

Review of Jennifer Hornsby's *Simple Mindedness: In Defense of Naive naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind*.

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Jennifer Hornsby's *Simple Mindedness* consists of 12 essays organized into sections focusing on three issues: the ontology of persons and mental events; how actions fit into a world of natural law; and the nature of intentional explanations. Most of the essays have been previously published but many of these are revised and include addenda. The collection is unified by its defending a position in the philosophy of mind Hornsby calls "naive naturalism." She advertises naive naturalism as neither physicalist nor Cartesian. Hornsby claims that the mind-body problem as currently discussed, i.e., the question of how the mind fits into nature, arises because contemporary analytic philosophers have an overly scientific view of nature restricting their concept of nature to whatever can be the proper subject matter of science. In her view, if naive naturalism were adopted, the mind-body problem, as it is currently discussed, would disappear. Hornsby is thus a member of that venerable tradition of English philosophers who see the mind-body problem as arising through an excessive fascination with science.

Hornsby says that the 'naive' of 'naive naturalism' is to be understood as qualifying 'nature.' As I understand it, her view is that naive nature is nature as presented by common sense prior to the sophistications of science and philosophy. A big part of naive nature is what she calls "common sense psychology." Its subject matter consists of persons, their thoughts, experiences, feelings, actions, and so forth. It includes the general principles (imprecise and perhaps uncodifiable) of charity and rationality that govern our interpretations and explanations of person's thoughts and actions. Common sense psychology, in her view, is normative and first-personish. In these ways it is quite distinct from the *objective* view of nature had by the scientist. Many of the essays urge her view that it is a mistake to see common sense psychology as a kind of proto-theory susceptible to improvement and explanation by science. Thus she is at odds with those philosophers of mind (e.g., Fodor) who see common sense psychology as a starting point for a scientific theorizing about the mind whose principles may be refined and explained by future cognitive science.

According to Hornsby, what makes naive naturalism naturalistic is its rejection of Cartesian substances and privacy. However, she emphasizes that her brand of naturalism is quite different from naturalism as it is understood by most contemporary philosophers of mind. These philosophers, she says, think that everything in the natural world is susceptible to objective scientific understanding and, physics being the fundamental science, they tend to identify naturalism with physicalism. Hornsby observes that to these “scientific” naturalists the mind appears deeply problematic. How, they ask, can the objective physical world of science contain common sense psychology? For them solving the problem requires “naturalizing” the mind; that is, showing how the mind and specifically intentionality and consciousness fits into the physical world by explaining these features in terms of micro-physics. Hornsby thinks this project is doomed to failure. Those scientific naturalists who share her view (e.g., Dennett and Churchland) will then be committed to holding that common sense psychology is false and thereby to eliminativism or instrumentalism about the mental states posited by common sense psychology. Hornsby thinks this consequence is absurd and its mere possibility shows the inappropriateness of setting up science as a standard for common sense psychology.

Hornsby’s anti-physicalism is greatly influenced by Davidson’s anomalous monism. Like Davidson, she thinks that the normative and first personish aspects of common sense psychology preclude its reduction to physics. Neither Davidson nor Hornsby are completely clear about what they consider to be the reductionism they oppose, but it seems to include any view (e.g., property identity theory, functionalism) on which physical properties are connected by strict law with intentional mental properties. She treats Davidson’s arguments for irreducibility as though they were well established results, something like the Pythagorean Theorem; doing little to explicate or defend them. This is unfortunate since these arguments, at least among those who are not already believers, are thought to be, at best, obscure. One gets the feeling that Hornsby considers philosophers (e.g., Fodor and Dretske), who think that some kind of reduction is possible, to be, as she says at one point, “in the grip of a picture” (p.42). In any case, her anti-physicalism goes even further than Davidson’s. According to naive naturalism, mental events are not even token identical to physical events. This claim is quite important to her view that common sense psychology is independent of science. She seems to think that if the events of common sense psychology are not identical to the events of physics then we should not expect them to be susceptible to scientific correction and explanation.

Hornsby brings to bear a number of considerations in support of her non-identity thesis. The primary one is her rejection of a mereological principle concerning events. The mereological principle says that if e and f are any events then their fusion $e+f$ is a unique event. Hornsby thinks that this principle is required to support the identity thesis. Her idea is that one is inclined to think that a mental event, say J 's deciding to go out, is identical to a physical event in J 's brain, only because we think that there is a fusion of micro-neurophysiological events which occupy the same spatio-temporal region as J 's deciding to go out. In an interesting discussion she argues that Davidson's principle of the nomological character of causality that is a premise for his argument for the identity theory presupposes the mereological principle. But Hornsby argues that arbitrary fusions of events need not be events since they might not be causes of anything. According to her, e.g., the fusion of Julius Caesar's death, the battle of Hastings, and a speech by Edward Heath is not an event since it is not a cause of anything. One can grant this point but still hold on to the identity thesis, since it requires not that all fusions of events are events but only certain ones; those that occupy the same region as mental events. Nothing in her argument precludes identifying these with mental events since they will satisfy Hornsby's condition that events are causes. As far as I can see Hornsby's arguments at most undermine some reasons for holding the identity thesis. They don't refute it.

Hornsby thinks that even the weakest version of physicalism entails the event identity thesis so if she can refute it she thereby establishes anti-physicalism. Whether this is so depends on one's account of events and one's account of physicalism. On fine-grained accounts of events (Kim, Lewis, Yablo), mental events are not identical to physical events (since they are instantiations of mental properties), but are *realized* by them. According to one influential characterization of physicalism, every property instantiation is realized by the instantiation of fundamental physical properties, and every entity is *constituted* by physical individuals. This allows for the existence of events and objects that are not identical to (since they are realized by and constituted by) physical events and objects. For example, a statue may be constituted at a time by a certain lump of gold not identical to it and a feeling of pain may be realized by a neurological event not identical to it. It is likely that Hornsby would reject this version of physicalism as well since if Davidson's arguments are sound they would appear to be effective against realization physicalism. But one would like to see the arguments that are supposed to defeat realization physicalism clearly laid out.

Anti-physicalist views like Hornsby's face a problem. Hornsby argues that beliefs and desires are causes of the actions they rationally explain. She thinks that this is possible even though they do not fall under laws and are not identical to, or realized by physical events. But mental events also have purely physical effects. A decision about what word to type into my computer results in a certain micro-physical condition in the computer. It is commonly thought that this effect has a completely physical cause. The question then arises of whether the micro-physical effect is overdetermined by two distinct causes, i.e., a physical and a mental one or the mental event is identical to or dependent on the physical one. The former seems *ad hoc* and awkward, and the latter is at odds with naive naturalism's attempt to place mental events outside the scope of science.

Hornsby's view of the scope of science and what it can teach us about ourselves and the world is notable. Here are two quotations:

"The world in which the mind is accommodated by the naive naturalist is naively natural; it contains the objects that we see and we act on; no peculiarly scientific method is required to have knowledge of it." (p.12).

"The metaphysical picture which calls truth 'correspondence with reality', and which sets facts apart from human thinking and places them in 'the uninterpreted world', has led to the idea that science sets the standard of truth. To those in the grip of the picture, science seems uniquely equipped to determine the facts. But once the picture is abandoned, science has no special status in telling us what are matters of fact. Without the picture, then, we are under no pressure to suppose that common sense psychological phenomena 'ought' to be amenable to explanations of some kind that scientists give." (p.42)

But any person curious about why water expands when it freezes, why the sky is blue, why the moon looks bigger and redder when on the horizon, how people can understand sentences they have not previously encountered, and why many perfectly ordinary phenomena accessible to common sense occur, would expect (and in many cases can find) answers from science. Contra Hornsby, science does have a special status in telling us what are matters of fact. The reason, of course, is that science is in the business of constructing the theories and explanations and then subjecting them to experimental test and critical evaluation. Hornsby

seems to fear that if science is allowed this status and if its scope is inclusive it will somehow crowd out other human concerns; particularly common sense psychology. But there is little danger that learning about the neurophysiological and computational grounding of common sense psychology will refute it. We can safely predict that science won't tell us that there are no beliefs; for the same reason that it will not tell us there are no mountains. There obviously are both mountains and beliefs. And we have reason to believe that sciences that account for the features of both are possible.

Although I have little sympathy for Hornsby's anti-physicalism and less for her accusations of "scientism" I do think that *Simple Mindedness* should and will be taken quite seriously. Physicalists have as little reason to be complacent about their views as naive naturalists.