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Why Philosophy Makes No Progress

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Abstract
This paper offers an explanation for why some parts of philosophy have made no progress. Philosophy has made no progress because it cannot make progress. And it cannot because of the nature of the phenomena philosophy is tasked with explaining—all of it involves consciousness. Here, it will not be argued directly that consciousness is intractable. Rather, it will be shown that a specific version of the problem of consciousness is unsolvable. This version is the Problem of the Subjective and Objective. Then it is argued that the unsolvability of this latter problem is why there are other unsolvable philosophy problems.

Keywords Consciousness · Mind · Objective · Philosophy · Progress · Points of View · Reduction · Subjective

1 On Proving Philosophy Problems Unsolvable

The idea that philosophy does not make progress is not new. And, unsurprisingly, it is not warmly embraced. But it is increasingly taken seriously.[1] Here, we will argue that five specific philosophy problems are unsolvable because they are all variations of one special problem which is itself unsolvable. This latter problem is the Problem of Subjective and Objective points of view. That this problem is unsolvable strongly suggests that the problem of consciousness is also (and see, Dietrich and Hardcastle 2004).

[1] For some arguments that philosophy makes no or surprisingly little progress, see Chalmers (2015), Dietrich, (2011), McGinn (1989, 1993), Nagel (1974, 1979, 1986), and Sterba (2005). The literature on this fascinating topic is growing as pro-progress philosophers rush to philosophy's aid, e.g., see Stoljar (2017). In sharp contrast, the sciences do indeed make progress. Consider medicine: it is much better to have almost any disease today than 50 years ago. The sciences are among humankind's greatest achievements.

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Thomas Nagel cast doubt on the view that consciousness was due entirely to neurophysical processes in his famous paper 'What is it like to be bat?' (1974). In this paper, he introduces us to a more general version of the problem of consciousness he calls the Problem of the Subjective and Objective. The Problem of the Subjective and Objective is given a fuller treatment in his 1979 paper, 'Subjective and Objective' in his book *Mortal Questions* (pp 196–213—stand-alone page references will be to this).

The philosophy problems we are concerned with are the same Nagel analyzed in his (1979). They are:

(1) The meaning of life—is life absurd?
(2) Is there freewill?
(2a) Is there moral responsibility? (Nagel considers this problem to be directly tied to problem (2))
(3) What constitutes personal identity? Are we each a self?
(4) The mind–body problem—could consciousness be a physical brain process?
(5) The clash between consequentialist and "more agent-centered views of right and wrong" (p. 202).

Our strategy, like Nagel's, will be to show, first, that these five problems are all versions of one specific, but abstract, philosophy problem, and then, second, to argue that that specific problem is unsolvable. The one specific problem: reducing our subjective points of view to our objective ones (or vice versa), or, failing that, reconciling these two points of view. We will use 'S/O problem' as a short name for this problem. We will call the five philosophy problems, above, the Central Five, agreeing, with Nagel, to make (2a) a crucial part of (2).[2] Importantly, our argument that the S/O problem is unsolvable differs considerably from Nagel's, and it is considerably stronger.

Finally, though our strategy is like Nagel's, it diverges from Nagel's view of the matter. Nagel hoped that shedding light on the S/O problem would help move philosophy along to solving some of its deepest problems. Nagel said: (p. 196).

> There is a problem that emerges in several areas of philosophy whose connexion with one another is not obvious [the S/O problem]. I believe that it can be given a general form and that some treatment of it is possible in abstraction from its particular instances—with results that can be applied to the instances eventually. (p. 196).

But in the end, he doubted that the S/O problem could be solved:

> It is the aim of eventual unification [of the subjective and objective points of view] that I think is misplaced, both in our thoughts about how to live and in our conception of what there is. (p. 213).

[2] The term "central five" primarily means central to Nagel's goal, rather than central to all of philosophy.

Yet Nagel placed no blame for philosophy's lack of progress on the eternal clash of the subjective and objective points of view. This is exactly what is argued for here.

2 Why These Five?

Why did Nagel pick these five philosophy problems, and not others? It is not because only these five exhibit the S/O Problem. Nagel openly states that other philosophy problems exhibit the same S/O Problem structure (p. 206). He says:

> Obviously the difficulty of reconciling subjective and objective points of view arises with regard to space and time, death, and throughout the theory of knowledge. (p. 206).

But Nagel does not explicitly say why he picked these five. And we use them here because Nagel used them to such good effect in his 1979 paper. But there is more to say.

The key for Nagel, I think, is that all five problems are important and venerable philosophy problems which each of us probably has wrestled with at some time in our current lives, and all five are easily seen to be due to the clash between subjective and objective points of view.[3] And, all five problems share the same structure, which is this: "From the relevant subjective point of view, *X* is the case, but from the relevant objective point of view *Y* is the case, where *Y* entails *Not-X* and *X* entails *Not-Y*." We immediately have, then, this result: The subjective and objective points of view in each problem cannot both be true, that would result in a contradiction; so, the objective point of view must provide the correct answer to the philosophy problem under consideration simply because the objective point of view is objective. The problem with this, as we will see in the remainder of this paper, is that the objective point of view fails to capture the truths revealed from the subjective point of view. This works the other way, too. We can go with the "solution" seen from the subjective point of view, while tabling the objective point of view. But then we lose truths revealed by the objective point of view. So, we are stuck, then, with contradiction or inadequacy. Both are unacceptable. The remainder of the paper examines all this in detail.

3 Subjective and Objective Points of View and the Central Five

Rather than defining "subjective" and "objective" points of view, let us instead show how S/O funds the Central Five. Hopefully, this will help the reader's intuitions and thereby help the reader see how the S/O problem is at the heart of the Central Five. (This strategy and discussion are derived from Nagel 1979.)

[3] Also, the five problems work together, forming a sort of kernel that spans most of philosophy. Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Ethics are all represented here.

(1) From a subjective point of view, one's life is significant. One's goals, beliefs, desires, success's, failures matter to the individual who has them and to the people who, in one way or another, come into contact with that individual. However, from an objective viewpoint, one's life is not significant. In the fullness of time, none of our lives will matter. Eventually, *Homo sapiens* will go extinct; our sun will expand to consume Earth and then wither to a red dwarf. All life on Earth, and all testament that there was life on Earth will one day be gone completely. In sum, from a subjective point of view, our lives have meaning and so aren't absurd, but from an objective one, they lack meaning, and so are absurd.

(2) From a subjective point of view, we humans do things; we are agents—we often think of ourselves as the sources of causal chains. We decide we are going to take up yoga and follow up by attending weekly classes. As we get stronger and healthier, we feel good about ourselves for having the will to stick to a good, if arduous, plan. However, from an objective viewpoint, all of our thoughts and behavior have causal antecedents that together form a vast causal history. This history runs back to the beginning of everything, and so, predates not only our decision to take up yoga, but yoga, humans, and life itself.[4] Determinism, on Nagel's view, is the thesis that there are no agents, no one ever does anything, rather, stuff just happens causally, and the relevant being is along for the ride.[5]

    (2a) From a subjective point of view, we are each morally responsible agents. A person's behavior is subject to her moral judgments as well as the moral judgments of others. Moral responsibility flows from being an agent, from being the author of certain causal chains. However, from an objective point of view, where there are no agents, moral responsibility evaporates. From an objective point of view, blame and guilt make no sense (p. 199). From an objective viewpoint, the September 11 attackers were not morally responsible for their deeds, for there were no deeds. Instead, the attackers were swept along in a vast wave of causation; at no time were they in control. At no time... are any of us.

(3) From a subjective point of view, we each have a personal identity which we often label as our self and which grounds our being. We answer the question "What are the conditions that must obtain if two experiential episodes separated in time are to belong to a single person?" (p. 199) with "the same self experiences both episodes" (or "the same self is the experiential locus of both episodes"). However, from an objective point of view, various types of publicly accessible and determinable continuities—e.g. "physical, mental, causal, emotional" (p. 199)—can be used to establish that it is the same person who experiences both

[4] If one wants, this beginning can be construed as the Big Bang or Inflation or some other early epoch in the formation of today's observable universe.

[5] As Nagel points out, if somewhere in the vast causal chain, there is some uncaused event, such as some quantum process, this does not open any logical space for freewill because the uncaused event, by definition, was not caused by an agent. See p. 198.

episodes. Nagel objects here, deploying a "further question" argument (p. 200): For any individual or being that satisfies some objective continuity, there is the further question as to whether the same self is also continued. This further question occurs because the publicly accessible and determinable continuities don't directly apply to the self; by definition, selves are not public. Consider the resulting epistemic clash: Objectively, our inability to capture the continuity of the self is troubling (at least to some), but subjectively, it seems that we don't even need to bother with such concerns—it is subjectively obvious (at least to some) that one's self now is the same self as an earlier one. In fact, subjective continuity of a person is due to the continuity of that person's self.[6]

(4) From a subjective point of view, sugar tastes like this (p. 201), the blue sky looks like this, and a baseball feels like this. The thises are pointing at certain experiences that all or most of us share to some degree. Such pointing is the best we can do communally, publicly. This is because, in general, from a subjective point of view, we are beings with minds: our lives are filled with rich, conscious experiences, which we share more or less well, often by language. However, from an objective point of view we are beings with brains. Somehow, conscious experiences are available only to the relevant agent, the relevant self. External to this agent or self, there are only the events and properties that we can publicly measure. Our sciences require such publicly measurable events. So, the contents of our conscious experiences are apparently beyond the reach of science (Dietrich and Hardcastle 2004). We now have, even if we don't like it one bit, two realms: the objective, measurable, physical realm, and the subjective, non-measurable, experiential realm. How they interact (if they do) is the mind–body problem.[7]

(5) From a subjective point of view, we must take the individual seriously. Specifically, it seems we all have the right to pursue our own lives (within limits) without having to consider, at each step, whether we are maximizing the good for the most beings—without, that is, justifying everything that we do to the larger community to which we belong. However, from an objective point of view, we seem to be drawn naturally to a more consequentialist viewpoint. For the consequentialist, our behavior is good or bad depending on how it affects others. From a more agent-centered perspective, our acts are right or wrong depending

[6] This epistemic clash is due to the *epistemic gap* between the physical and the phenomenal (Levine 1983). Of course, some philosophers reject the very notion of an epistemic gap. One way to do this is to get rid of the self, say by arguing that it is an illusion. Thomas Metzinger is a well-known example of someone who makes such a move; see his 2003 book *Being No One*. There is a large literature on this book, attacking and defending it. As with similar attempts by the Logical Empiricists, the self seems to have so far survived Metzinger, mostly due to the fact that selves are very hard to deny (at least for some). Those that have an easier time denying the self are usually impressed by the repeated failures to reductively (neurally) explain what the self is and how we have one (if we do). One unpopular option: conclude that, perhaps, some very important things, like the self, cannot be reductively explained, which is to deny physicalism.

[7] Again, we see the epistemic gap. And again, a well-known move some philosophers make here is to flatly deny that there is any such gap by denying that there is any experiential realm at all. Daniel Dennett is an example. See his 1991 book, *Consciousness Explained* and his 1988 paper, Quining Qualia.

on whether we are interfering with another's rights (p. 203). Nagel holds that for the consequentialist, the individual must transform "as far as possible into an instrument for the realization of what is best *sub specie aeternitatis*" (p. 204).[8] However, Nagel points out that "life cannot be lived *sub specie aeternitatis* (p. 205)." From which he suggests that the opposition between the two points of view is a stalemate (p. 205).

This concludes our examination and explication of the Central Five. The important thing to note, says Nagel, is that all these problems are based on the clash between an objective point of view and a subjective one. Of course, the details differ from problem to problem, but their general, abstract structure remains the same: What is asserted from the subjective point of view is denied from an objective point of view. So, we get: Our individual lives are meaningful—Our individual lives are meaningless; We each have freewill—We each lack freewill; and so on. Subjectively, *X* is the case, but objectively, *Not-X* is the case. For those who hate contradiction, who hate paradox, this is intolerable. Something must be done.

Finally, from the above discussion, we see that an objective point of view is a view on a mind-independent, external world: *the mind views the external world*. Objective points of view have to be impersonal to varying degrees. A subjective view is private and depends exclusively on the viewer's *consciousness*. Unlike the objective point of view, the subjective one doesn't guarantee an external world at all: *the mind experiences*, full stop. So, as noted, the two points of view are in opposition. This attempt at definitions will have to do for now.

4 What Does It Mean to Solve the Subjective/Objective Points of View Problem?

Since the Central Five are, at root, the S/O Problem, knowing how to solve it would presumably take us a long way toward solving the Central Five. There are at least two ways to solve the S/O problem. Perhaps most obviously, one way would be to reduce the subjective to the objective, or vice versa. The goal for physical monists is to reduce the subjective point of view to the objective one (e.g.,Dehaene and Naccache 2001; Dehaene et al. 2017; Moyal, et al. 2020.) The goal for the idealists is to reduce the objective to the subjective (e.g., Berkeley 1713).[9]

Another way, would be to say that the objective point of view is always the correct point of view, in virtue of being objective.

[8] Literally, 'under the aspect of eternity.' Somewhat more colloquially, 'viewed in relation to the eternal,' or 'from a universal perspective.' Such a view is purely objective. At least that is the intent. This point of view is ancient, but Spinoza gave it its modern meaning. See his *Ethics*, Part V, Prop. XXIII, Scholium. We will examine this further, below.

[9] For Berkeley, the subjectivity was God's. Naturally, Berkeley held that such subjectivity was rock solid (he was a bishop, after all). Indeed, for Berkeley such subjectivity was objectively true: If God subjectively perceived a tree at some location, then for humans and other beings, there really was a tree there, and it remained there because God continued to subjectively perceive (or conceive) it.

Reduction in either direction has so far not worked. This conclusion is forced on us by the lack of any widely agreed-upon reduction in the literature (see, Carter, et al. 2018, which is a reply to Dehaene, et al. 2017; see also Lycan 2009; and for a positive anti-reductionist theory, see Chalmers 1996). But of course, what we want to do here is to explain *why* the reduction won't work. So, we have to examine this attempted reduction carefully.

The second way is more promising: cleave to the position that the objective view is always the right one. Let us consider this second way first, partly because it reveals more about how the subjective and objective points of view are related.

5 The Objective-Only Solution

One objection to the Objective-Only solution is that the subjective is just as real, just as important, and just as much a guarantor of truth as is the objective.[10] In fact, in one way, conscious, subjective experience is a more reliable guide to a certain kind of truth than objective perceiving. To be conscious of experiencing a red square is to be *infallible* about such an experience.[11] Yes, there might be no red square in the perceiver's external environment causing the experience, but the experience exists and persists anyway. If you are the experiencer, you are *certain* you are having the experience; in fact, for any experiencer: *to experience is to be certain* (see next). You are perhaps somewhat less confident that you are not hallucinating (especially if you are in a philosophy class), or less confident that you are experiencing something out there in your environment. Such loss of certainty is the core of *Cartesian Doubt*. But one can be sure the experience itself is real. As Chalmers puts it (1996, pp. 196–197):

> there is something intrinsically epistemic about experience. To have an experience is automatically to stand in some sort of intimate epistemic relation to the experience.... *There is not even a conceptual possibility* that a subject could have a red experience like this one without having *any* epistemic contact with it: to have the experience is to be related to it in this way. [First emphasis added.]

So, going with the objective answer, and only the objective answer for each philosophy problem, makes an entire class of relevant truths unavailable to us. How then, could the objective-only answer always be the right one?

"Precisely because," responds the fan of Objective-Only, "the real truth, the important truth in each philosophy problem *is* the objective truth; everyone sensible

[10] This is the point of Nagel's well-known paper "What is it like to be a bat?", Nagel (1974). The only way to know what it is like to be a bat is to be a bat, which for Nagel's human reader (and for Nagel himself) is impossible. Imagining hanging upside down and flying around on summer nights eating bugs will not cut it, according to Nagel, for that only delivers what it would be like for the imaginer to *behave* like a bat.

[11] *Incorrigible* is also used, see, e.g., Chalmers (1996), pp. 196–197. The terms 'infallible' and 'incorrigible,' are not perfectly interchangeable, however. 'Infallible' is a better term, here.

agrees to that. So, we can forego the subjective truths. Yes, there are subjective truths, but they are important only to the relevant individual, the experiencer, they aren't important to a wider community. . . pretty much by definition. So, the S/O problem is solved, or at least solvable provided that we embrace objectivity, which we must."

The fan of Objective-Only is wrong.

6 The Subjective and the Objective Viewpoints Are Equally Real and Equally Necessary

The connections between subjective and objective points of view are quite tight and robust. The fan of Objective-Only underestimates them. We will briefly examine three of these connections; this will give us our needed argument that the fan of Objective-Only is wrong. The three are:

(1) Experience delivers knowledge;
(2) Occurrent knowing feels like something, i.e., occurrent knowing delivers a conscious, subjective state unique to it—it delivers a certain type of experience.
(3) Subjective and objective need each other and involve each other directly.

6.1 Experience Delivers Knowledge

Our subjective, conscious experiences are crucial to our lives. Experiencing thirst, Bif searches for a glass of water. Not finding any, she builds a water pipeline from a nearby river. Abstract this case, and one will see that our inner, private subjective states are at least partly responsible for everything we intentionally do, and some things we do accidentally. From AI to global heating to wildlife protection measures for zebras, human objective action and human subjective experience are deeply and robustly intertwined. We get this principle:

EDK: Experience delivers knowledge; experiencing delivers knowing.

EDK is basically Chalmers's idea, above, that it is conceptually impossible to consciously experience something and not gain some knowledge of that thing in that very experience, even if the thing is only in one's imagination or mind—a hallucinated red square is still red and a square.

6.2 Occurrent Knowing Feels Like Something

Bringing before our mind something that we know, results in *feeling* that we know that thing. Currently reflecting on the happy fact that $2+2=4$, we can step back

see that our knowing this fact feels like something. As Nagel might put it: *There is something it is like to be a knower*.[12] We knowers use this feeling of knowing to know (or learn) that we know. The feeling that we know 2+2=4 when we think of it is subjective, but that 2+2 equals 4 is an objective fact. Both points of view are needed in order to know the sum of two twos.[13]

6.3 Subjective and Objective Need Each Other and Involve Each Other Directly

The lesson of **6.2** expands. The objective involves the subjective both directly and crucially. And the subjective directly involves the objective. It is not just that the one needs the other, it is that objectivity is a form of subjectivity and subjectivity is a form of objectivity—yet, they are not the same.

To see this, let's start with objectivity. To objectively perceive something, is to have a certain kind of subjective experience of it. What makes this subjective experience objective, according to Nagel (p. 208), is that the experience is experienced by someone almost all of whose *particular* properties have been abstracted away. Details which pick out a specific and unique perceiver and its specific point of view are abandoned via abstracting. All that really matters is that the objective experiencer is an appropriate perceiver equipped with some relevant knowledge. If some baseball pitch is objectively a strike, and as long as the relevant perceiver (which could even be a computer of some sort) knows what a strike looks like, then all the other details can be ignored, including not being a human baseball umpire.

We can see all of this in Nagel's description of the objective point of view. Nagel points out that talking of objective and subjective points of view is shorthand for a subjective/objective *polarity* (p. 206). At one end, the objective dominates; at the other, the subjective dominates. But at no place between the two poles, nor at either end, is there objectivity without subjectivity, or subjectivity without objectivity. They are always together. What then constitutes being objective? Nagel says (p. 208):

> [Neither wider and wider intersubjective agreement, nor expanding imaginative scope are required.] [Objectivity's] essential character [in the Central Five]... is externality or detachment. The attempt is made to view the world not from a place within it, or from the vantage point of a special type of life and

[12] It does look as if EDK, "experience delivers knowledge," is somehow the flip side of "occurrent knowing feels like something." For example, one might speculate that "experiencing delivers knowing" always co-occurs with "knowing delivers experiencing." Exploring this seems fruitful, but will have to await for another time.

[13] Claim: All the propositional attitudes—belief, hope, desire, want, wish, judge, consider, deny, etc.—come with their own specific conscious feeling. Hope feels different from desire or belief. So, it is not just occurrent emotions that deliver conscious feelings. It is not clear how to prove this claim, however. About the best that can be done is to ask researchers to treat their own minds like a field study and open-mindedly introspect the subjective felt differences that occur with having the different propositional attitudes. For further work on this topic: see, Kriegel (2013), and for some good background, see Bourget and Mendelovici (2019).

> awareness, but from nowhere in particular and no form of life in particular at all.

Nagel calls this 'nowhere in particular,' the *View From Nowhere* (see his 1986).[14]

(One might quibble with Nagel, here. It might be that increased externality and detachment *imply* ever widening intersubjective agreement and increased imaginative scope. We assume these implications here.)

So, to be objective requires being subjective, but where the experiencer lacks any identifying details that would provide a specific location, a specific form of life, or a specific point of view.

What then is subjectivity? It is narrow, right-now consciousness. It is the *what-it-is-like-to-be-ness* of our immediate existence. At the subjective end of the polarity, a specific self is having a specific subjective experience. Where, then, is the objective in this subjectivity?

Nagel holds that the increased objectivity depends on detachment, which, via the implication above, which we accept, implies a greater field of view than the subjective. Nagel says: "[The aim of increased objectivity] is to regard the world as centerless, with the viewer as just one of its contents" (p. 206). According to Nagel, we shed our current perspective and move toward greater objectivity by moving outward toward greater detachment; what we formerly detached from becomes part of what we are now viewing—our old, less objective point of view. Of course, all this "moving to increase the width of perspective" is metaphorical, but it is a compelling and useful metaphor. So, what about the width of the maximally subjective point of view? It most definitely has a width; its width isn't zero. Its width is one experiencer wide, as it were. This is the objective reality of the subjective. The subjective is objectively real, it is just experienced by one, single experiencer.[15]

Another way to put this is to note that each experience is *someone's experience* (p. 207), that is, the experiencing relation is binary: there is the experience itself (the *content* of the experience) and the self or being having the experience. The experiencer really is experiencing, even if the experiencer is hallucinating or is all alone in a self-imagined universe. At maximal subjectivity, we have a kind of minimal objectivity.

A third way to put this is to note that when considering our maximally subjective point of view, we are at *the view from someone very specific*. This is an objective view. Detaching from here and moving outward, repeatedly shedding points of view, we wind up at a robustly objective point of view.

[14] Nagel does not think we can ever get to the View From Nowhere (p. 206). Instead, the View is a governing, lofty goal.

[15] One can speculate that at the maximally subjective point of view, there can only be one single experiencer. On this assumption, there is no community of selves or beings at the maximally subjective point of view.

Here is an example. Suppose at the maximally subjective point of view, Bif sees a red square. The red square is accessible only to Bif, for conscious experiences are private.[16] This is already an objective point of view held by one: Bif. It is a minimally objective view, true, but enough to be genuinely objective. Now, Bif can externalize, detach, abstract from her own personal conscious experience. She can explicitly adopt perspectives that are increasingly objective, accessible to more and to different kinds of experiencers. For example, from the private red square perspective, Bif can move to seeing the red square as something "out there" *causing* her experience and hence, accessible others (of course, this move is made constantly and easily and naturally by all of us[17]). Still more objective points of view can be got by adding in more physics; for example, by considering the red square as something reflecting light of wavelengths between 630 and 750 nm and absorbing other wavelengths. Further abstractions can be developed. These remove Bif's personal, specific details, such as her location in space and time and what kind of being she is. So, Bif's subjective experience is capable (in principle) of generating a Bif-less objectivity as Bif herself recedes into the background.

Call Bif's increasing detachment *subjective shedding*. The properties that define a specific, individual perceiver are shed, increasing objectivity. Subjective shedding is increased externality which in turn results in ever widening intersubjective agreement and expanding imaginative scope. However, no one can shed *all* the properties that define a specific, individual perceiver.

Call going the opposite way *subjective acquiring*. This is the way of ever narrowing intersubjective agreement and imaginative scope until, at its narrowest, there is but one experiencer robust and fully specified (in principle) by all her properties both factual and counterfactual.

We see then that the subjective couldn't be rendered more and more objective unless there was something to detach from right at the beginning. This something is the minimally objective (maximally subjective) aspect of Bif's red square experience.

[16] Conscious experiences can be and are routinely *conditionally shared*. If we *trust* Bif and her reports on her phenomenology (and such trust is usually easy to come by; often trusting is the default), then we may confidently infer that she, Bif, sees a red square. Of course, we have to also assume that there is no Cartesian evil demon, which is a very easy assumption to make, to put it mildly... but it is an assumption. As an aside, note that the evidence that no evil demon exists is the same as the evidence that there is an evil demon fooling us — namely the "external" world.

[17] Though easy, natural, and constant, it all could still be an illusion, as Descartes and the movie *The Matrix* make clear. It is easy and even necessary to assume that there is no evil demon, but there might be an evil demon for all that.

7 The Fan of Objective-Only is Wrong

So we have: subjectivity delivers objective knowledge (sec. 6.1), this knowledge is identified as such by the possessor of that knowledge via subjective feelings (sec. 6.2), and the core content of all objective views is provided by subjective, if abstract (and highly externalized), consciousness, and, as well, objectivity accompanies even maximally subjective experiences (sec. 6.3). So, the subjective and objective viewpoints work together and stand or fall together. Hence, there is no such thing, no such point of view, as the "objectively only." All objectivity contains some subjectivity. So the fan of Objective-Only wants what cannot be got. It is as if the fan wanted a square without corners. A cornerless square is an impossible object. The "objective-only" is equally impossible. Subjectivity must accompany us even as we approach the View From Nowhere. This is because consciousness must be present, or there is no perceiving at all.

8 The Unsolvability of the Subjective/Objective Problem

In Sect. 4, we said there are two ways to solve the S/O problem. The first was reducing the subjective to the objective or vice versa. The second way was to pick the objective point of view without any subjectivity at all, not only for the S/O problem, but for all of the problems in the Central Five. This second way has been dealt with: it is logically impossible since neither the objective nor the subjective are eliminable.

But what of the first way? Can we reduce one point of view to the other?

If "reducing" means, for example, *getting rid* of the subjective point of view completely and using only the objective one, then *No*, reduction is not possible, and for the same reasons as in Sects. 6 and 7, above: there is no objective view without the subjective one. If "reducing" means seeing how the subjective point of view is *realized* (or *implemented*) in the objective, then *Possibly*. The deep clash exhibited by the S/O problem on its own and as it appears in the Central Five seems to reveal an intrinsic dualism that cannot be eliminated (at least this is one reasonable understanding of the problem). So, if the realization/implementation can maintain this dualism, then *Possibly.* If "reducing" means seeing how the subjective point of view *logically supervenes* on the objective view, then again, *Possibly*, and for the same reasons governing realizing and implementing; the dualism has to be maintained.[18]

[18] Maintaining the dualism needed here while using the machinery of logical supervenience might seem to be a contradiction. After all, Chalmers (1996) uses logical supervenience to characterize certain aspects of the mind as physical. If A facts logically supervene on physical facts, then A facts are themselves physical, according to Chalmers. So, for example, human memory is physical. But regular logical supervenience might allow for a kind of monism as well as a kind of dualism. This is because Chalmersian supervenience doesn't require the supervenience base to have any direct effect on supervening process or properties. What we would need to *guarantee* that we are dealing with the supervening physical is something like *superdupervenience*. See, Horgan (1993). But then we would be embracing a kind of monism, which, as argued, won't do.

In so far as solving the S/O problem requires winding up with just one of the pair, then the S/O problem is unsolvable. And it is no stretch to say that by the term "solve" most philosophers do mean getting rid of one of the pair, usually the subjective view. So, if dualism is an embarrassment, and only some sort of monism will do, then the S/O problem cannot be solved.

9 Conclusion

It is not just that philosophy has made no progress; it *cannot* make progress, at least on the Central Five. This is because solving the Central Five requires getting what cannot be got: one single viewpoint of a subjective-free objectivity (or, vice versa for fans of idealism).

Those philosophers wanting or even needing to solve the Central Five (or just one of them) can always hold out for a major scientific-philosophical advance that finally, in some way which we cannot conceive of here, "reconciles" the objective and subjective points of view. Were this to happen, it is likely that our understanding of both subjective and objective viewpoints would have to change radically—perhaps the subjective more than the objective... or vice versa, who knows? Other philosophers, finding the arguments here more congenial, could accept that neither reducing nor "reconciling" are in the cards, that a kind of subjective/objective dualism governs human existence, and then they could go on to accept that major philosophy problems cannot be solved.

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