

Review of: "Hard problems in the philosophy of mind"

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This paper provides a clear, exhaustive, account of the muddle contemporary philosophy of mind has got into. Well done. Ironically, the problem is presented as 'modern' and philosophers often use modern to mean sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – when the confusions were much better understood and avoided. There is a strong argument for saying that current 'hard problems in philosophy of mind' reflect a failure to grasp the implications of Schopenhauer, back through Leibniz, Galileo and Montaigne, now made transparent by both experimental psychology and fundamental physics.

This is a journey many of us have taken, but with different places to start. I suggest that the concept of physicality is the proverbial 'better not from here' in the directions to Tipperary. The early moderns mentioned tell us that the more one thinks of physicality the more one is invoking mentality. The stone Dr Johnson kicked was not more than mathematical, and so *real*, because of 'physicality', over there. It was more than mathematical through being a collection of goings on with a power to contribute to mentality over here – the sense of hardness that our brains use as a sign to track events. Einstein says the same thing. The philosophers' 'physicalism' is a straw man based on pop science.

A comprehensive analysis of just the issues raised in this paper is given by Leibniz. He identifies a subject as a point of view that is a simple substance. He points out that even Descartes's 'extended matter' should be treated as fundamentally the same because rigid extension involves a mathematical impossibility. He breaks down the misconceptions around determinism and freedom. Almost everything he proposes has been confirmed as physics advances. He explains why fundamental physics must involve indivisible units with no shape, size or parts, merely a domain that is the focus of a point of relation to universe – a body of other units. As in modern physics. The hard problems melt away.

There are, of course, difficult biophysical problems remaining. Leibniz knew he could not discover the rules that equate action to acquisition of perception. We know a lot more but many of the questions raised in the paper remain daunting. How could our complex multimodal perceptions and emotions correspond to mathematical patterns of physics? The author is a physical scientist. These questions can only be answered by physical science and depend crucially on identifying the domain that gives a human subject its point of view. As Leibniz shows, that does not reduce the wonder of mentality to 'stuff'. Quite the reverse, it gathers physics up into a wondrous mental whole.