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## *Can the Conditional Analysis Strategy Help Physicalism?*

**Abstract:** *Braddon-Mitchell (2003), Hawthorne (2002), and Stalnaker (2002) provide a physicalistic argument that depends on the following two conditionals. If we experience dualistic pain, zombies are possible. On the other hand, if the actual world is physicalistic, zombies are impossible. Based on these conditionals, it is derived that zombies are conceivable but this does not entail their possibility. This line of argument for physicalism is referred to as the Conditional Analysis Strategy (CAS). I claim that the CAS does not help physicalists defuse the zombie argument. To show this, I first suggest that there are three possible interpretations of the strategy: the CAS explains the zombie intuition by virtue of the conceivability of zombies; the CAS conditionally disproves the entailment-link from conceivability to possibility; the CAS unconditionally denies the entailment-link. I argue that none of the three understandings brings good news to physicalism.*

**Keywords:** physicalism; phenomenal concepts; consciousness; zombie argument; conditional analysis.

### 1. Conditional Analysis: No Coincidence

Chalmers (1996) argues that if zombies — physical and functional duplicates of us, only lacking qualia — are conceivable, then they are also (metaphysically) possible, and therefore physicalism is false.

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According to differing reactions to the zombie argument, Chalmers (1996) classifies physicalism into two types.<sup>1</sup> Type-A theorists contend that zombies are inconceivable, since the concept of zombies contradicts a functional (or conceptual) analysis of consciousness. Type-B theorists assert that zombies are conceivable but impossible. They claim that consciousness is not functionally analysable, but that there is a metaphysical correlation between a physical and conscious state. The hottest issue surrounding the zombie argument is, arguably, whether the conceivability of zombies entails their possibility. Anti-physicalists<sup>2</sup> (and sometimes Type-A theorists too) tend to criticize that Type-B theorists provide no proper explanation of the psychophysical correlation. The result is that physicalism cannot deny the entailment-link from conceivability to possibility without making the correlation primitive. Type-B theorists, however, attack the dualist assumption for defending the entailment-link that the so-called phenomenal concepts, which are supposed to connote all phenomenal aspects of consciousness, pick out irreducible non-physical states. Both dualists and Type-B theorists, thus, appear to be begging the question, and it seems impossible to find a topic-neutral way to solve the mind-body problem.

In this context, it is no coincidence that Hawthorne (2002), Braddon-Mitchell (2003), and Stalnaker (2002) have nearly simultaneously, yet independently, developed similar arguments intended to defuse the zombie argument. Surprisingly, they have all reached physicalistic conclusions without directly touching on the issue of explaining the primitive mind-body correlation. Regarding the charm of this strategy, Hawthorne writes, 'The trick is to find a way of conceding [that consciousness is not deducible from all physical facts in our world] without thereby seeming to posit mysterious brute necessary connections between experiential and physical facts' (Hawthorne, 2002, p. 21). They all simply examine how debates have gone thus far, and present a simple solution for physicalism. This approach sounds like clever 'Advice for Physicalists', as Hawthorne (2002) titles his paper. However, it is better to think twice about such an appealing suggestion.

This strategy is based on the two following conditionals, both of which seem almost trivially true:

[1] Chalmers later adds more types, but I will not mention all here.

[2] I do not make a distinction between dualists and anti-physicalists.



- (IC1) If we are acquainted with tokens of a kind of emergent non-physical mental state that is typically caused in the way that folk think pain is caused, then those tokens are pain\*s.
- (IC2) If the world is merely physical, then pain\*s are tokens of the kind(s) of physical state that plays the pain role in us (Hawthorne, 2002, p. 22).

Hawthorne proposes that 'pain\*' is a conditional concept that rigidly picks out a non-physical state if the dualist assumption is the case, but rigidly picks out a physical state if the physicalist assumption is the case (*ibid.*, pp. 21–2). An interesting feature about the two conditionals is that they neatly represent the debate over zombies. (IC1) summarizes an anti-physicalist argument: if the antecedent of (IC1) is true (and if relevant hidden assumptions about the zombie argument are added), it follows that pain\* is a non-physical state and so zombies are possible. On the other hand, the antecedent of (IC2) is what physicalists insist upon. Therefore, if it is true (and relevant hidden assumptions are added), physicalists are correct in saying that pain\* is a physical state and so zombies are impossible.

Hawthorne concludes the following from (IC1) and (IC2):

In sum: If pain is something like pain\*, one would expect to be able to find zombies positively conceivable but would see no metaphysical bite in that finding. (*ibid.*, p. 26)

Hawthorne seems to argue here that even if zombies are conceivable, this does not entail that zombies are possible. In fact, this is exactly what Type-B theorists dream about. For this reasoning, Hawthorne supposes that only an oracle can tell us which state pain\* is. This oracle hypothesis might explain why Hawthorne's advice seems so appealing. It would not draw any immediate objections from anti-physicalists. From the two conditionals and the oracle hypothesis, two statements can be made. First, since (IC1) cannot confidently be excluded until the oracle's revelation, it *seems* that zombies are *possible*. In other words, zombies are conceivable. Next, because (IC2) cannot confidently be excluded, the possibility of zombies is not guaranteed. This method of arguing for physicalism uses such a conditional analysis of phenomenal concepts. Thus, it can be called the Conditional Analysis Strategy (hereafter, CAS).

There has been some debate about the CAS. Alter (2007) raises criticisms and Chalmers (2005) expresses a similar concern.<sup>3</sup> Both hold that the CAS cannot yield conceivability. Alter (2007) indicates that what the CAS entails is not exactly the conceivability of zombies but the conceivability of the possibility of zombies. However, in defence of the CAS, Haukioja (2008) insists that it can prove the conceivability of zombies. More recently, Yetter-Chappell (2013) presents a counterargument against Haukioja.<sup>4</sup>

I will first argue that Alter's idea is more plausible. The CAS does not literally prove the conceivability of zombies. Nevertheless, an important implication of the CAS is, I believe, still untouched. The CAS can be related to the possibility of zombies, which may be of wider interest to most physicalists. Concerning possibility, there are two further readings of the CAS. Stalnaker (2002), Braddon-Mitchell (2003), and Hawthorne (2002) assert that the CAS actually reveals that the zombie argument is effective only under the supposition that the actual world could be dualistic (that is, only if the antecedent of (IC1) is true). This is a *conditional* interpretation of the CAS. However, there can also be an *unconditional* understanding. Hawthorne (2002) seems to argue that even before we have any assumption about the actual world, the CAS implies that the entailment from conceivability to possibility fails. I aim to demonstrate that none of the possible interpretations really supports physicalism.

## 2. Conceivability

It is widely held that possibility is something over and above conceivability. In this context, conceivability is often expressed in terms of '*seeming possibility*' (hereafter, *SP*). That is, it only *seems* that zombies are *possible*. Many Type-B theorists would not mind thinking of *SP* as conceivability, when they want to say that conceivability is an imperfect guide to possibility. (This might not be the exact meaning of conceivability. However, with regard to the CAS, it may be safe to relate *SP* to conceivability.) This is also found in Hawthorne's

- [3] Alter first asks if the conditional analysis is *a priori*, and he next claims that (IC2) may entail a contradiction with functionalism. (In agreement with Haukioja, 2008, I think these two attacks can be dodged by reformulating (IC1) and (IC2) to include all relevant hidden assumptions.) But Alter seems to confuse the apriority of the inference from (IC1) and (IC2) to the conclusion with the apriority of our phenomenal experience. The apriority of the conditional analysis is not the main focus of this paper.
- [4] Yetter-Chappell (2013) offers more arguments to show that the CAS is incomplete. Since I cannot make a clear relation to my main discussion, I will only mention her argument against Haukioja.



description of the oracle hypothesis concerning our lack of confidence that the actual world is physical. If *SP* is the same as conceivability, then the CAS can serve as showing that physicalism is compatible with the conceivability of zombies. Strictly speaking, however, *SP* is not equivalent to conceivability.

### 2.1. Doubly Modal Claim

Braddon-Mitchell (2003) argues that even if the CAS does not deliver the direct conceivability of zombies, which means the conceptual coherence of zombies, it entails something similar. He points out that whether zombies are conceivable or not (or possible or not) heavily depends on our intuition. A Type-A theorist would think that pain is a functional state in the actual world, and so that zombies are inconceivable. If you are an anti-physicalist and so believe that non-physical pain obtains in the actual world, then zombies are possible. Our intuition about zombies is not fixed. It rather relies on our intuition about how the actual world turns out. Braddon-Mitchell (*ibid.*) asserts that when there is no fixed answer, a direct conceivability is not different from *SP*. He states, ‘Intuition does not distinguish between a non-zero credence in things being such that “there could be physical duplicates that are Zombies” might be rightly thought true, and a direct intuition that it does express a truth given how things actually are’ (*ibid.*, p. 127). He argues that even if the CAS is not straightforward in providing the literal conceivability of zombies, it actually does. If so, the CAS succeeds in showing that physicalism is consistent with the conceivability of zombies.

Still, I feel uncomfortable in relating *SP* to a direct conceivability. Braddon-Mitchell is correct in stating that conceivability (or possibility) involves our intuition about the actual world. However, *SP* differs from conceivability. Alter articulates a conception of *SP*, derived from the conditional analysis, as the conceivability of the possibility of zombies:

[T]he conditional analysis delivers the result that, even if physicalism is true, it is *a priori* conceivable that zombies are metaphysically possible. (Alter, 2007, p. 248)

Alter dubs this conceivability a ‘*doubly modal claim*’ (*ibid.*, p. 245). Similarly, Chalmers (2005) coins it ‘*meta-conceivability*’ (p. 158). It is quite easy to attack this conception of conceivability, as both Alter and Chalmers do. The conceivability of zombies should literally mean,

(C1)  $\diamond_c$  there are zombies. (Here, ‘ $\diamond_c$ ’ represents conceivability.)

However, what actually follows from the lack of confidence in physicalism is,

(C2)  $\diamond_c \diamond_m$  there are zombies. (Here, ‘ $\diamond_m$ ’ represents metaphysical possibility.)

I agree with Alter and Chalmers. It is just evident that (C1) is not equivalent to (C2). First, the number and the kind of modal operators are different. Second, *SP* does not mean the conceptual coherence of zombies, as no conceptual intuition about phenomenal consciousness is found in (C2). The conceivability of zombies or their possibility might rely on our intuitions about what pain\* is among a functional, physical, or dualistic state in the actual world.<sup>5</sup> Since each intuition is related to its own modal notion, there must be no confusion. Intuition about possibility is distinguishable from intuition about conceptual coherence. Therefore, ‘a non-zero credence’ to the possibility of zombies is distinguishable from our intuition about the concept of zombies. It means a sort of psychological or epistemic intuition about possibility, which is captured by (C2).

### 2.2 Haukioja’s Defence

Siding with Braddon-Mitchell, Haukioja (2008) tries to defend the CAS by maintaining that the direct conceivability of zombies, which is (C1), is impossible in case of ‘myself’. He also claims that the conceivability of the possibility of *individual* zombies can mean their conceivability (*ibid.*, pp. 150–1). Haukioja first argues that it is impossible to conceive that I am a zombie, because my consciousness has no ‘appearance/reality distinction’ that would make it possible to conceive a false case as true (*ibid.*, p. 150). He further asserts that the direct conceivability of ‘a full zombie world’, implying that I could have been a zombie, is absurd (*ibid.*, p. 150). In fact, it is notoriously difficult to distinguish appearance and reality in my conscious world. Haukioja thus writes,

if it has *seemed* to me that I am phenomenally conscious, then I *have* been phenomenally conscious. (*Ibid.*, p. 150)

[5] Here, a functional state that conforms to Type-A theory depends on conceptual (or functional) analysis of a mental state. On the other hand, a physical state conforms to Type-B theory, which depends on the metaphysical correlation between a physical and conscious state.



He assumes that if it *seems* to me that I am having pain, this appearance actually constitutes a reality that I feel pain. Hence, I could never have been a zombie. A result is that a full zombie world, including myself as a zombie, is impossible. If so, Alter (2007), who makes a sharp distinction between (C1) and (C2), loses the target of his attack.

As Haukioja points out, it is true that Alter asks for a *full* zombie world including myself as a zombie. Alter (2007) requires a zombie world to be 'a minimal physical/functional duplicate of the actual world, but without consciousness' (*ibid.*, p. 244). However, in order to deny global supervenience, all anti-physicalists need is a world in which at least one zombie exists. I agree with Haukioja's complaint that 'a full zombie world' is problematic. So, (C1) is not translated into the conceivability of 'a full zombie world'.

Nevertheless, I do not endorse the impossibility of the direct conceivability of my being a zombie. What is more important in Alter's argument is whether the conceivability of zombies is entailed by the CAS. I suspect that Haukioja confuses the appearance of having pain in the sense of what it is like to have pain (i.e. my conscious state of which it is hard to make an appearance/reality distinction) with the lack of certainty that we see in the case of *SP*. The appearance of having pain can be used to denote my phenomenal pain. On the other hand, we are sometimes not sure about what (or even whether) we are experiencing. For example, we seem to have had an experience of what existed in our peripheral visual field, but sometimes we seem to have had none. Thus, this sense of '*seeming* to have an experience' (which is relevant to *SP*) lies on a different plane from my conscious state. Once this distinction is made, it becomes more intuitively appealing to conceive that I could have been a zombie. Indeed, I can positively conceive a case that I have lost my conscious state, even if I react perfectly to the outside world.

Similarly, Yetter-Chappell (2013) argues that although I have to be conscious in order to consider a zombie world as actual, this does not mean that I cannot be a zombie. According to her, this is similar to Berkeley's unperceived tree. Conceiving of an unperceived tree does not require us to have a representation of it (*ibid.*, p. 559). Her point is close to my criticism about Haukioja's confusion. The appearance of having pain means what it is like to have pain, while *SP* actually needs my evaluation of whether something is really possible. I think that my argument is directly relevant to Haukioja's negligence about the difference between (C1) and (C2).

Another problem in Haukioja's argument is that the inconceivability of my zombieness naturally opens up the possibility that all

individual zombies are also inconceivable. If I cannot conceive that I could have been a zombie, then everyone can insist, 'I can't conceive that I could have been a zombie'. Although the inconceivability of my having been a zombie might not directly entail the inconceivability of *any* individual zombies, the former is at least consistent with the latter.

Haukioja (2008) also argues that even if the direct conceivability of my zombieness is impossible to entertain, *SP* is compatible with the direct conceivability of *individual* zombies:

Moreover, the conditional analysis *is* compatible with the direct conceivability of *individual* zombies... [W]e cannot rule out *a priori* the possibility that the actual world contains non-physical phenomenal states. If that is the case, then we can neither rule out the possibility that the actual world contains non-physical phenomenal states (of the right sort) and *also* some physically and functionally normal humans who lack these states (that is, zombies). (*ibid.*, p. 150)

This understanding still falls short of a direct conceivability. In this passage, Haukioja simply repeats his assertion that (C1) is equivalent to (C2). Again, the lack of confidence in ruling out *a priori* the possibility that some of us are individual zombies is not tantamount to the direct conceivability of individual zombies. Instead, it rather implies a case like (C2): it is conceivable that individual zombies are possible.

### 2.3. Modal Argument

There can be a further favourable understanding for Braddon-Mitchell. The two diamonds in (C2) can be seen as being of the same kind. If the main issue is conceivability, we might have a doubly modal claim, which is slightly different from (C2):

(C3)  $\diamond_c \diamond_c$  there are zombies.

(C3) says that it is conceivable that zombies are conceivable. Surprisingly, (C3) can be thought to be equivalent to (C1) in some modal systems such as S4 or S5.<sup>6</sup> I will call this strategy 'a modal argument'.

(C3) is weaker than (C2), granted that conceivability is weaker than possibility. In most articles about zombies, entailment from conceivability to possibility causes a problem, but not the other way around. Therefore, regarding the second diamond as conceivability would not confront serious objections. Moreover, if the CAS is supposed to prove only the conceivability of zombies, then (C3) is a legitimately

[6] Of course, modal systems are not directly concerned with conceivability. But thinking that '*possibly possible*' is '*possible*' in S4 or S5 and that what is important is whether a doubly modal claim in general entails a direct possibility or conceivability, '*conceivably conceivable*' does not seem so different from the case of '*possibly possible*'.



reasonable option. Perhaps, S4 or S5 needs a very strong metaphysical commitment. However, it is intuitively plausible that if something is conceivably conceivable, then it is conceivable. A modal argument thus supplies the CAS with an attractively simple solution.

However, as argued earlier, conceptual intuition does not amount to metaphysical intuition. Therefore, ' $\diamond_m$ ' is not replaceable by ' $\diamond_c$ '. Furthermore, accepting S4 or S5 to maintain conceivability is not a good option for physicalists. If they want to assert something significant about possibility and maintain S4 or S5, this may open up a more serious interpretation of *SP*:

(M)  $\diamond_m \diamond_m$  there are zombies.

(M) tells us that it is possible that zombies are possible. We already had (C3) in order to save the CAS, and so interpreted the second diamond of (C2) as conceivability. At this point, anti-physicalists might lead us to a wrong direction. '*Possibly possible*' sounds like a weaker claim than straightforward possibility. This still sounds like an unreliable guide to the literal or direct possibility of zombies. Why not, then, interpret the first diamond as possibility and accept (M)? However, this looks like the least plausible interpretation. (M) entails the possibility of zombies in S4 or S5, which contradicts what the CAS stands for (i.e. physicalism). Therefore, saving the conceivability of zombies may lead physicalists to accept the possibility of zombies.

### 3. Possibility

Alter (2007) and Chalmers (2005) appear to be satisfied at finding fault with the doubly modal claim. However, their points, if extended further, could have been developed as a stronger argument against the CAS.

#### 3.1 Is the CAS Only for Conceivability?

The main target of many anti-zombie arguments is usually the entailment-link from conceivability to possibility. Physicalists need conceivability as a starting point to argue against the zombie argument. Let us suppose that the CAS successfully delivers a result that a zombie *seems possible*, and therefore a zombie is only conceivable. However, conceivability alone does not defuse the zombie argument. Physicalists must explain why the conceivability of zombies is not a good guide to their possibility. To convince anti-physicalists that zombies are only *seemingly possible*, physicalists must make a stronger claim about possibility.

In fact, I have met many sceptical reactions against relating the CAS to possibility. Some indicated that nobody believes that the CAS robustly disproves the possibility of zombies. A popular interpretation of the CAS is that it is intended to explain the zombie intuition *only* in terms of conceivability.<sup>7</sup> If the CAS succeeds in showing that *SP* is not so different from conceivability, it promises that physicalism is consistent with the conceivability of zombies. That is, physicalism does not have to deny the zombie intuition. Unfortunately, the CAS does not assure this, as argued in the earlier sections. What is worse, we don't need the whole package of the CAS for conceivability. Even if what *pain\** is in the actual world is undetermined, the concept of zombies involves no contradiction. Even if an oracle tells us that the actual world contains only physical properties, we can still *conceive* a zombie world! This is why Type-B theorists are fond of making a distinction between conceivability and possibility. Without the CAS, physicalism is compatible with the conceivability of zombies. I will later present an argument why consistency is insufficient for rebutting the zombie argument.

According to Yetter-Chappell (2013), the CAS enables physicalists to '(1) accept the zombie intuition, (2) accept that conceivability is generally a good guide to possibility, and yet (3) reject the conclusion that zombies are metaphysically possible' (*ibid.*, p. 571). To be a serious strategy, I believe, the CAS needs to touch on possibility. It has to contribute positively to explaining why conceivability is not a reliable guide to possibility in the case of zombies. I would like to make the CAS more meaningful with regard to its implication to possibility. In fact, the doubly modal claim is related to possibility, as 'the conceivability of the possibility of zombies' contains 'possibility'. To evaluate whether the CAS successfully proves that the possibility of zombies is not real, the issue of possibility must be examined. For those who are reluctant to connect the CAS to possibility, I will review how the proponents of the CAS have made their points about possibility. Braddon-Mitchell (2003) explicitly uses the CAS to derive conceivability. However, Stalnaker (2002) and Hawthorne (2002) are explicitly talking about possibility. I would like to find an interesting understanding of the CAS by focusing on whether it has something to do with possibility.

[7] For example, Braddon-Mitchell (2003) or Kirk (2003, §4.2).



### 3.2. *Conditional Understanding*

Braddon-Mitchell, Stalnaker, and Hawthorne utilize the CAS to argue that anti-physicalists can hold the possibility of zombies only when the dualist view of the actual world is presupposed. In other words, (IC1), one of the two conditionals in §1, is what anti-physicalists have actually shown, but the antecedent of (IC1) remains unproved. This reminds us of the circularity found in the zombie argument. The possibility of zombies is needed to demonstrate that physicalism is false, but the dualist intuition about the actual world is needed for the possibility of zombies. Braddon-Mitchell thus writes, ‘some intuitions about what is actual are driving some intuitions about what is possible’ (Braddon-Mitchell, 2003, p. 128). Hawthorne indicates that the possibility of zombies requires an anti-physicalist supposition about the actual world by stating, ‘If at the actual world I rigidly designate a physical state type (or some disjunction of such), ... [zombies] are not possible’ (Hawthorne, 2002, p. 24). Stalnaker also asks, ‘If zombies are conceivable in just this sense [that is, if we are actually in a dualist world], does that mean that zombies are metaphysically possible?’ (Stalnaker, 2002, p. 399). All three philosophers claim that the zombie argument *conditionally* works under the supposition that pain\* is a non-physical state in the actual world. I will call this a conditional understanding of the CAS.

If we connect the conditional understanding to Chalmers’ two-dimensional framework, we are able to conclude that zombies are not possible. Chalmers (1996) makes a distinction between primary and secondary modality. Zombies are primarily possible if a world, in which pain\* is a non-physical state, is considered as actual. However, zombies are not secondarily possible if a world, in which pain\* is a physical property, is considered as actual. In fact, an intuition of what the actual world is like determines how we see zombies. So, the supposition that pain\* could be a non-physical state in the actual world entails that a zombie world could be the actual world. Therefore, the conditional understanding implies that zombies are only primarily possible. To be a successful strategy against physicalism, the zombie argument requires secondary possibility. Stalnaker thus appears to assert that the CAS confirms that only the primary possibility of zombies is provable. In the passage mentioned earlier, Stalnaker seems to assume that primary possibility is not different from conceivability. If so, the CAS denies the entailment-link from conceivability to possibility.

However, this line of thinking is too hasty. For anti-physicalists, it is still an open question whether zombies are secondarily possible. In fact, anti-physicalists can legitimately complain that physicalism is only conditionally right. The CAS can be used to reveal that the physicalist intuition about what pain is in the actual world is supposed in order to positively argue for physicalism. (IC2) says that pain\* is a physical state if the actual world contains only physical properties. If this conditional is the best that physicalists can provide, the oracle hypothesis lets anti-physicalists maintain that the zombie argument survives.

As Stalnaker acknowledges, ‘We have no a priori assurance that we can identify the subject matter of our dispute in a theory-neutral way’ (Stalnaker, 2002, p. 396). He further suggests that anti-physicalists like Chalmers would think that a zombie world could be actual, while physicalists would consider our world as actual. Therefore, it may be fair to blame anti-physicalists for presupposing that a zombie world could be actual. At the same time, a parity argument that can be given by anti-physicalists is also coherent. Hence, the debate returns back to two competing fundamental intuitions about what pain is in the actual world. If pain is physical, zombies are impossible, but if pain is actually irreducible, then the CAS can rather support anti-physicalism. What an oracle can teach us about this debate is ‘whereof one cannot [know yet], thereof one must be silent’. When we use either of the two conditionals, (IC1) or (IC2), to criticize anti-physicalism, the parity argument reveals that the conditional understanding of the CAS seems to be no better than just stating that our world is actually physical. This is not so different from simply positing the primitive mind–body correlation, which leaves the so-called hard problem unsolvable. Hawthorne’s initial intention to help physicalists dodge a direct discussion about the mind–body correlation does not produce a promising result.

### 3.3. *Unconditional Understanding*

Hawthorne (2002), at some point, is enthusiastic in *unconditionally* talking about the CAS with regard to possibility. I will first examine how he accepts the conceivability of zombies without any supposition. He claims that zombies are positively conceivable, even if we have *perfect* physical knowledge of our world. The positive conceivability of zombies comes not from the fact that we are not confident in ruling out the *conceivability*, but from the fact that the dualist concept of pain is not completely explained. Even before an oracle opens her mouth, physicalists can endorse that a complete list of all the physical



facts in our world would not exclude the conceivability of zombies. That is, physicalists cannot help but accept that the conceivability of zombies follows *a priori*. This needs no supposition about how the actual world could turn out. Granted that zombies are positively conceivable, the next step is to deny the entailment-link. Hawthorne writes, 'We will admit that zombies are positively conceivable, but will not be confident that zombies are possible' (*ibid.*, p. 25). He means that the conceivability of zombies is derived *a priori*, but this has 'no metaphysical bite' (*ibid.*, p. 25). Here, he seems to translate the lack of confidence in the possibility of zombies into the denial of the entailment-link.

In this reasoning, the referent of 'pain\*' is still undetermined, and no *conditional* supposition about the actual world is found. According to Hawthorne, 'pain\*' is a sort of topic-neutral concept, and his argument avoids the circularity to which the conditional understanding is committed. He does not demand that pain\* is a physical state. Furthermore, he is not blaming anti-physicalists for assuming that pain\* is a non-physical state. As argued earlier, it does not present a knockout argument to simply state that the positive conceivability of zombies entails their possibility only when a zombie world is considered as actual. Indeed, it is more interesting to understand the CAS as an unconditional argument.

If I have succeeded in relating the CAS to possibility, I must then evaluate whether the CAS really helps physicalism. To do so, Alter's assertion that the CAS interprets the lack of confidence in physicalism as open-mindedness is a good starting point. Alter (2007) correctly states, '[open-mindedness] is merely a concession to minimal rationality' (p. 248). He does not insist that the CAS seriously intends this attitude, but attacks '*the view that open-mindedness is enough*' (*ibid.*, p. 248). As he points out, this is a trivial view. Open-mindedness as minimal rationality may be a practical piece of wisdom. From this, however, physicalists can just draw the conclusion that the possibility of zombies should not be denied without serious examination.

The CAS could be more significant. The idea of open-mindedness suggests epistemic agnosticism. In fact, the CAS effectively describes the current debate status about the mind-body problem that no position has been conclusively proven to be right. This agnosticism is captured in the oracle hypothesis. The point is that we can still argue that anti-physicalism is not metaphysically guaranteed, even when we endorse epistemic agnosticism. In other words, the force of the CAS is found in a move from agnosticism to metaphysics.

However, this strategy is not successful. Hawthorne's concern about anti-physicalism that the conceivability of zombies has no metaphysical impact is returned to him. Agnosticism cannot have a direct impact on metaphysics. The lack of confidence in the possibility of zombies merely entails that it is conceivable that zombies are impossible. This is something parallel to *SP*: that is, zombies *seem impossible*. This falls short of completely explaining why conceivability is not a reliable guide to possibility. Since it is obviously different from the impossibility of zombies, the entailment-link cannot be denied. The following two propositions demonstrate the difference.

(IM1)  $-\diamond_m$  there are zombies.

(IM2)  $\diamond_c-\diamond_m$  there are zombies.

The entailment-link required by anti-physicalists is,

(E)  $\diamond_c$  there are zombies  $\rightarrow \diamond_m$  there are zombies.

To prove that (E) is false, physicalists need (IM1). Yet Hawthorne derives (IM2), which is not equivalent to (IM1). Actually, impossibility is far more stringent than (IM2).

Hawthorne is unfair in considering agnosticism. He utilizes the lack of confidence in anti-physicalism to deny the entailment-link (that is, the antecedent of (IC2) could be true). However, he fails to notice that we also lack confidence in physicalism, which could undermine the impossibility of zombies (so, the antecedent of (IC1) could be true). Similar to the case of conditional suppositions of the actual world in §3.2, anti-physicalists can legitimately maintain that the CAS implies that we lack confidence in physicalism as much as in dualism. Agnosticism must be neutral to both physicalism and dualism, and therefore Hawthorne's (2002) reasoning for rebutting anti-physicalism is not guaranteed.

The upshot is that what follows from the CAS is at best epistemic agnosticism. There can be a logical gap in the attempt to extract a metaphysical conclusion. Some might maintain that the CAS helps physicalism to some degree, since it implies that physicalism is not conclusively known to be false. However, this type of agnosticism can also be used by anti-physicalists.

### 3.4. *Is Consistency Sufficient?*

As mentioned earlier, some physicalists do not think that they have to prove the impossibility of zombies, but rather they need to explain that the zombie intuition is compatible with physicalism. Similarly, some



might be worried that the CAS is not supposed to be a robust strategy against the zombie argument. Perhaps the CAS modestly aims to prove that physicalism is consistent with *SP*. This consistency undermines anti-physicalism, since it appears to deny that physicalism is completely false. The CAS does not have to conclusively refute the zombie argument. According to this weak understanding, the CAS still helps physicalism to a meaningful extent.<sup>8</sup>

Such consistency, however, is not a serious blow against anti-physicalists. They would maintain that the CAS fails to persuade them. If consistency is what the CAS stands for, then anti-physicalists can set up another similar (but slightly different) parity argument. On the one hand, the CAS confirms that physicalism is consistent with *SP*. On the other hand, it also confirms that anti-physicalism is consistent with the physicalist intuition that zombies *seem impossible!*<sup>9</sup> This certainly sounds very awkward, since there seems to be no need for explaining away the physicalist intuition. However, the brute mind-body correlation might be something that anti-physicalists want to reveal as an illusion. They may first stipulate that pain\* is a non-physical state in the actual world, and then try to explain that the physicalist intuition about the correlation is not real. Under the supposition that pain\* is a physical state, as (IC2) suggests, zombies are impossible. However, this merely means that zombies *seem impossible*, which falls short of refuting the zombie argument. Therefore, anti-physicalism is compatible with the physicalist intuition that zombies *seem impossible!* For anti-physicalists, the CAS rather explains that dualism is consistent with the physicalist intuition. The CAS then appears to deny that anti-physicalism is false. This strategy is also applicable to denying Braddon-Mitchell's argument that *SP* means conceivability. Anti-physicalists could use the CAS to show that anti-physicalism is consistent with the conceivability of physical pain.

Considering this parity argument, I find no compelling reason to favour the CAS. As Hawthorne (2002) says, the beauty of the CAS is found in circumventing a direct discussion about the primitive mind-body correlation, when controversies over the zombie argument pro-

duce no apparent direction (pp. 20–1). The CAS was intended to help physicalism when both physicalists and anti-physicalists are committed to circularities. However, the result is that circularities have merely been shifted to a different level.

If the CAS is expected to be a serious strategy against anti-physicalism, it must present more substantial implications about possibility. Therefore, I have tried to argue that the CAS can be a strong tool against the possibility of zombies. However, connecting the CAS to possibility is unsuccessful, since agnosticism is neutral and cannot promise metaphysics.

#### 4. Conclusion

The CAS is disappointing. In a weak interpretation, it can be used to argue for consistency between physicalism and conceivability (or *SP*) by showing that zombies are possible only if a dualist world is considered as actual. However, this is insufficient for debunking the zombie argument. In a stronger interpretation with regard to possibility, the CAS fails to negate the entailment-link from conceivability to possibility. In any attempt to derive a conclusion for physicalism, anti-physicalists could answer with a parity argument. What is worse, the CAS does not guarantee the conceivability of zombies. Therefore, the CAS, which initially appears to be clever advice, cannot help physicalism. Physicalists (especially Type-B theorists) had better not be distracted by such advice that is too good to be true.

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[8] One referee stated that the parity argument in §3.2 is applicable to only a strong sense of the CAS that aims to conclusively refute the zombie argument. That is, a weaker claim that aims to find a way simply to defuse 'the force of the conceivability argument' still survives my criticism. Another parity argument will be provided to undermine this weak claim.

[9] Alter (2007) makes a similar point in a different fashion. He mentions that the CAS may entail that even if pain\* refers to a non-physical state (that is, the antecedent of (IC1) is the case), 'no *a priori* reasoning could exclude the possibility that the world is merely physical' (p. 241). In this understanding, the CAS shows that dualism is consistent with the possibility of physicalism. However, as Alter says, this begs the question (*ibid.*, p. 241).

[10] An early draft was included in *Proceedings of XXII World Congress of Philosophy*, 42.

[11] This paper is developed from a discussion in my PhD dissertation (Han, 2007).



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