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Conceptual Independence, Cartesian Intuitions, and Co-reference: A Defense of the Phenomenal Concept Strategy

Ronald Planer

In this paper I respond to a family of objections seeking to show that the phenomenal concept strategy must fail. Roughly, the strategy holds that antiphysicalist arguments, such as Kripke's modal argument and Jackson's knowledge argument, can be undercut by appealing to the unique features of phenomenal concepts. This idea is cashed out in various ways by different philosophers, but the thread uniting them is that phenomenal and physical concepts are very different. The main virtue of the strategy is that it allows one to accept antiphysicalist intuitions at face value without conceding that some form of property dualism is true. But before responding to any of the objections, let us look at the phenomenal concept strategy more closely. To this extent, I will be relying on the details of Loar, as put forth in his seminal work "Phenomenal States."

Phenomenal Concept Strategy (à la Loar)

Loar claims that we must distinguish between *concepts* and *properties*. Put simply, the distinction is this: a concept C of a property P is a way we have of thinking about P as being. For example, my concept of the property *being water* might include the idea that it is my favorite thing to drink. So, an agent's possessing a concept of some property requires certain psychological abilities on the part of that agent. From this, it follows that concepts are crucially tied to certain aspects of our cognitive system. In contrast, a property P is a way some subject might actually be, independent of the ways

Ronald Planer studies philosophy at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. He is primarily interested in the physical status of consciousness, intentionality, and reductive explanation. After graduating, he plans to apply for graduate study, where he will continue to focus on contemporary issues in the philosophy of mind.

that subject may be conceptualized by cognitive agents. For example, the property *being a liquid* would still be true of water even if there was no one around to conceive of water as being that way. The importance of this distinction is that it allows one to accept the antiphysicalist intuitions behind conceivability- and knowledge-based arguments at face value while holding on to a physicalist metaphysics; i.e., while such arguments show that phenomenal and physical *concepts* are independent, they do not show that phenomenal and physical *properties* are distinct (Loar 295).

More precisely, the essence of Loar's account can be grasped by noting two things about phenomenal concepts. First, they are recognitional[1] in nature. They belong to a larger class of concepts that we regularly employ in our everyday interactions with the external world. These concepts have the form of type-demonstratives, which means that they discriminate their referents as being instances of such-and-such a general kind. The following example will make this point clearer. Suppose you have recently observed a new kind of animal in your yard. You may lack a name for this animal, but you are able to identify future instances of the same animal, solely by virtue of its perceptual presentation, i.e., it's looking such-and-such to you. Your concept of the animal thus has the form "one of *that* type," but does not go beyond this in descriptive content. Crucially, as it regards the objections in this paper, your concept does not scientifically or even consciously analyze the kind it refers to. Thus, one may learn at a later time that there is a theoretical concept from biology which also refers to the same animal.

The second point about phenomenal concepts is that they lack contingent modes of presentation. (Hereafter, I will use the phrase "picks out its referent directly" in place of "lacks a contingent mode of presentation" for simplicity's sake.) Put roughly, a contingent mode of presentation is a way of conceiving of a referent which is inessential to that referent. In other words, the referent of the concept is determined by a property that the referent has only contingently. For example, one might conceive of Ben Franklin as the inventor of bifocals, but this property is not an essential property of Ben Franklin, for it would have been possible for Ben Franklin not to have invented bifocals. In fact, he might not have invented anything at all. This applies to phenomenal concepts, then, in the following way: Not surprisingly, to say that phenomenal concepts pick out their referents directly means that they pick out their referents by way of properties that those referents have necessarily. In this sense, phenomenal concepts are

[1] By "recognitional concept" I mean simply those concepts which we use to recognize objects, states, or properties. The important point about recognitional concepts, at least for our purposes, is that they discriminate the properties they pick out merely as "one of those." The rest of the paragraph fleshes out this idea.

unique among recognitional concepts, for the latter usually pick out their referents under contingent modes of presentation of the form "the cause of such-and-such an experience." Why think that phenomenal concepts differ in this respect? The reason to think this is primarily based on the intuition that anything appearing to be phenomenal consciousness just is phenomenal consciousness. Consider pain, for example. According to this intuition, anything having the feeling of pain just would be pain. It is absurd to think that some other phenomenal experience could have felt like pain. This suggests that pain has its phenomenal feel necessarily. So, if our concept "pain" picks out its referent as "the inner state with *that* feel," where "*that*" demonstratively refers to the qualitative feel of pain experiences, then the concept "pain" does not have a contingent mode of presentation but rather picks out its referent directly (i.e., by virtue of a property that belongs to the referent necessarily).

We are now in a position to more fully understand Loar's account. He puts it the following way:

> Phenomenal concepts are recognitional concepts that pick out certain internal properties; these are physical-functional properties of the brain. They are the concepts we deploy in our phenomenological reflections; and there is no good philosophical reason to deny that, odd though it may sound, the properties these conceptions *phenomenologically reveal* are physical-functional properties—but not of course under physical-functional descriptions . . . [Thus,] the property of *its being like this* to have a certain experience is nothing over and above a certain physical-functional property of the brain. (209)

What this means is that, while phenomenal and physical concepts[2] are independent (i.e., one cannot *a priori* infer phenomenal concepts from physical concepts or vice-versa), they nevertheless pick out the same properties (because they corefer) and have the same properties as reference-fixers (because they both pick out their referents directly). This is the view that I wish to defend in this paper.

[2] By "physical concept" I mean those concepts which reveal the scientific or "true" nature of an object, state, or property. As I explain below, physical concepts analyze the properties they pick out in terms of structure (i.e., physical organization and composition of parts) and function (the functional role played by that object, state, or property). This definition is meant to include concepts from physics (e.g., electron), chemistry (e.g., H20), and biology (e.g., DNA). However, the physical concepts we are here interested in are neuroscientific in nature, such as "c-fiber stimulation", "activation of pyramidal cells in V5 of the occipital lobe", and so on.

Conceptual Independence

First Objection: The strategy holds that phenomenal concepts are independent of physical concepts because the former are recognitional, and other (i.e., non-phenomenal) recognitional concepts are independent of physical concepts even when they both pick out the same property. However, other recognitional concepts are independent of their corresponding physical concepts precisely because the former pick out their referents under contingent modes of presentation. Thus, in accepting the intuition that phenomenal concepts pick out their referents directly, the strategy thus eliminates the support for the idea that phenomenal and physical concepts should be independent.[3]

Reply: The crucial assumption in this objection is that other recognitional concepts are independent from physical concepts for no other reason than that they pick out their referents under contingent modes of presentation, using a form such as "the cause of such-and-such an experience." Put differently, this same assumption entails that a recognitional concept's picking out its referent directly would make coreference with a physical concept *a priori* apparent. The support for this assumption comes from the idea that, in such a case, there would be nothing contingent in the connotations of the concepts involved to prevent one from inferring (without additional information) that they coreferred. It is thus concluded that, were phenomenal concepts to pick out their referents directly, coreferring phenomenal and physical concepts would not be independent.

To think this about recognitional concepts, though, is a mistake. It is true that other recognitional concepts have contingent modes of presentation, but this is not what explains their independence of physical concepts; at least this is not what the phenomenal concept strategy holds. Rather, according to the strategy, this is explained by a further feature of other recognitional concepts, namely, that they discriminate physical properties without scientifically analyzing them as such.[4] This point is so crucial that it deserves a special place in our discussion.

> *Conceptual Independence (CI) Thesis*: Where C is a recognitional concept and C* is a physical concept, and C and C* pick out the same property, C and C* will be conceptually independent because C picks out P without scientifically analyzing it, while C* picks out P precisely by scientifically analyzing it.

[3] This objection presupposes that physical concepts also pick out their referents directly.

[4] Loar defends this kind of thesis on page 299.

Thus, the importance of the point that phenomenal concepts are recognitional is that, in general, recognitional concepts do not scientifically analyze their referents. It is this point, not simply that other recognitional and physical concepts are independent, which is supposed to motivate the idea that phenomenal and physical concepts should likewise be independent. Of course, this reply is only as convincing as the *CI thesis* is plausible. So what reasons are there to think that the thesis is true? The following considerations yield strong support for it.

First, it seems to me that to deny the *CI thesis* is to miss the point of Loar's distinction between concepts and properties altogether. That is to say, if one holds that the only way a recognitional concept may be independent of its corresponding physical concept is for the former to pick out its referent under a contingent mode of presentation, one grossly underestimates the cognitive-psychological dimension of both recognitional and physical concepts. It is as if the psychological mechanisms to which these concepts are crucially tied—introspection-related and recognitional mechanisms in the case of recognitional concepts, verbal and theoretical mechanisms in the case of physical concepts—can have no effect on what one can and cannot *a priori* see. Given that some cognitive-psychological explanation of inference-making must exist, this line of thinking seems unsupported. It may be the case that a purely psychological factor *F* can keep one from *a priori* connecting phenomenal and physical concepts.

Moreover, there are positive reasons to think that just such an F exists. As mentioned above, recognitional concepts pick out their referents as being one of such-and-such a general kind, where recognition is mediated via perceptual experience. Beyond this, no conscious analysis, never mind scientific analysis, of the referent ever takes place. Physical concepts, on the other hand, pick out their referents precisely by scientifically analyzing them. The referent is analyzed in terms of structure *S* and function *F* where "*S*" and "*F*" have meaning only insofar as they figure into a physical-theoretical theory (e.g., physics, chemistry, biology, etc.). Thus, given the very different ways in which recognitional and physical concepts pick out their referents, it is implausible to think that one would ever be able to connect them *a priori*. Crucially, this is to be expected quite independently of whether or not the recognitional concept of the pair picks out its referent under a contingent mode of presentation.

Finally, in light of the foregoing considerations, think for a moment about what the objection assumes, namely, that if a recognitional concept picked out its referent directly, then coreference with a physical concept would be *a priori* apparent. However, for such coreference to be *a priori* apparent, it would seem that one would need to know all kinds of information in addition to that revealed by the concepts. For example, one would presumably

need to know that only a property with structure *S* and function *F* could be experienced as such-and-such. But knowing this would require knowing how the recognitional system works—at least in part—and knowing what physical features it is perceptually sensitive to. These are clearly facts that can be known only through empirical investigation.

These considerations speak against the assumption of the above objection and in favor of the *CI thesis*. As such, they provide the strategy with a convincing reply to the first objection. That other recognitional concepts have contingent modes of presentation is not the explanatorily relevant condition of their being independent of physical concepts. Rather, it is the fact that the two concepts pick out their referents in such radically different ways that explains their independence. Thus, we should expect recognitional and physical concepts to be independent, even when the recognitional concept of the pair picks out its referent directly (as in the case of a phenomenal concept).

Cartesian Intuitions

Second Objection: The strategy holds that modal intuitions over consciousness ("Cartesian intuitions," for short) may be unreliable because they involve the exercise of both a recognitional and a physical concept. But if that's the case, then it is simply the psychological distinctness of the concepts involved which explains why they might be unreliable. So, it seems that we should be equally skeptical of any modal intuition involving the exercise of distinct kinds of concepts. For example, one might make a similar argument regarding our intuition that it is metaphysically possible for a human being to jump a hundred feet high—a modal intuition which no one would want to deny. Thus, what is needed is an account of why Cartesian intuitions may be uniquely unreliable. In the absence of such an account, one is forced to conclude that many of our otherwise unproblematic modal intuitions may also be unreliable.[5]

Reply: It seems to me that a successful reply to this objection requires an affirmative answer to the following two questions:

> (Question 1): In the first place, can the psychological distinctness of recognitional and physical concepts really provide a sufficient explanation as to why Cartesian intuitions may be unreliable?
> (Question 2): If so, can this explanation be sufficiently qualified so that it does not entail that other plausible modal intuitions may also be unreliable?

[5] See Chalmers, D. (1999). "Materialism and the Metaphysics of Modality," page 486.

Below, I sketch how I think the strategy can do this. As a preliminary point, however, one must realize that no account at present can show with certainty that Cartesian intuitions are unreliable. This is because, for all we know, some form of property dualism or even substance dualism is true, in which case, no necessary connection between phenomenal and physical properties would exist; Cartesian intuitions would thus turn out to have been right all along. The logical possibility (here understood in terms of conceptual, not metaphysical possibility) of some form of dualism's being true shows that the strategy need only explain how Cartesian intuitions *may* be false. If we already knew whether it was possible or impossible for phenomenal and physical properties to come apart, there would be no debate over physicalism.

In my view, the real issue at stake in Question 1 is whether Cartesian intuitions provide the antiphysicalist with a sound argument against the strategy. The following argument shows that they do not: (1) Given that Cartesian intuitions involve the exercise of such radically different concepts, it is plausible to think that we would have such intuitions in all their robustness, even if there were a necessary connection between phenomenal and physical properties. Hence, (2) the fact that we have such intuitions cannot possibly show that phenomenal and physical concepts are not in fact necessarily connected. Cartesian intuitions thus have no force against the strategy.[6]

Now the plausibility of this argument obviously depends on the truth of (1). Fortunately for the strategy, there is every reason to think (1) is true. To show this, we need only slightly change the idea used to respond to the first objection. Ascending to the level of psychological mechanisms, it is hardly controversial to assume that different mechanisms underlie recognitional and physical concepts. For example, recognitional concepts involve introspection and recognition, while physical concepts involve verbal and theoretical mechanisms. So, given the deep psychological (and thus neural) differences between the mechanisms involved in the possession and application of the two kinds of concepts, there is every reason to think that, even if phenomenal and physical properties were identical, one would be able to imagine scenarios in which it would be correct to apply the concept "pain" but not the concept "c-fiber stimulation" or to apply the concept "c-fiber stimulation" but not the concept "pain." This follows solely from the psychological distinctness of the mechanisms involved. These considerations place (1), and thus the foregoing argument, on firm ground.

Turn now to Question 2. The issue here is whether our treatment of Cartesian intuitions can be qualified so that it does not also call into

[6] Hill and McLaughlin defend a similar thesis (449).

question other plausible modal intuitions. If, on the one hand, it is simply that Cartesian intuitions involve the exercise of psychologically distinct concepts, then the objection seems to succeed: the strategy will entail that we should be equally skeptical of many other plausible modal intuitions, such as it being metaphysically possible for a human being to jump 100 feet high, run a mile in less than a minute, or eat an entire elephant in one sitting.[7] This is the idea behind the objection. But if, on the other hand, there is a very unique kind of distinctness between the concepts which Cartesian intuitions involve, then the objection can be undercut.

Cartesian intuitions uniquely involve concepts and mechanisms which are distinct in a fundamentally different way from all other pairs of concepts. This difference is due to the fact that phenomenal concepts conceive directly of experiences (and are thus tied to the first-person perspective in a way that even other recognitional concepts are not), while physical concepts are essentially third-person or "public" in nature. This feature of Cartesian intuitions suffices to distinguish them from the other modal intuitions which are *prima facie* called into question by the objection.

One might object that it is still simply the distinctness of the concepts involved which explains why Cartesian intuitions may be unreliable, and thus it is arbitrary to limit our account to intuitions that involve the exercise of a first-person concept and a third-person concept. However, I think the following considerations show that this is not arbitrary on our part at all. First, it is hardly controversial to assume that there are deep psychological (and so, neural) differences between the mechanisms that make experiences possible and the mechanisms that make verbal and theoretical organization of information possible. This idea is supported by the fact that while the latter mechanisms are relatively well understood (for example, we can get a computer to perform these functions), the former remain largely, if not entirely, mysterious to us at present. Second, given these deep differences between first- and third-person mechanisms, it would be highly

[7] If it is simply the fact that Cartesian intuitions involve the exercise of psychologically distinct concepts which is to do the work of the reply, then the strategy faces the following problem. It seems to me that the only thing one can say is that recognitional concepts pick out their referents without scientifically analyzing them while physical concepts do just the opposite; or, ascending to the level of psychological mechanisms, that recognitional concepts involve introspection-related and recognitional mechanisms, while physical concepts involve verbal and theoretical mechanisms. But it is hard to see how this is any different than the psychological distinctness of other concepts, such as the concepts "human" and "jumping 100 ft. high," both at the level of concepts and at the level of mechanisms. It seems right that "human" and "jumping 100 ft. high" pick out their referents in different ways, and that they also involve different psychological mechanisms. This is evidenced by the fact that one may be adept at applying one of the concepts but not the other. So, if Cartesian intuitions may be unreliable for this reason, then it seems that we should be equally skeptical of the modal intuition "it is metaphysically possible for a human to jump 100 ft. high." Analogous remarks apply to any modal intuition involving distinct concepts.

tendentious to assume that such a difference cannot be anything over and above the manner in which other psychological mechanisms differ. One would need an additional argument to show that.

To sum up, in order to respond to the second objection, the strategy needs to do two things. First, it needs to show how the psychological distinctness of the concepts involved in Cartesian intuitions is a sufficient reason for thinking that such intuitions may be unreliable. This is accomplished by noting that even if phenomenal and physical properties were identical, we would still have Cartesian intuitions. So, the fact that we have such intuitions cannot possibly show that phenomenal and physical properties are distinct. Second, it must qualify its treatment of Cartesian intuitions so that other plausible modal intuitions are left intact. This can be done by distinguishing Cartesian intuitions from the rest on the grounds that the former uniquely involve a concept which is tied essentially to the first-person perspective as well as a concept which is tied essentially to the third-person perspective. Consequently, one can reject Cartesian intuitions while holding onto the idea that other modal intuitions, despite involving the exercise of distinct concepts, may well be reliable. Why should not this be a full explanation of why conceivability-based arguments fail to undercut the strategy?

Coreference[8]

Third Objection: Every other pair of concepts which (i) are independent and (ii) pick out their referents directly, refer to different properties. Phenomenal and physical concepts satisfy (i) and (ii). Thus, it is plausible to think that phenomenal and physical concepts also refer to different properties.

Reply: The idea behind this objection is not simply that there is no reason to think phenomenal and physical concepts corefer but rather that there are positive reasons to think that they do not corefer. As evidence, we can point to the entire class of other concepts. So far, we have been merely assuming that phenomenal and physical concepts corefer. This objection challenges that assumption. However, I think that it can be met in a straightforward way.

Note that the strategy only claims that it is possible for a phenomenal and a physical concept to satisfy (i) and (ii) while still picking out the same property. As such, the fact that other pairs of concepts are apparently unable to do this may not constitute a threat to the strategy. For example, it may

[8] For both objections in this section, see Chalmers, D. (1999), page 488.

be the case that other pairs of concepts differ in some crucial respect from pairs of phenomenal and physical concepts such that a lack of coreference of the former does not generalize to the latter. That is precisely what I shall argue.

This objection appeals to the following principle:

> *Coreference Principle*: For any pair of concepts C and C*, if C and C* are (i) independent and (ii) both pick out their referent directly, then they do not corefer.

It is true that all other concepts obey this principle. However, the problem with using it to infer that phenomenal and physical concepts do not corefer is this: the *coreference principle* is supported by pairs of concepts in which both concepts are physical or both are phenomenal.[9] For any pair of physical concepts, if they are independent and both pick out their referent directly, it follows that the properties they refer to are distinct. Analogous remarks apply to pairs of phenomenal concepts. But this is precisely because coreference with another physical (or phenomenal) concept would be *a priori* apparent under such circumstances, and so the concepts would not be independent. This crucial point follows from the fact that, when both concepts are physical or when both are phenomenal, (a) there is nothing contingent in the connotations of the concepts to prevent coreference with the other concept from being *a priori* apparent, and also (b) there are no deep differences in the psychological mechanisms involved in the reference-fixing of the two concepts to prevent coreference with the other concept from being *a priori* apparent (because both concepts are of the same kind). Thus, in order for the objection to have any force against the strategy, it must prove that two psychologically distinct concepts cannot simultaneously satisfy (i) and (ii) while coreferring. At most, the objection establishes that no two concepts from the same psychological category can simultaneously satisfy (i) and (ii) while coreferring. But that is not enough to undercut the strategy.

My idea here is of course very different from the antiphysicalist assumption mentioned in response to the first objection, namely, that if a recognitional concept picked out its referent directly, then coreference with a physical concept would be *a priori* apparent. This assumption is flawed precisely because it overlooks the possibility of there being a purely psychological explanation in terms of the distinctness of concepts/mechanisms as to why one may be unable to connect the concepts *a priori*, despite having the same property as reference-fixer. But when both concepts are physical

[9] This is due to the fact that these two kinds of concepts are the only concepts that pick out their referents directly, and so they are the only concepts that meet (ii).

or when both are phenomenal, there is nothing psychological to "get in the way," and so the notion that coreference with another concept will be *a priori* apparent is plausible. In sum, the feature of other pairs of concepts which grounds the *coreference principle* is absent from pairs in which one concept is phenomenal and the other is physical; pairs of the latter type are just those pairs in which a purely psychological explanation may be in order. Thus, there is no reason to think that the coreference principle should apply to phenomenal and physical concepts.

Fourth Objection: The strategy holds that phenomenal and physical concepts corefer because phenomenal concepts are recognitional, and in general, other recognitional concepts corefer with physical concepts. However, the coreference of other recognitional and physical concepts is explained by the recognitional concept of the pair's picking out its referent under a contingent mode of presentation, using a form such as "the cause of such-and-such an experience." Thus, since phenomenal concepts pick out their referents directly, there is no reason to think that they corefer with physical concepts.

Reply: It is objected that nothing in the strategy justifies the idea that phenomenal concepts pick out physical properties. Instead, the strategy merely assumes that because other recognitional concepts do this, so do phenomenal concepts. The problem with this line of thinking is that other recognitional concepts pick out their referents using an experience which is related to the referent only contingently. As such, there is no need to claim that the property picked out is necessarily connected with that experience. Thus, in order to justify the idea that phenomenal concepts—which pick out their referents using an experience, a phenomenal feel, that is said to belong to the referent necessarily—can corefer with physical concepts, support must come from elsewhere; other recognitional concepts cannot help.

That having been said, it is clear that there is nothing in principle to prevent one from holding that a physical-functional property of the brain (e.g., c-fiber stimulation) may be identical with a phenomenal feeling (e.g., the feel of pain). If certain physical properties were like this, then they would be connected with phenomenal modes of presentation (e.g., feeling like *this*) necessarily, and thus phenomenal and physical concepts would corefer, despite their independence and despite the fact that both pick out their referents directly. As such, coreference of this kind cannot be ruled out *a priori*.

Granting this, it seems that there are just two reasons one may have for thinking that physical properties cannot be identical with phenomenal feels.[10] First, there are conceivability-based arguments, such as the conceivability of zombies and of disembodied consciousness. However, in my reply to the second objection, I already addressed such arguments, showing that they cannot establish that phenomenal and physical properties are distinct. Hence, such arguments cannot here provide the objection with the strength it needs to go through. Second, there are arguments based on the explanatory gap. At first blush, these arguments seem more convincing, but I think that they ultimately fail for the same reason that conceivability-arguments fail: at most, explanatory gap arguments establish that there is a deep gap between phenomenal and physical concepts, not properties. Let us look more closely at this idea.

Arguments based on the explanatory gap have the following form: no amount of structural or functional information about physical property *P* can explain why *P* is identical with a phenomenal feel of type *Q*. Moreover, no amount of structural or functional information about *P* can explain why there is something that it is like to have or undergo *P* at all. Therefore, phenomenal and physical properties are distinct.

The problem with using such arguments against the strategy is this: what is being objected to is the lack of an explanation as to why a physical property *P* may be identical with a phenomenal feel, yet what the antiphysicalist really wants is an account of *P* which conceptually entails phenomenal feel *Q*. But to require such an explanation is to beg the question against the strategy, for the strategy takes off from the intuition that no such explanation is possible, given that phenomenal and physical concepts are so psychologically different. Hence, the fact that the strategy does not offer an explanation of this nature cannot possibly be held against it.

There is a strong tendency to assume that the strategy is thus committed to phenomenal-physical identities forever remaining mysterious. That is to say, because of the deep differences between phenomenal and physical concepts, we will never know why c-fiber stimulation, for example, had the phenomenological feel of pain, or even why there is something that it is like to undergo c-fiber stimulation at all. One will have to merely accept as a primitive fact that phenomenal concepts pick out physical properties. Thus, it may seem tendentious to suppose that phenomenal and physical properties are truly identical. In the least, phenomenal-physical identities

[10] There are also knowledge-based arguments. However, because they stand or fall with conceivability arguments, I do not give specific attention to them here. In other words, once one has explained why P & ~Q is conceivable, one has also explained why the conditional "If P, then Q," is *a posteriori*, and thus how it is possible to know all the physical facts about someone without knowing any of the phenomenal facts.

will be fundamentally different from all other *a posteriori* identities about which there is no corresponding mystery.

As I see it, there are roughly two ways one may try to respond to this kind of objection to the strategy. The first is to argue that even though there is *now* no explanation of phenomenal-physical identities such that having structure *S* and function *F* is seen to suffice for phenomenal consciousness, perhaps an explanation will one day emerge. That is to say, perhaps we are unable at present to see why phenomenal and physical properties are identical, but as we begin to understand consciousness better, this relation will become clear.[11] This line of thinking is attractive, but unfortunately is not open to the strategy. It responds to explanatory gap arguments by claiming that we do not yet possess or fully possess the necessary concepts and schemas to fully understand consciousness but that, if we did, we would be able to see why having structure *S* and function *F* suffices for phenomenal consciousness. For, what other form might an explanation take if it is to show how phenomenal and physical properties are identical or necessarily related? The strategy I have been defending, on the other hand, claims that even if one fully possessed both phenomenal and physical concepts, no connection would be apparent; it would still seem as though phenomenal properties may have existed independently of physical properties. Thus, this line of response is counterproductive to the strategy.

Fortunately, there is another way to respond. One may simply bite the bullet, accepting that phenomenal-physical identities will have a fundamentally different epistemology than other *a posteriori* identities, but argue that we should expect this. For example, given our conceptual system, perhaps we should expect phenomenal-physical identities to remain mysterious and contingent-seeming. We may even suppose that a completed cognitive psychology will one day explain why phenomenal-physical identities had to have precisely this mysteriousness about them (as compared with other *a posteriori* identities). We have already said that phenomenal concepts are unique in that they are the only recognitional concept that picks out its referents directly, as opposed to having some experience as a contingent mode of presentation. Given the singular status of phenomenal concepts, then, why should not a special explanation be in order? Surely an additional argument would be needed to show why a special explanation is unacceptable.

Though this line of thinking may be seen as conceding something to the antiphysicalist, I think that it pays only a small price, for what the strategy gives up is simply entailment of the phenomenal by the physical at

[11] A similar view is defended by Stoljar. He calls it the "missing concept strategy". See Stoljar, D. (2005). "Physicalism and Phenomenal Concepts", page 489.

the level of concepts, not at the level of properties. If the uniqueness of phenomenal concepts can be motivated, which it obviously can, then it seems that there is good reason to accept a special explanation (or really a lack thereof) of phenomenal-physical identities. So in short, the strategy can accept arguments based on the explanatory gap at face value while denying that they establish a corresponding ontological gap.

To sum up, I have argued that there is nothing incoherent in the notion of a physical property's being identical with a phenomenal feel. Additionally, I have argued that the only positive reasons in favor of rejecting such identities can be undercut: conceivability-based and explanatory gap arguments can be accepted at the cost of treating phenomenal-physical identities somewhat epistemically differently than other *a posteriori* identities. Since there are certainly good reasons for doing so, this should not be seen as a weakness in the strategy.

Conclusion

In this paper I responded to a family of objections seeking to show that the phenomenal concept strategy must fail. These objections represent what I take to be a more or less exhaustive list of the toughest problems for the strategy to overcome. Some of these objections misunderstand the strategy in some crucial respect. Others fail to fully appreciate the resources at the strategy's disposal. None of them actually succeed in undermining the strategy. Needless to say, there are slight variations on some of these objections that I am unable to consider here; however, I am confident that my replies can be reformulated to meet these objections as well. For now, then, the strategy remains on firm ground.

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