounds.

ROBERT VAN GULICK

00:45.27

Some parrots are pretty good. Alex, the grey parrot. Alex, yeah?

QUESTIONER

00:45.31

I know, but my point is that still, I mean unless you have kind of the dependent arising kind of

idea, where the properties of the system is not reducible to the properties of the individual components, but it is in the interrelationship of the components that together constitute the system, there is an emergence.

00:45.59

So dependent origination, that dependent arising idea, postulates this, but I'm wondering whether that is the same idea that the non-reductive physicalism is making. Because I heard that in one- in some way or another, whether actualized or unactualized, individual components do possess that property of the system. So that's what I'm questioning. I mean it's obvious that they are- the system has properties that individual components do not have. That is obvious. That's not the question.

ROBERT VAN GULICK

00:46.29

And ones that are in many cases very different than the ones that have them. Ones that the parts couldn't possibly have. The parts couldn't

possibly be alive or the molecules couldn't possibly be colored. I mean, the word, the phrase non-reductive physicalism often engenders a lot of resistance and I think it is important to understand, to stress again that at least people like Jerry Fodor and to some degree, Ned, and others who coined this phrase or this idea in the 1970s, had in mind really a rejection of a particular paradigm that was very powerful at the time.

00:47.04

It's hard for us to remember that it was so powerful, but I grew up under what was called the unity of science hypothesis. And it was under the influence of positivism and logical empiricism. I know it had no resonance in Eastern philosophy, but in mainline analytic philosophy in the United States and Europe, there was this idea that you could produce a perfect language using the tools of first order logic or higher order logic.

00:47.24

And use certain kind of sensational data and such that we're sort of given for simple observations, and everything that could be said about the world could be constructed in that language. So, theoretically, you could take the resources of physics and actually construct all the true statements of chemistry. Then use it to construct all the true statements of biology. And it was really a very much a conceptual imperialism and a notion that there was a single language that could be used for saying everything that was worth saying or that had any truth to it. And that's been rejected.

00:47.53

The zeitgeist now is thoroughly pluralistic. That we need wide ways of conceptualizing the world, wide varieties of theoretical frameworks and a variety of ways of encountering and engaging the world. So, the non-reductive aspect is the rejection of this kind of reductivism about how we have to think or know the world. But it tries to combine that with the notion that, ok, but in

some sense, the world is still physical. Why? Well, somehow, everything that's real somehow depends on the physical.

MARK SIDERITS

00:48.24

I'm going to take advantage of my situation as the moderator here and actually jump in. We're running out of time and so I can't restrain myself. There is, actually, a Buddhist equivalent of that notion of an ideal language. In abhidharma, you get the notion of a dharma language. And dharmas are symbols, they are the atoms of the physical and mental atoms out of which reality is constructed. And in fact, all situations can, in principle, be described in terms of interactions among those symbols.

00:48.59

So you do, in fact, have a perfect parallel. Now, this is not representative of THE Buddhist position. As we know now, there is no such thing as THE Buddhist position and there are those Buddhists who reject exactly that picture. But

the situation does have its parallels. Ok, I'd like to get in at least a couple of questions from the audience. Here are two, actually, both I think directed at Bill.

00:49.27

First, karma and the possibility of liberation. Given the cycle of stimuli, karma that give rise to consciousness- Sorry. Ok. Karma and the possibility of liberation. Given the cycle of stimuli, karma that give rise to consciousness, how is liberation an intention independent of karma, possible?

00:49.49

Second question that I think actually fits with the first - will the circle be unbroken? The Buddha gave a path out of samsara, but you didn't discuss. How does this endless construction change for the better?

WILLIAM WALDRON

00:50.03

What was the last part?

MARK SIDERITS

This endless, endless construction change for the better.

WILLIAM WALDRON

00:50.11

Yes. Well, that's a- I think actually, this is a question that is probably will be more directly addressed in other panels. But I wanted to limit my remarks to models of the mind that I thought would- they would find some kind of commensurability with ways that scientists are studying the rising of consciousness and the sort of patterns of- the causal patterns of arising of consciousness, rather than the ethical or moral or ameliorative, liberative dimensions of Buddhism.

00:50.50

But, what is- I think what in each of these points of these causal relations - these are not fully determinative. They tend to evoke certain types of reactions. There are dispositions towards certain things. This is not a causal

determinism and I think it's really important in the Buddhist terminology is that cognitive awareness and feeling and sensation are results. They're results of certain types of forces.

00:51.22

They are not themselves causes. And so, apala (ph) is not ahaytu (ph). And so therefore, it is not a kind of causal determinism. And I don't think, broadly speaking, that the methods that Buddhists use to overcome these habituated complexes are very different than methods that all of us, in various times and places around the world, have also used to overcome our deep-seated habits and complexes.

00:51.52

I think they're more sophisticated and systematic in certain kinds of ways, but I think there are things that, actually, a lot of us do all the time, we just don't do it in such a systematic way. So it is not a kind of causal determinism. The- Some people would like the circle to remain

unbroken, but there's an awful lot of other people who would like to get out of it.

MARK SIDERITS

00:52.18

Ok. Ok, I think this is directed to Joseph. If we can have an emotional experience without being aware of any corollary feeling, can the left prefrontal cortex that is contentment and a sense of well-being, theoretically be activated, maintained without any conscious emotional awareness operating.

JOSEPH LEDOUX

00:52.46

Well, first I don't think you can have an emotional experience without being aware of it. You can be in an emotional state without being aware of it. And you know, how that relates to left and right is still, I think, pretty unclear. But, to the extent that, you know, that the brain can segregate processing from sub-cortical centers into left and right, then theoretically

it's possible. But I think we don't know enough about that at this point.

MARK SIDERITS

00:53.17 Ok. A question for Evan. As Kant notes, the self cannot be known as a subject because only predicates can be known. Yet, if a self were a part of a whole, could the whole know the self?

EVAN THOMPSON

00:53.34 I'm not sure I quite get the question, but- Kant's idea about the self was that it was a kind of unifying principle that was not to be found in experience, but was necessary to suppose in order to account for the unity and coherence of consciousness.

00:53.58 Now, from the point of view of both Buddhist thought and also, from developments in phenomenology, that is not a necessary postulation. That there are principles of unification within the flux of moment to moment

experience or the stream of consciousness - to use James's phrase - or the self-constituting flux of consciousness - to use Fosphenol's (ph) phrase.

00:54.26

So, again, it's a kind of case of emergence of self-organization. Where you have a complex pattern that arises, that pattern can't reflect back on itself and capture itself as that very pattern, of course, because that's paradoxical. That invokes a kind of reflexivity that doesn't make sense. So if that's what the second part of the question is asking, I would say the answer is no, not in that sense.

00:54.54

The self-awareness- This is a point I was trying to make. Self-awareness is something that is intrinsically temporal because it always involves a elapsing sense of what has just passed, which is the note that has just sounded, but also one's immediate sense of having heard that note. So, there's a kind of intrinsic-

00:55.11 This actually goes in connection to what Georges was talking about this morning in response to Ned. There's a kind of intrinsic self-awareness that's not reflective or introspective. It's actually passive and it's built into the structure of time consciousness and how short-term memory, in a sense, works. Not recollective memory, but short-term memory.

00:55.32 I have no idea whether that answered the question, but I hope it did.

MARK SIDERITS

00:55.38 Ok. Here's a question for either Evan or Robert, but I suppose you could both have a shot at it. Actually, the rest of the panelists could, as well. What would it mean for consciousness to be non-naturalistic or non-biological or non-physical? What is the alternative?

EVAN THOMPSON

00:55.58 Bob, are you taking this one or am I taking this one? Well, I want to say something, actually, that goes back to the discussion we were just having about physicalism. There's a sense in which the very notion of- the thesis of physicalism is not a clear thesis.

00:56.14 And actually, Hempel pointed this out a long time ago. Because if the physical means what physicists now understand by the physical, well that's presumably limited and is going to be revised and enriched in ways that we can't foresee. If physical means what physicists at the end of the day- If that even makes sense to suppose, at the ideal limit of inquiry in the Persean (ph) sense. If the physical is what that, what physicists are gonna say at the end of the day is the physical, then physicalism is not really a contentful thesis.

00:56.42 So, here I really agree with Owen that naturalism is maybe- I mean, that's a problematic term, too.

But maybe it's a little more helpful than physicalism because- Here, think of it this way - suppose physicists were to say that we need sui generis mental properties, qua (ph) mental properties as part of the explanation of the workings of the physical world.

00:57.06

Well, would that mean that they were no longer, that they were mental in a sense of not being physical? Well, not really because if they're incorporated into the framework of physics, then in a certain sense they become physical. So this whole notion is, in a way, conceptually- I don't know how to put it. It's empty in a certain sense.

ROBERT VAN GULICK

00:57.23

Not empty.

EVAN THOMPSON

00:57.25

It's not empty. Alright. Good, so we can disagree about it.

ROBERT VAN GULICK

00:57.28

Quick response to the Hempel problem. Remember, the Hempel problem is either- It's not what physicists (unintell) or what the ideal inquiry of physics in the end. Well, here's a way of stating physicalism. It involves two elements. One is, everything that's real is physically realized. Either it's a base level physical property or it's something that is realized by combinations, complex combinations.

00:57.50

Now, how do we decide what the realm of the physical is? Well, here's at least a kind of reasonable criterion. There are no properties and no laws that need to be invoked specially - say for the mental - that aren't the same laws that govern the behavior of these physical components that are doing the realization in the non-mental case.

00:58.08

If the same ones that are necessary for regulating the atoms and the electrons or the strings or whatever it is that make up this notebook are the only laws that are needed in order to explain what's going on in Owen's brain when he, you know, thinks about his conversations with His Holiness then- I don't necessarily know what those are, but the argument is it's the same ones. There's no new laws. There's no new properties that need to be invoked.

00:58.33

Now, again, I'm not saying we know that to be true. It's a working hypothesis. It's a claim that a lot of people believe is plausible and they believe that if we're sitting here a hundred years from now, we'll say about consciousness as we now say about life. If we'd been here a hundred years ago, we would have been worrying about whether or not vitalism was true. And a hundred years from now, the suggestion is we won't be worrying about whether consciousness,

also, cannot be understood as a complex brain property.

00:58.57

That's a prediction, it's not necessarily guaranteed to be true. But that, I think, is the answer that people typically give to the open-endedness. Namely, whichever ones they are, they're the same fundamental laws that apply in the non-mental case are gonna be the only ones you need for the mental case.

MARK SIDERITS

00:59.15

Anyone else?

WILLIAM WALDRON

00:59.19

This isn't really my area, but it strikes me that this is a very metaphysical question. And there must be some strong metaphysical things at stake in this and I don't mean this to be dismissive, by any means. But one of the reasons that I focused on the particular topic and the mode of

analysis that I did is that these are things that people can get at.

00:59.41

The- what the Buddha suggested is something actually very practical here in analyzing experience. And talking about the larger metaphysical framework and arguing about that I'm sure is very important, but I think it has- these things will work themselves out, too. And in the meantime, most of us, I think- and the nitty gritty of experience and the nitty gritty of trying to understand that, you need to look at these causal patterns, you know.

01:00.13

What the Buddha's asking - and Buddhism in general, I hope I don't sound like I'm preaching here - but what is it that gives rise to certain types of experience. What are the conditions? This is a very limited type of causal syntax. It's a theory of causality. This gives rise to this type of experience and then stops when this stops.

01:00.35

And that would, to me, to my mind anyways, it suggests that those are things that are a very, very productive way of looking at things. And I really don't mean to be disrespectful here because I realize these are really important kinds of questions. But they seem to me to be very metaphysical questions and I- That's all I have to say.

MARK SIDERITS

01:00.57

Well, on that note. There are lots more questions from the audience and I am grateful that you have this much interest in the topics we're discussing. I'm sorry we didn't have time to get to all your questions, but it is now 3:30. We'll be taking a 10 minute break and then we'll come back for the third panel of the day, which is on wisdom. Thank you.

APPLAUSE

01:01.43

TAPE END