What I am and what I am not*: Destruktion* of the mind-body problem

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Abstract

The German word *Destruktion* was used by Heidegger in the sense that philosophy should destroy some ontological concepts and the everyday meanings of certain words. Tradition allows the transmission of knowledge and sensations of continuity and connection with the past, but it must be critically evaluated so that it does not perpetuate certain prejudices. According to Heidegger, tradition transmits, but it also conceals. Tradition induces self-evidence and prevents us from accessing the origin of concepts. It makes us believe that we do not need to return to that origin. Making tradition transparent dissolves the concealments it has provoked. Here I will apply this idea to the *mental* and the *physical* by suggesting that the mind-body problem has inherited occultations that are born in Descartes himself. As a result, what could be a new philosophical framework for the research in consciousness emerges: That as an individual cognitive being I cannot avoid splitting reality into *what I am* and *what I am not*, extending then the individual duality to a collective error transmitted culturally.

Introduction

Heidegger said that tradition transmits, but at the same time makes inaccessible and conceals what is transmitted. We take what comes to us through tradition as self-evident and cease to question it. Tradition prevents us from accessing the original sources of categories and concepts, since it makes us forget that they have had an origin, and makes us believe that we do not need to return to these sources [22].

That is precisely the meaning of the term *destruktion* for Heidegger: philosophy can completely change the meanings of concepts that we use on a daily basis. *Destruktion* is the task of making tradition transparent and dissolving the concealments it has provoked.

In this article, I will argue that we need to go back to the sources of the concepts of *the mental* and *the physical* and not let ourselves be carried away by what tradition takes for granted. This would serve to shed light on the mind-body problem that has its origin in Cartesian dualism. I propose that this problem has inherited hiddenness because of tradition that must be "destroyed". This *destruktion* of the problem would have consequences also in the science of consciousness since it could prevent scientific

theories from carrying the burden of an erroneous philosophical approach and would allow such theories to put the focus on the real scientific problem.

In what follows, I will address, first of all, what Heidegger said about Cartesian dualism (section 1). In section 2, I will discuss the not simple question of what is meant by the mind-body problem. I will then expose the differences usually attributed to the mental and the physical (section 3). In the next section, it is shown that throughout history it has been difficult to propose an explanation in a naturalistic, non-dualistic context that does not deny the mental. Thus, I will review the difficulties to solve it that accumulate centuries of history in a succession of proposed solutions that have always met with serious objections (section 4). Section 5 summarizes how duality is characterized in the different proposed solutions in order to highlight the contrast with what will be proposed next. In section 6, I address the *destruktion* of duality on the basis of foundational texts by Descartes. In section 7, I present the philosophical framework resulting from the *destruktion* in contrast with other proposals. Finally, I list a whole program of future research (section 8).

1 Heidegger and Cartesian dualism

The forgetfulness of being is a well-known idea that Heidegger develops in *Being and Time* [22]. According to Heidegger, philosophy has tended to think of being as if it were a substance and in fact we ask "what is being?" when we should ask "what is the meaning of being?". In this context Heidegger confronts the Cartesian subject-object split [17, 18]. Descartes sought a basis for certain knowledge by methodically doubting everything and came to the conclusion that one can doubt the knowledge acquired through the senses and through reasoning, but one cannot doubt the very fact that we are doubting. From there we arrive at the famous *cogito, ergo sum* —I think, therefore I am— in one of Descartes' most quoted texts:

> And so, because our senses sometimes deceive us, I decided to suppose that nothing was such as they lead us to imagine it to be. And because there are men who make mistakes in reasoning, even about the simplest elements of geometry, and commit logical fallacies, I judged that I was as prone to error as anyone else, and I rejected as false all the reasoning I had hitherto accepted as valid proof. Finally, considering that all the same thoughts which we have while awake can come to us while asleep without any one of them then being true, I resolved to pretend that everything that had ever entered my head was no more true than the illusions of my dreams. But immediately afterwards I noted that, while I was trying to think of all things being false in this way, it was necessarily the case that I, who was thinking them, had to be something; and observing this truth: I am thinking therefore I exist, was so secure and certain that it could not be shaken by any of the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics, I judged that I could accept it without scruple, as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking [17].

From this first principle of indubitable knowledge, Descartes builds his philosophical system. According to Heidegger, since Descartes we have considered the subject-object distinction self-evident and on the basis of it we have developed the concept of *objectivity* and the scientific method [22]. Any question is posed *objectively*, opposing the rational self to the object to be investigated. And we do the same in the question of

being: we place being before us as if it were an object, an entity or entity to be explored objectively. But for Heidegger, contrary to our ingrained beliefs, being is not an entity. From here Heidegger develops his *fundamental ontology* while avoiding the assumptions imposed on us by tradition. He asserts that in everyday life things are not treated as objects, but that we interact with them more within a network of contexts. Only when the thing ceases to fulfill its function within the network do I look at it as an object, showing that it was not an object when it did fulfill its function. Heidegger does not really intend us to abandon the subject-object division, but only to show that Cartesian dualism derives from something more fundamental: what he calls *being-in-the-world*.

In a line with connections with the Heideggerian reflection, but developed independently of it, in this article I will use the framework of the Heideggerian idea of *destruktion* to expose hidden keys that help to clarify the mind-body problem. But first it is necessary to specify what is understood by this problem and to recall the difficulties to solve it that accumulate centuries of history in a succession of proposed solutions that have always met with serious objections.

2 Definition of the problem: philosophical versus scientific problem

The definition of the mind-body problem in the literature is multiple and not without some complexity [24]. For example, the mind-body problem and the so-called problem of consciousness may overlap without coinciding exactly. One can also consider problems, in the plural, and classify them into families [60]: i) descriptive questions of the type "What is consciousness?", etc., ii) explanatory questions such as "How does consciousness appear?", etc. , and iii) functional questions along the lines of "Does consciousness have a function and, if so, what is it?", etc. Moreover, one can consider Chalmers' hard problem [11] as a more or less novel reformulation of the classical problem. Finally, after decades of neuroscientific development, the problem has been renamed the "mind-brain problem".

Once the multiplicity of the problem is admitted, it can take the form of a complex network of interconnected questions. I will distinguish here between the two main hubs of this network: a) the scientific core, which for the most optimistic will be solved in the future as we learn more about the functioning of the brain and/or develop successful scientific theories of consciousness, and b) the philosophical core, which causes us perplexity and fascination, and which for the most pessimistic would even lead to the failure of the resolution of the scientific problem.

Within the network of interconnected issues, the philosophical core of the problem is situated around the nature of the relationship between mind or consciousness and the physical world, and is strongly connected with ontological, causal and functional issues. The scientific core of the problem can be characterized as the search for necessary and/or sufficient conditions for a physical system to be conscious. This scientific core is most strongly connected with questions such as: a) the determination of the level of complexity that a central nervous system has to reach so that in the evolution of life on our planet it could be affirmed that consciousness was reached, b) the conditions to be able to affirm that artificial intelligence reaches artificial consciousness, c) which areas of a concrete brain are involved in a concrete conscious experience, i.e., which are the neural correlates of consciousness, etc.

In this article I will focus on the philosophical core of the problem —the relationship between the mind or consciousness and the physical world— in an attempt to

undermine philosophical perplexity by the *destruktion* of the problem. I argue that without knowing in detail what are, if any, the concrete neural correlates and mechanisms of consciousness we can conclude that there are philosophical questions that are ill-posed. I also try here to clarify how a problem is generated which, ultimately, would be a false problem. That is, I argue that without having solved the scientific problem we can make the philosophical problem transparent and, in some way, create a conceptual framework that avoids difficulties gratuitously added to those inherent to the difficult path of scientific questions.

Finally, when we confront the philosophical core, mind or consciousness can be characterized by focusing on its representational aspects, as do Rosenthal [51] or Dennett [16], or on its experiential or phenomenal aspects, as do Chalmers [11] or Nagel [41]. The former characterization is usually considered relatively more tractable in terms of cognitive explanations. Therefore, here I will specifically refer to the second characterization in order to directly address the perplexity involved in consciousness.

It is noteworthy that the scientific approach is often expressed in terms of a gradual continuum between non-conscious and conscious systems. This is reflected, for example, in studies of the transitions between different phases of sleep or in the gradual biological evolution from presumably non-conscious species to the indisputably conscious species homo sapiens. In contrast, the philosophical problem abounds in the alleged qualitative leap or break between the characteristics of the physical and the mental through arguments such as Levine's explanatory gap [34], McGinn's cognitive closure [38], Jackson's epistemological [25], Nagel's point of view [41], Chalmers' zombies [8], or the inverted spectrum [8].

3 The physical and the mental appear to us as different

The main differences in the way mental and physical phenomena appear to us are: a) physical phenomena seem to take place in space, while mental phenomena do not seem to have spatial location, b) physical phenomena appear to all, that is, they are public and can be shared, while mental phenomena are private, they appear to only one person at a time, and c) mental phenomena seem qualitative —*qualia*— as opposed to the supposed quantitative and measurable nature of physical phenomena.

The words *appearance*, *seem* and *supposed* appear in the previous paragraph suggesting that the destruktion of the problem would lead us to rethink the usually accepted concepts of the physical and the mental. The idea that the mind-body problem is not a real problem but appears to us as a problem is not new and goes back to Locke [27]. However, in case it is a false problem we have to answer the question why it appears to us as a real problem. Explaining why both types of phenomena appear to us in such different ways would be a way to undermine the perplexity associated with the problem. We shall consider in the next section that throughout history it has been really difficult to find an explanation in a naturalistic, non-dualistic, and non-denying mental context. A convincing explanation should clarify why, despite all previous attempts, the mental cannot seem to be reduced to the physical.

4 Some proposed solutions and their objections

In this section, I follow what was previously exposed in [24]. One can summarize the history of the mind-body problem by stating that all the proposed solutions have raised

serious objections. Thus, for example, within the so-called dualism of substances we have interactionism, epiphenomenalism, and parallelism. To the interactionism between physical and mental substances defended by Descartes (L'Homme, 1664) and more recently by Popper and Eccles [46] it has been objected that Physics shows us a self-sufficient physical world to explain natural phenomena -principle of physical causal closure that, in particular, should also be applicable to the brain-. Moreover, it is difficult to explain how two different and ontologically independent substances interact with each other [57].

According to epiphenomenalism, physical events are causal with respect to mental events, but not vice versa. Epiphenomenalism thus respects the causal closure of the physical world by proposing that the mental accompanies the physical without influencing the latter [50]. But epiphenomenalism seems incompatible with our being aware that we have consciousness, since for us to know that we have it would have to produce some change in our brain. Nor does it explain the emergence of consciousness in biological evolution, since it would have no effect on an organism's adaptive capacity [3].

According to parallelism, the mental and the physical function synchronously without either interacting causally with the other [14, 33, 40, 49]. But it requires belief in a deity that intervenes or programs in advance in a sort of *deus ex machina* [13].

Nor is the dualism of properties that usually accepts the supervenience of the mental in the physical —non-reductive physicalism— free of objections [62] since if we respect the closure of the physical domain and causal exclusion, i.e., that no event can have more than one sufficient cause, mental properties would lack causal efficacy and would be merely epiphenomenal [29].

The idealist school of thought claims that the physical can be reduced to the mental, since the supposed physical world is empirical and therefore a social construct created from shared subjective experiences. But even the originator of these ideas, Berkeley, was aware of several objections to his idealism. The first is the difficulty of distinguishing real things from imaginary ones. It also seems absurd to suppress physical causes and attribute everything to the mind, as, for example, not to say that fire heats, or that water cools, but that it is the mind that heats or cools. In addition, there is the question of the persistence of objects that seem to continue to exist when no one perceives them. Another objection is the difficulty of explaining how we distinguish error from truth when, for example, one thinks that an oar is crooked because one of its ends is under water. Finally, it is difficult from idealism to explain why certain things seem the same to us all [5].

In neutral monism, ultimate reality is intrinsically neither mental nor physical, but neutral, and the difference between the physical and the psychological lies not in the object, but in the direction of investigation [35] . One objection to neutral monism is that it does not make concrete the nature of neutral entities. In some versions, neutral entities have *both* physical and phenomenological characteristics, rather than *neither* physical nor mental. Moreover, neutral elements seem rather mental since the way physical objects are constructed from the neutral is reminiscent of Berkeley idealism [46]. In the Russellian version of neutral monism, the fact that there are intrinsic properties that explain the phenomenal and extrinsic relations that construct the physical can be seen as metaphysical speculation to no practical effect [8]. Ordinary material objects must be constructed from the neutral, but neutral monism has not shown the method of construction [59]. It has also been objected that the alleged phenomenal qualities constitutive of fundamental neutral entities do not necessarily entail an associated conscious experience. This is a quality/consciousness gap, analogous to the physical/consciousness gap objected to physicalism. It is conceivable

that these phenomenal qualities are instantiated without consciousness of them, and this casts doubt on whether consciousness exists in a truly neutral universe [12].

Within physicalism we find, for example, theories of mind-brain identity that hold that the states and processes we call mental are states and processes of the nervous system. Its advocates argue that this is a reasonable scientific hypothesis, just as the statement "lightning is a movement of electric charges" is [45]. Thus, the mind-body problem disappears as the mental is identified with a region of the physical world and no interaction between two distinct things is necessary. However, it is often objected that they do not account for qualia [8]. A second objection is the multiple realizability argument which claims that if mental states can be realized in systems other than brains, identity theory would be false [47].

Anomalous monism attempts to reconcile three seemingly irreconcilable principles: i) that at least some mental events interact causally with physical events, ii) that where there is causality, there must be a law, and iii) that there are no strict deterministic laws on the basis of which mental events can be predicted and explained. To make the three principles compatible, mental events must instantiate some other non-mental —physical— property to fulfill the second principle in spite of the third. Consequently, causally interacting mental events must be identical to physical events. But as a novelty with respect to identity theories, a distinction is made between type identity and token identity: although the class or type of mental events cannot be reduced to the class of neuronal events, each individual mental event —each case or token— is nonetheless identical to a physical event [15]. It is objected, however, to the anomalous monism that implies an absence of causal power of mental properties due to the causal closure of the physical. And if both the mental cause and the physical cause were sufficient, the physical effect is overdetermined. Moreover, the idea of overdetermination also seems to violate the principle of causal closure of the physical [28]. It is also seriously doubted that the identity of individual events is compatible with irreducibly different types or classes [32].

The most radical variant within physicalism is eliminativism, which denies the existence of the mental. In our daily lives we attribute beliefs and desires to other minds —and our own— using what is often called folk psychology (FP). For eliminativists, FP is a false theory and its mentalistic vocabulary should be eliminated and replaced by neuroscientific vocabulary. One objection to eliminativist materialism is that if there really are no beliefs and desos, then the eliminativists' belief that there supposedly are no beliefs would not exist [48]. Furthermore, eliminativist reasoning is based on FP being an empirical theory subject to refutation, but for many FP is nothing but a simulation our mind makes of what the other would do with the beliefs and desires we think they have [21]. Eliminative materialism should explain why FP has a success in predicting human behavior comparable to the success of the natural sciences, and even improving on that of recent psychological and neurobiological theories. Finally, FP should not be reduced to a predictive capacity, since in addition to predicting, it justifies, evaluates, commends, and rationalizes [31].

But there is a more general physicalism, which does not deny the mental, but tries to explain it in physical terms. This physicalism must face objections such as those of Nagel for whom the mental or consciousness is nothing but the subjective character of experience, but this is only comprehensible from a particular point of view, and the objectivity that characterizes Physics leads us in the opposite direction away from the true nature of the phenomenon [41]. A second argument against general physicalism is that of knowledge which claims that even if we had all the physical information about the whole physiology of the experience of color vision we would miss the experience of color itself [25]. Other arguments against physicalism are the explanatory gap between

particular experiences and their physical substrate [34], the cognitive closure towards the solution of the mind-body problem [38], that of the conceivability of the physical without the phenomenal [8], and that of the inverted spectrum [8]. All abound in the apparent disconnect between subjective experience and the physical world. Because that connection remains a mystery all these arguments are called Mysterian arguments [19].

Emergentism argues that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts in the sense that a complex system has properties or behaviors that its components do not have on their own. In philosophy of mind, emergentism has been used to interpret the mental as an emergent property of the human brain, in which the components are physical [7]. We speak of strong emergence when the causal power of the emergent property is irreducible to that of the micro-properties in which it supervenes, and therefore there must be downward causality from the macro to the micro. In contrast, weak emergence occurs when the macro-state can be derived from the microdynamics and external conditions by simulation [4]. Weak emergence is seen as simply reinforcing the main idea of physicalism by showing how all emergent phenomena are based on underlying laws [10]. Therefore, the real alternative to physicalism is strong emergentism with its top-down causation. In fact, the main objection to strong emergentism is related to top-down causal powers. The argument is an adaptation of those used against property dualism and anomalous monism. Consider the following principles that we do not want to give up: (i) emergent properties supervene on microphysical properties, (ii) emergent properties are neither reducible nor identical to microphysical properties, and (iii) mental properties have causal efficacy. If we add to these the principle of the closure of the physical domain (iv), and the principle of causal exclusion (v) according to which no event can have more than one sufficient cause, the conclusion is that all five principles cannot be true simultaneously. The weakest point is the causal power of emergent properties and the conclusion is that consciousness would be an epiphenomenon [29].

Functionalism holds that a particular mental state is characterized by playing a definite role in a particular chain of causal relations between perceptual inputs, other mental states, and behavioral outputs. Thus, what defines a mental state is the causal-effective role it plays. The best known objection to functionalism is the Chinese room argument [53] with which Searle dismantles the idea that following a set of syntactic rules can be equated with thinking. It is also objected to functionalism that a system could be functionally equivalent to the human brain with a total absence of *qualia*. Thus, it has been proposed to imagine the individuals of the Chinese nation working together in a way that is functionally equivalent to a human brain [6].

Panpsychism advocates that all physical systems have minds . A solution close to it is panprotopsychism in which it suffices that some fundamental physical entities (e.g., quarks or photons) have conscious experiences [12]. The main objection to panpsychism and panprotopsychism is the problem of combination. It is difficult to imagine how the conscious microsubjects of experience, with their microexperiences, come together to form a conscious macrosubject with its own macroexperience. For William James, for example, even if we group conscious experiences together, each will remain enclosed, ignorant of the other experiences [26].

Finally, I will comment on dual-aspect monism, which historically was the first monistic response to Cartesian dualism [56]. Its different variants consider the mental and the physical as two aspects of an underlying reality. They usually combine an epistemic dualism with an ontic monism as an alternative to conventional physicalism [1]. But if there is a neutral underlying reality that we can understand as mental or physical, depending on the point of view from which we observe it, dual-aspect theory reduces to neutral monism. If the dual-aspect theory insists that the two aspects are fundamental and irreducible to each other, we would fall into panpsychism. And if not, it would be

closely associated with emergentism [1, 55]. Let these last reasonings serve to show how, once we accept the concepts of the physical and the mental as presented to us by tradition, the combinations to solve the mind-body problem seem limited and in some way a dead end is reached.

5 Dualities proposed in the different solutions

All the proposed solutions, although not properly dualistic, propose to characterize the differences between the physical and the mental in different ways. Dualism of substances proposes an opposition between two different substances, while dualism of properties defends an opposition between two different types of properties. In idealism we find the opposition between ideas and the social construct created from them. In neutral monism the opposition is between different directions of investigation. In identity theories ordinary processes of observation and scientific procedures are contrasted. In anomalous monism we have events of different types or classes. In eliminativism we have neurophysiological events versus falsely attributed attitudinal propositions. For antiphysicalists (and physicalists) the (non)opposition is between the physical and subjective experience. For (strong) emergentists the opposition is between microscopic properties and emergent properties. For functionalists the contrast is between the neurophysiological substrate and the causal role played by that substrate. For the pansychists there would be a contrast between the relational structure of matter and its intrinsic nature. And finally for dual aspect monists there is opposition between aspects.

6 *Destruktion* of duality

If the reader were to reread the Cartesian text of *Discourse on Method* cited in the first section, he could see that Descartes mentions "I" fourteen times. In addition, he mentions other pronouns and possessive adjectives of the first person such as "we", "my", "our" and "us" seven other times, making a total of 21 mentions. And this is even surpassed in a text by the same author in *Meditations on First Philosophy* where the first person is mentioned 26 times:

> But what shall I now say that I am, when I am supposing that there is some supremely powerful and, if it is permissible to say so, malicious deceiver, who is deliberately trying to trick me in every way he can? Can I now assert that I possess even the most insignificant of all the attributes which I have just said belong to the nature of a body? I scrutinize them, think about them, go over them again, but nothing suggests itself; it is tiresome and pointless to go through the list once more. But what about the attributes I assigned to the soul? Nutrition or movement? Since now I do not have a body, these are mere fabrications. Sense-perception? This surely does not occur without a body, and besides, when asleep I have appeared to perceive through the senses many things which I afterwards realized I did not perceive through the senses at all. Thinking? At last I have discovered it—thought; this alone is inseparable from me. I am, I exist—that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. For it could be that were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist. At present I am not admitting anything except what is necessarily true. I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind, or intelligence,

> or intellect, or reason—words whose meaning I have been ignorant of until now. But for all that I am a thing which is real and which truly exists. But what kind of a thing? As I have just said—a thinking thing [18].

Ignoring this fact, it is usually emphasized that texts such as those cited above express Descartes' search for a solid truth on which to base his philosophical system and that they establish a distinction between two types of substances: mental and physical [52]. The physical substance or *res extensa* would be composed of the bodies, animate or not, that occupy extension in space, while the mental substance or *res cogitans* can be identified with the soul, the mind or the consciousness of thinking subjects.

But the key in the process of *destruktion* that I propose is in statements such as "I am a thinking thing" or "I am a mind". In them one is identifying *what I am* with *what is mental*. In identifications of this kind, the meaning of one of the terms is usually clarified by the fact that the other is sharper, less ambiguous and/or less conceptually problematic. Here Descartes seems to take for granted that we all have a relation of familiarity with our consciousness and that we therefore know well what thought is. Thus Descartes assumes thought —in a rational, restricted sense, but which the subsequent historical evolution of the mind-body problem has extended to all mind and even to all phenomenal consciousness— as something known, self-evident, that we directly know what it is. In contrast, Descartes directs his inquiry to whether I am and what I am. That is what is in doubt, because before Descartes saw it clearly it did not seem evident, when everything is methodically doubted, that I exist, and, if so, that I am a soul, a mind, or a body. And these doubts are dispelled by identifying the investigated *I* with the solid —clear, distinct, immediate, acquainted— *thought*.

However, distracted, both by the search —in a skeptical context— for something solid and certain, and by the discovery that "I am" and of what I really am, the origin of the meaning of the mental remains hidden and will remain hidden in the tradition: that *the mental is me*. That is to say, I propose that in the Cartesian identification between mind and I there is not a characterization of the *I as the mental* —more or less debatable according to one's opinion—, but the covert definition of *the mental as what I am*. I will therefore use the expression *what I am* for what is currently known as phenomenal consciousness or subjective experience or, for the sake of clarity, the object of the hard problem [11] in clear allusion to the foundational moment in which Descartes concealedly defines the mental.

I argue that the consequence of this concealment, for the history of the mind-body problem, is that the mental and the physical remain irreducibly opposed in spite of all the efforts of physicalism. And this happens because the physical, in an even more surreptitious and hidden way than in the covert definition of the mental, is defined in opposition to what I am: what I am not. The physical is what I perceive through the senses, the reality of which is uncertain in contrast to the certainty I have regarding the reality of what I am. Thus, the certainty with respect to the mental comes from the fact that I am it, while the uncertainty of the physical, what I perceive through the senses, comes precisely from not being it. Behind the opacity of the Cartesian operation, there is an incommensurable and irreducible opposition between what I am and what I am not. Its origin concealed, the mental-physical opposition will produce perplexity and fascination for centuries. However, the opposition between what I am and what I am not, when reflected upon serenely, is inevitable and natural in each of us as parts of a greater whole. This is so, naturally, without posing any physical or metaphysical problem, except when it is disguised behind the categories inherited from the tradition of the mental and the physical.

7 The proposed new paradigm

I argue, therefore, that the apparent duality is a consequence of being a concrete cognitive system that is a part of a larger whole. And this seems inevitable. One would say that what is difficult is to conceive of a universe in which a concrete cognitive being can avoid dividing the universe between "what I am" and "what I am not".

7.1 What I do not propose and what I do propose

It should be noted that this article does not attempt to present a scientific theory of consciousness alternative to, for example, the theory of Integrated Information [43] or the theory of Global Workspace [2]. Nor does it attempt to elucidate the nature of the physical world. My intention here is to reflect on the traditional use of the words *consciousness*, *mental* and *physical* in the context of the mind-body problem. Specifically, I propose that tradition has bequeathed to us a use of these concepts that makes it impossible to solve the problem. For example, to reduce the mental to the physical would be, in reality, to try to reduce what I am to what I am not. In fact, making the origin of these concepts transparent leads to a new vision of the problem. Thus, it is convenient to characterize this break with tradition as a paradigm shift in order to avoid the otherwise inevitable inertia of thinking in terms of the mental and the physical as tradition has presented them to us.

There seems to be no reason in principle why new scientific theories of consciousness could not appear within this new paradigm, or even why existing theories could not be adapted to it. What is discarded is the frequent attempt —uncritical of traditional concepts— to explain how consciousness "arises" from the "physical" substrate. Nor does it make sense anymore to postulate consciousness as the proof that there are phenomena in nature that cannot be explained in "physical" terms.

7.2 Specific subject and being

Reference to the concrete subject appears habitually in philosophy of mind, and more intensely since Nagel associated consciousness with the first-person point of view [41]. For example, there are a whole series of philosophers [23, 42, 44] who defend a physicalism in which phenomenal concepts are related to indexical concepts such as *I* and *now*. According to them, just as there is a leap between objective and indexical concepts —for example, objective knowledge of the world does not imply knowing what time it is now or where I am— there is an epistemic gap between the physical and the phenomenal. Thus, phenomenal concepts refer to states of the brain, but are presented in an indexical way [9].

However, what I propose here is that it is duality itself that is associated with the concrete subject. Thus, not only phenomenal or mental concepts but consciousness itself or the mental is defined in relation to the concrete subject. And furthermore, the physical is also defined in relation to the concrete subject. The physical is characterized by our sensory and perceptual interactions with our concrete body and environment. The latter may not seem to be entirely novel since there is a whole series of *4E cognition* scientific approaches to consciousness from Varela and colleagues [61] that emphasize that the physical is characterized as an integral component of the enactive cognitive system. In this school of thought —whose origins can be traced back to Merleau-Ponty [39]— the body is not seen as a separate entity, but as an extension of the mind, and the mind is thought to arise from this bodily engagement with the

environment in a continuous and reciprocal interaction between an organism's sensory perception and its motor actions. However, in this approach, the emphasis is more on overcoming duality through integration than on clarifying its conceptual origin.

I argue that it is duality as such that is inevitably associated with each particular subject. And this is the consequence of emphasizing an approach to the problem that seeks to explain the apparent differences between the mental and the physical, while in other approaches it is usual to consider the physical as something less mysterious and problematic than consciousness, focussing the perplexity on the latter. This slippage from the mind-body problem to the problem of consciousness would contribute to make the solution unattainable.

As previously discussed, that the mental itself is defined on the basis of a particular subject is not really novel. But Nagel's way of characterizing consciousness is that an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that *is like to be* that organism [41]. My proposal goes further and characterizes consciousness as what I am. I argue that this step from *like to be* to *being* is the key, and allows us not to stop halfway through the proper reframing of the problem, because avoiding the question of *being* far from dissolving the problem turns the duality back into problematic. That is to say, I propose that instead of considering a first-person perspective —which is opposed to a third-person perspective— we consider a first-person being. Recall that there are proposals such as neutral monism, dual-aspect monism, physicalism that characterizes phenomenal concepts as indexical, and, in general, all phenomenal concept strategies among which the indexical one is [9], in which the apparent duality is characterized in epistemic terms, i.e., that the ways of accessing the mental and the physical are different. In contrast, in my proposal one does not access the mental or consciousness, but *is* the mental or consciousness.

Panpsychism accepts the traditional concepts of the mental and the physical and simply overlapping them. For the reader who may think that there is a closeness between what is proposed here and panpsychism, it is convenient to warn that what is fundamentally intended here is to correct a mistake committed by conscious beings who erroneously conceptualize the mental and the physical. It can be said that a prescription is a administered here to wake up from a dogmatic slumber, to stop believing that there is a mind-body problem. But it does not seem necessary to administer that prescription to stones, electrons or galaxies.

It may be that Nagel and all other authors prefer to avoid referring to being. In general in science and analytic philosophy references to being are avoided. Using Heideggerian language, one could say that this forgetfulness of being —specifically, forgetfulness of first-person being— causes us to turn consciousness into an entity, and this makes the mind-body problem unsolvable. Thus, the problem is described as the difficulty of explaining that a physical substrate generates consciousness [11], placing the subject itself in its perplexity in an equidistance with respect to the physical entity and the consciousness entity. In fact, we usually say that we *have* consciousness, as a property or attribute, instead of saying that we *are* consciousness. The use of the expression *being* associated with consciousness seems restricted to humanistic psychology contexts [20, 36, 37]. However, there is the paradox that when it comes to selling works related to scientific research on consciousness to the general public it is easy to find expressions like "being you" [54], "the feeling of life itself" [30], "being a conscious, sentient being" [58] on the front and back covers. But when we look inside the book we find no reference to being.

7.3 From the individual physical to the shared concept

A pending question is to comment on the process in which, starting from an individual experience of the physical, it ends up being conceptualized in a collective and objective way. How can we forget that the definition of the physical starts from what I am not? To the same extent that we forget the first person being, we forget that the physical originates from what I am not. And the union of the complements of "what I am" —union of the "what I am not"— of a collective of n individuals constitutes the collective physical:

$$\mathcal{P}_C = \bigcup_{i=1}^{n} \overline{A_i}$$

offering an appearance of completeness because nothing seems to be left out. In fact, if we forget the distinction between what I am and what I am not —as is usually done— the union of the individual physicalities of just two subjects is sufficient for an apparently complete description, since whatever I may leave out of my individual conception of the physical —a what I am that the other is not— is apparently covered by the individual physical of the other:

$$\mathcal{P}_C = \overline{A_1} \cup \overline{A_2}$$

Both in the case of n individuals and in the case of only two individuals a whole without first-person being is constituted, in which any "what I am" is excluded. Thus we obtain a union of the complements of first-person being that we can call *everything-without-being*. Here we can add the social construct of which the idealists speak and the mathematization and conceptualization provided by Physics in the form of theories, laws, principles and physical-mathematical models with their search for concrete patterns and propensities of nature. But the operation that excludes consciousness was already done. It is not a question here of discussing whether there is an objective reality independent of the observer, that is, whether the referent of the traditional concept of the physical exists. What I am asserting is that the collective concept of the physical is unconsciously constructed from an individual concept in which each observer excludes the mental.

7.4 Zombie universe and physics

Thus, when it is proposed to imagine a parallel universe that is physically equivalent to our own, but in which our twins have no conscious subjective experience [8], it is not difficult to conceive. In fact, it is the universe that derives from the traditional conception of the physical. That zombie universe precisely is that union of the "what I am not", the everything-without-being. It is not only conceivable but it is precisely the universe that physics is showing us insofar as it inherits the tradition of the concept of the physical. Precisely the extent to which we can conceive it is a measure of the limitations of our knowledge of what we are not, showing the long way still to go by Physics.

I would like to add here a personal opinion. I think that Physics is the highest creation of the human spirit. Even greater than Arts, Philosophy, Mathematics, Technology, or Religions. But this does not prevent us from foreseeing a long way to go in the future.

In fact, this divorce —to which the traditional conception of the physical induces us— between the real universe and the one shown to us by Physics is untenable. And as a consequence, Physics itself reacts by opening windows to the inevitable presence of the concrete subject. The theory of relativity and quantum theory can be interpreted as examples of this.

7.5 The dialectic of points of view

As discussed above it is usual for the mind-body problem to be expressed in terms of the opposition between the first-person and the third-person point of view [41]. But since the problem is always posed from a first person —whether Descartes, Nagel, Chalmers, or the reader— there is no other relevant point of view here. The tradition of the first-third person dialectic induces us to take it for granted that there are two possible points of view for the same phenomenon, when in fact each of us always has the same point of view throughout our lives.

That is to say, for an observed entity or phenomenon or object we cannot change our point of view at will —first and third person— but we have only one pertinent point of view, that of the subject who poses the mind-body problem, who can observe, yes, multiple objects. Thus, while it is correct to keep the subject fixed —in practice we cannot stop being who we are— and vary the observed object, on the contrary, it is impossible in practice to leave the object fixed and vary the point of view or subject. This is precisely how we originate the false problem.

8 Future directions

If a new paradigm is really to emerge from here, it is understandable that everything remains to be done. In particular, it is necessary to answer questions such as whether it is valid to reason from a particular subject —as I am asking here— and to draw general conclusions. Do we need an impersonal point of view for complete reasoning? We must also delve into the inconsistencies that arise when we start from a particular point of view and then abandon it. Is the error in focusing on subjectivity and then wanting to objectify it? How to characterize this error? How to conceptualize the point of view when actually we can never change it?

Is the way in which the mental and the physical have been characterized here sufficient to explain the differences usually observed and described in 3? Why are *what I am* and *what I am not* so radically different? Is what I am a kind of transcendental self, or essential indexical, or am I for me an essential singularity? Is there any overlap between what I am and what I am not, or are they mutually exclusive? How exactly does a particular cognitive system divide the universe into two parts? How to define more precisely the boundary between what I am and what I am not? From within my consciousness —and there I have lived and will always live— it is impossible to reach a boundary and get out of it. Despite everything I have argued for in this article, would it be licit to adopt the objective point of view to express the limits and then throw away the ladder?

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