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Review of *History of the Mind-Body Problem*, edited by Tim Crane and Sarah Patterson (London: Routledge 2000) and *History of the Concept of Mind* by Paul S. Macdonald (Aldershot: Ashgate 2003)

A well-known position in contemporary philosophy of mind is that we shall never solve the mind-body problem. A more popular position, which amounts to much the same thing in my view, is that the concept of mind is such that it presents us with the illusion of an insoluble mind-body problem. In such an intellectual climate, we need to remind ourselves of the historical contingencies which have delivered the particularities of the concept of mind currently holding sway over our thinking, a concept which the aforementioned positions treat as if its possession were a natural fact about the human species. Consequently, these two books are both timely and invaluable. I begin with Crane and Patterson's *History of the Mind-Body Problem*, a collection of eight essays which each merit individual discussion. So that is how I shall proceed.

Rae Langton's paper targets both Hilary Putnam's well-known attempt to lay claim to Aristotle as a fore-runner of functionalism, and Myles Burnyeat's consequent attack on functionalist readings of Aristotle. Her thesis is that Putnam was wrong to think of Aristotle as a proto-functionalism, but not for the reasons Burnyeat gives. Aristotle cannot be a functionalist, according to Burnyeat, because his theory of mind requires a necessary relation between matter and form, and is consequently incompatible with multiple realisation, and because he would have rejected supervenience. Langton responds that "Burnyeat's arguments, if sound, are compatible with basic functionalism" (22), by which she intends a contrast with "physicalist functionalism". There is nothing new in this contrast; introductory books on the philosophy of mind nearly always point out that *strictly speaking*, the functionalist proposal involves no commitment to the realisers of functional roles being physical. And there may be some peripatetic value to this. However, the only alternative to physical realisation is realisation by Cartesian mental substance, and so when Langton points out that the realiser could be *anything* "from Swiss cheese to Cartesian mind-stuff" (15), there is little force to this "anything", given that Gruyère et. al. are physical. Less force still when you consider the absurdity of realisation by Cartesian mind-stuff, since mind-stuff is stuff that is intrinsically mental - that is the point of it - and so once you have it, the mind does not need to be realised. In fact, the functionalist claim that properties are mental in virtue of their function is arguably incompatible with the Cartesian conception of intrinsically mental substance, since the latter is not mental in virtue of its function, but through its own nature. Given this, the best Langton can hope to establish is that in the face of Burnyeat's argument, Aristotle might still be attributed an absurd position. However, Langton also has strong arguments against Burnyeat's case for thinking that Aristotle cannot be a "physicalist functionalist", i.e. (to all intents and purposes) a functionalist. The necessary connection Aristotle imposes between flesh (e.g. eye-jelly) and function (e.g. sight) is a denial of the "multiple functionality of realisers" (24) rather than the possibility of multiple realisation, and Aristotle's special conception of change counteracts his apparent variance with the requirements of supervenience. Langton's final conclusion is that Aristotle cannot be interpreted as a functionalist because his definition of soul includes matter, the

functionalist's more "mathematical" approach to mind being one he explicitly criticised.

M.W.F. Stone's scholarly article provides a "flavour" (35) of the 13thC monopsychism debate for those unfamiliar with mediaeval philosophy of mind. The focus is Aquinas's attack on Siger of Brabant's Averroist view that humanity shares a unitary "agent intellect", a single intellect for the whole species that "thinks in" us by using our individual "cerebral images" (41). Much of the fascination of this piece is in how alien - and truly odd - the whole debate seems, despite Stone's assurances that these philosophers were trying to do "justice to the facts of ordinary conscious experience" (56).

Sarah Patterson's "How Cartesian was Descartes?" brings us back to familiar territory only to make it unfamiliar. She argues that the standard picture of Descartes' philosophy, which emphasizes the triad of Cartesian Scepticism, Foundationalism, and Dualism, is a distortion of Descartes' views. The real Descartes was not employing the method of doubt in a search for certainty, but rather in reaction to the then prevalent Scholastic view that understanding was tied to sensory imagination. Descartes wanted to show that the senses are a hindrance to understanding, rather than its necessary correlative, in order to undermine Aristotelian science and provide foundations for his own mechanistic physics based on the innate idea of extension. The "evil demon" was not even intended as a sceptical device, but rather a method of counteracting a preoccupation with the senses developed in childhood and codified by Aristotelian science. And the well known passages of the Second Meditation standardly taken to be Descartes' discovery of a conception of mind as appearance, were actually intended to show that sensing is an act of thought, as against the Scholastic view that sensing is not essentially connected with thought.

I have seen ingenious readings of Descartes before (none more so than Jacques Derrida's "Cogito and the History of Madness"¹), but this actually changed my fundamental beliefs about Descartes' philosophy. The argument is so strong, and the supporting quotations so unambiguous and squarely pertinent to the thesis that Patterson surely cannot be wholly wrong. And if she is not, what are the consequences? Is there no longer any need to take Cartesian scepticism and dualism seriously? The question is of course not just relevant to this paper, but to the general approach taken by both of these books of taking a historical perspective on a philosophical problem. Different pressures are at work in answering this. On the one side, it seems such considerations should have no bearing on the credibility of the Cartesian view. For if the task of philosophy is to come up with the best possible theories to describe real features of the world - surely the default metaphilosophy - then it can make no difference where the theories come from. If the Cartesian conception of mind is powerful, then it does not matter whether it was Descartes' conception, or whether it developed out of a misinterpretation of Descartes' texts, or whether it arrived from outer space. What matters is the idea, not its origin. And yet on the other side, when you see contemporary philosophers treating the Cartesian conception as a datum generating insoluble problems, it can seem imperative to think back before this way of thinking about the mind cast its spell. A classic attempt is

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1978.

Wallace Matson's "Why isn't the mind-body problem ancient?"², in which Matson wonders how the Greeks ("not the dullest people who ever lived"³), were apparently able to entirely overlook the mind-body problem, a problem which to our eyes is glaringly obvious. The tantalising thought is that there may be an unproblematic way of thinking about the mind which human beings can reclaim by working out where and why the Cartesian problem arose. The mind-body problem may be a crease in our understanding of the world which arose through certain historical contingencies, and by isolating and understanding them, we may be able to iron it out.

These two pressures are easily channelled together, I think, by accepting both that the history of Cartesianism has no bearing on its truth, and yet that given the hegemony of Cartesian thinking within our philosophical culture, we probably have a better chance of breaking out of it through historical research than through ingenuity and innovation.

Another question we might ask is: does a paper like Patterson's mean that introductory courses in philosophy need to be rewritten? The problem is that understanding the real Descartes reacting against his Thomist background to advocate an innatist physics of pure extension seems far less important to a philosophical education than the highly influential doctrines of Cartesianism, a consideration in favour of phasing out standard courses on the great philosophers in favour of an exclusively problem-based approach. And yet against this, the whole subject seems essentially tied up with a series of great individuals refining their own problematics, as evidenced by the fact that philosophers have never teamed up to work on problems as scientists do. Which way we turn here, I suppose, depends on whether the default metaphilosophy mentioned above is the right one.

Susan James's essay continues the theme. Descartes was, as she puts it, "chipping away at the powers of the soul" (120) by offering mechanistic explanations of the powers Aristotelianism attributed to the vegetative and sensitive parts of the soul, leaving the human body a machine allied with a rational, conscious soul. He did this because of a general dissatisfaction with the explanatory force of appeals to substantial forms in accounts of natural phenomena, and because of the specific problem facing the Aristotelians of how the sensitive and rational parts of the soul were supposed to interact. This latter problem reoccurs for Descartes, according to James, in the familiar form of the mind-body problem. If this is right, it suggests that prior to the advent of Cartesianism, philosophers were in fact bothered by similar intuitions to those that drive the debate today.

John Cottingham's main claim is that Brentano's thesis that intentionality is the mark of the mental was prefigured by Descartes (at the end of the paper he calls it the "Descartes-Brentano thesis"). This does not come entirely out of the blue given Descartes' background in Aquinas, though his conception of intentionality turns out in many ways to be more interesting than that of the later empiricists, as demonstrated by

² Wallace Matson, "Why isn't the mind-body problem ancient?" in P. Feyerabend and G. Maxwell (eds.) *Mind, Matter and Method: Essays in Philosophy and Science in Honor of Herbert Feigl*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1966.

³ *Ibid.* p. 95.

a passage in the *Optics* quoted by Cottingham (138) which notes the need to distinguish representation from resemblance.

William James thought that incorporating an unconscious / conscious distinction into psychology would turn it into a “tumbling-ground for whimsies” (148) - a phrase which provides Neil Campbell Manson with the title of his contribution. Manson distinguishes four ways in which the unconscious / conscious distinction has been made. The first is the occurrent / non-occurrent distinction, and the second the 19thC practice of classifying typically physiological phenomena as unconscious because of their role in “enabling, causing or structuring” (153) conscious thought. The third is Leibniz’s doctrine of *petites perceptions*, which Manson thinks is a “metaphysical” notion of the unconscious arising from a “technical” use of the term “perception” which is “quite divorced from its normal use” (155). This claim, which I do not find at all obvious, is never argued for, and the appeal to “normal use” seems very odd given the subject matter of the essay. The fourth is the most interesting, in which Manson argues that Sir William Hamilton (in 1836) and Freud employed broadly the same pattern of argument, that of postulating an unconscious in order to accommodate apparent exceptions to general laws of conscious thought. The conclusion of the essay is that James’s suspicions resulted from his assumption that explaining conscious thought in nonconscious terms would mean explaining it in nonmental terms, whereas contemporary theorists employ what Manson calls a “consciousness-independent conception of mind” (165) centred on representation, though how this ties in with the four historical movements, and how it shows James was wrong to worry, is never really made clear.

Tim Crane’s multi-layered and rewarding article, “The Origins of Qualia”, begins by trying to make sense of the fact that some philosophers find the existence of qualia - those naturalistically elusive ‘how consciousness feels’ properties - to be entirely obvious, whereas others find it just as obvious there are no such properties: “How can there be such extreme disagreement about what is obvious?” (171). To illustrate the former position, he mentions the best-known statement on the matter, Ned Block’s response to the question of what qualia are with an analogy to jazz music: “As Louis Armstrong said when asked what jazz is, ‘If you got to ask, you ain’t never gonna get to know’” (quoted at 170, also by Martin at 227).

An aside about the Block quotation: Louis Armstrong’s famous response when asked for a definition of jazz was “Jazz is what I play for a living”⁴, which is not unlike (the inspiration for?) Ayer’s gesture towards his bookshelves when asked for a definition of philosophy. Fats Waller, however, was once asked what *swing* was, and replied, “Lady, if you have to ask, don’t fool with it!”⁵, a line both funny and which makes sense. Whether or not Armstrong ever said or was attributed Block’s phrase (I can only find references to it in philosophy books), I get the impression that philosophers think that *jazz* (rather than any other art-form) is somehow particularly relevant to the analogy with qualia. But opera or abstract expressionism would work just as well, as far as I can see.

⁴ Bill Crow, *Jazz Anecdotes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1990, p. 215.

⁵ Studs Terkel, *Giants of Jazz*. New York: The New Press 2002, p. 72.

Anyway, Crane finds a parallel dispute in old discussions of sense-data: Moore and Price found the presence of sense-data in experience obvious, but their critics claimed not to be aware of any. Crane explains that on the minimal understanding of sense-data intended by Moore, all that should be understood is the object of experience, that is, that which is given in experience. It is a further step, by means of the argument from illusion, to a conception of sense-data as non-physical objects. According to Crane's analysis, the former conception was employed by those who found sense-data obvious, the latter by their critics. The "predictable solution" (182) to the contemporary dispute over qualia follows the same lines: qualia advocates cannot understand how anyone could deny the existence of properties constitutive of the phenomenology of a conscious state, but qualia opponents operate with a more committal conception of qualia as intrinsic, non-intentional properties of experiences.

Crane next asks why qualia are taken to be properties of experiences given that their standard employment within objections to physicalism, such as the knowledge argument, does not in fact require this. After all, he points out, that argument could just as well show that qualia are properties of public objects that can only be fully understood by being experienced. So why is it assumed that qualia are properties of experiences rather than properties of public objects? For broadly the same reasons, Crane thinks, that the originator of contemporary interest in qualia, C.I. Lewis, started talking about them in the first place. This was in order to contrast properties of the given (i.e. sense-data on Crane's reading) with objective properties, since different objective properties can be responsible for the same qualitative property of the given (the same quale), and the same objective property can give rise to different qualitative properties of the given (different qualia). Contemporary theorists employ the same sort of considerations to motivate distinguishing qualia from properties of public objects, but since physicalism rules out a sense-data account, they part company from Lewis to hold that qualia are properties of experiences.

The layers merge here as Crane points out that the above reasons for thinking of qualia as properties of experiences have no tendency to also show them to be intrinsic, non-intentional properties. In fact, since talk of qualia was initiated through reflection on the given, the contemporary counterpart of which Crane plausibly identifies as intentionality (189), he thinks qualia are more naturally aligned with the intentionalist view. His final conclusion, though, is that in the absence of agreement about what qualia are supposed to be, it is probably best to stop talking about them.

M.G.F. Martin's paper, the last in the collection, revolves around two principles. The principle of Transparency holds that experience is always of mind-independent objects and their properties. The principle of Actualism holds that for all experience of properties, there has to be an actual object which has those properties and which is being experienced. Martin argues that contrary both to sense-data theorists, who tended to claim that introspection supports Actualism and is neutral about Transparency, and intentional theorists who tend to claim that introspection demonstrates Transparency, and thus casts doubt on Actualism, it is actually the case that Actualism and Transparency are consistent with each other, and that both are lent equal support from introspection. This combination of Transparency and Actualism, supported by introspection, amounts to Naïve Realism, the view that in perception I am aware of independently existing objects and their properties which have to be there

in order for me to have the experience. The real significance of the argument from illusion, according to Martin, is not, as has widely been supposed, the support it provides for a sense-datum theory or even indirect realism more generally construed. This is just as well given the recent agreement documented by Martin that this would be a very bad argument indeed. Rather, its real significance is as an argument against Naïve Realism: given the possibility of illusion, both Transparency and Actualism cannot be true together. Since the disagreement between sense-data and intentionalist theorists over which principle should go cannot be justified by the evidence of introspection, which supports both equally, Martin suggests that we look to other factors to make sense of their disagreement. The explanation he offers is that sense-data theorists generally mistrusted realism, which rendered Transparency dubious to them, and intentional theorists generally have a commitment to physicalism, which renders Actualism dubious to them.

There seems to be some tension in the conclusions Martin draws from this. He says that “Once we recognise that introspection supports naïve realism, rather than directly recommending either a sense-datum view or an intentional account, then we are faced with the consequence that at least some experiences will be misleading about their own nature.” (226) This is because when we introspect our experiences, it appears to us that both Actualism and Transparency are true, but since the possibility of illusion shows that at least one of them must be false, appearance itself must be potentially misleading about its own nature. However, a page back Martin is criticising qualia theorists for avoiding a commitment to Actualism at the cost of “becoming completely divorced from giving a believable story about the apparent structure of perceptual consciousness” (225). But just suppose for the sake of argument that qualia theorists are right: what accounts for the subjective character of a conscious state is an intrinsic, non-intentional property of that state. If that were true, then what it is like when I introspect is what it is like to be aware of a non-intentional quale, though this awareness of a non-intentional quale presents itself as awareness of the world. This ties in with Martin’s claim that appearances can mislead. But exactly because appearances can mislead, it cannot be a good argument against a theory that it fails to match the “apparent structure of perceptual consciousness”: if the theory is true but the appearances would not incline you to judge that it is true, then the appearances are misleading, and if the theory is true and the appearances would incline you to judge that it is true, then the appearances are not misleading. So it seems that in granting that appearances can be misleading, Martin undermines the motivation for a theory to fit the appearances - since a theory may be true whether or not it fits the appearances (i.e. whether or not the appearances are misleading) - and consequently he undermines his own view that introspection supports naïve realism and counts against theories such as Block’s. For even if naïve realism appears to be true when we introspect, any “support” this might be thought to lend naïve realism drops away once we have learnt to mistrust appearances: introspection of qualia might (misleadingly) appear to support Actualism and Transparency.

The second book, Paul Macdonald’s *History of the Concept of Mind: Speculations about Soul, Mind and Spirit from Homer to Hume*, is nothing if not impressive. The blurb on the jacket describes Macdonald’s undertaking as “monumental” and the result as “magisterial”, and I am not about to disagree. Clichéd or not, these two words succinctly convey the scholarship on display here. Starting in ancient times

with the Hebrew concept of *nepesh* and the Homeric concept of *psyche*, this book works through the classical canon, medieval Islamic and Christian thought, the Renaissance, and into the modern period, finishing up with chapters on the Rationalists and Empiricists. There is also a chapter on the concepts of mind and soul as they developed in the English language, from Middle English to Shakespeare. Macdonald seems to be equally expert throughout the historical epochs, as much at home discussing conflicting interpretations of the pre-Socratic fragments, St. Paul's distinction between *psyche* and *pneuma*, or Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's views on magic. Moreover, the sources he draws from are simply voluminous: across the pages, you will encounter a seemingly endless stream of obscure historical figures who said something about soul, spirit or mind. What emerges is an intricately intertwined history of the development, mutation, cross-breeding, transformation, and sometimes plain conflation of the concepts of soul, spirit, and mind, with each of these in turn containing various strands which strengthened or fell away as the concepts vied for pre-eminence. If, as suggested earlier, what we find obvious about the mind is historically conditioned, so that obstinate contemporary intuitions are open to being unpicked through their history, then this book is quite simply an amazing resource for the philosophy of mind. It is the sort of thing I would not expect to have been written, but which I can see myself browsing through for years to come. That said, it is not without its flaws.

The main flaw is that though Macdonald has done a remarkable job in compiling the vast quantity of information contained in this book, he has been less successful in collating it. There is occasionally a thread of argument holding the material together, but usually there is only chronology. This does not matter so much when the material is unfamiliar: I was quite happy to sit back and be presented with the views of Alkimi and Alfarabi summarised in clear prose, with the various interpreters of these figures amply footnoted. But when we get to Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, questions about Macdonald's intention and methodology inevitably come to the fore. In the section on Descartes, Macdonald does have a thesis, which is that Descartes distinguished mind from soul, despite widespread opinion to the contrary (281-4). But most of the section is taken up with a fairly standard account of Descartes' philosophy. And the sections on Spinoza and Leibniz are nothing but straightforward potted expositions, not unlike the sort of thing you would expect to find in a popular History of Philosophy book. How these familiar metaphysical systems are supposed to mark developments within the concept of mind is left for the reader to work out, making it seem as if their inclusion was a chore for the sake of completeness. This impression is reinforced by the fact that Macdonald assumes the reader's familiarity with the material in any case (e.g. 339, where Hume's "bundle" view is referred to in advance of the section on Hume). Another problem arising from the material not being organised around a narrative of argumentation, however loose, is that when Macdonald chooses to discuss a view, or argument, or interpretation, it can seem entirely arbitrary. On one page, we find the text shifting from Locke's conjecture that matter might think, to Nicholas Jolley's reconstruction of Leibniz's argument for innatism, to the issue of whether animals have souls (307), and on another, we find three interesting positions on Locke from Thomas Lennon, John Yolton, and Charles Taylor, admirably selected perhaps, but presented without any comment or attempt at adjudication (337).

There are three other flaws - or what seemed to me to be flaws - which are perhaps worth mentioning. The first is that Macdonald makes a number of derogatory comments about recent philosophy of mind which he does not back up, and which are entirely out of place. For example, in the midst of a discussion of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, he says that Putnam and Dennett have "incorrectly claimed that Cartesian-style dualism unavoidably commits one to notions of privileged access" (265), and that Ryle's "ghost in the machine" label is "a cartoon caption for which there is not a shred of textual evidence." (266) Perhaps he is right, but there is nothing explicit in the book to back this up. Elsewhere, he labels eliminative materialists as "extremists", and ridicules their claim that the ontology of mind is part of a "folk account" of human nature (350). And yet by this point, the reader has learnt all about the original connection between the concepts of soul and breath, and the historical influence of the idea that spirit is a rarefied stuff that permeates the body! The second flaw is the conclusion, which is inadequate for a book of this ambition: it is just a summary. In fact, it makes rather uneasy reading since it seems to have been compiled by, to a certain extent, cutting and pasting from the main text (compare 279 & 357, for example): it provided me with a number of disconcerting déjà-vu sensations. The third flaw is just an oddity: there is no discussion of Malebranche (only a mention at 344). Given the obscurity of some of the other figures discussed, and the influence which Malebranche's ideas had (at the very least on Leibniz and Berkeley), I could not make sense of this.

Basically, I liked this book a lot more when I was initially browsing through it than when I sat down to study it in detail, and I hope now to revert to the former attitude. It is, as I said before, an amazing resource. Perhaps an obvious comparison might be fruitful by way of conclusion, namely a comparison with Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*. A clear difference is that Russell provides a grand, coherent narrative, whereas Macdonald does not. But Macdonald's book has two distinct advantages. Firstly, Russell is notoriously unreliable, controversial, or at the very least partisan in his accounts of some thinkers (notably Leibniz, Kant, Nietzsche, and Bergson). Macdonald, on the other hand, draws on an impressive grasp of the best available scholarship on each of the figures he discusses, and usually presents the varying interpretations even-handedly. Secondly, Russell's approach is selective, concentrating on whatever contributes to his narrative. Macdonald's approach, on the other hand, is thoroughly ecumenical, leaving the reader to weave his or her own narratives from a wealth of collected material. So though Russell no doubt wrote a better book, it is Macdonald's that will sit on my coffee table for the foreseeable future whilst Russell's collects dust on the shelf.