

pretty much lost the thread of the chapter, which is titled "Creation." Repeating this exercise 17 times makes for a bumpy read.

There is no question that the information added to the new edition of *The Left Hand of Creation* makes it a more complete and useful book than in its original edition. The trade-off is that the manner in which this information is presented may discourage casual readers from learning more about a fascinating subject that Barrow and Silk are especially adept at explaining.

James Wilson

Editorial Director, Business Technology News Services
JIMWILS@AOL.COM

The Rediscovery of Mind by John Searle. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992, xv +270 pp., \$12.95 (paper), ISBN 0-262-69154-x

This is an interesting, provocative, and well written book by one of America's well-known and highly regarded philosophers. It asserts the existence of consciousness and mental states as a physical properties or biological properties, caused by the brain but irreducible to other properties of the brain. As such, consciousness and other mental states are subjective and non-computational. Along the way, it also argues for the falsity of both classical mind-body dualism and traditional materialism. For Searle, if you think that when it comes to minds one must be either a dualist or a materialist, you are quite mistaken, and if you lean more to functionalism or a materialism that construes mental activities on a computational model, you don't need refutation, you need help. (p. 9) There is much to be learned here and virtually everybody's ox gets gored, because virtually everybody believes in either materialism or some form of dualism.

The Rediscovery of Mind comes in three parts. The first three chapters (Part One) offer pointed criticisms of the major views in philosophy of mind. Chapters four through eight (Part Two) sketch an account of consciousness as part of a physicalist's world view. And chapters nine and ten (Part Three) confront the empirical study of the mind, and offer a trenchant critique of cognitive science in general along with some helpful pointers on how the mind should be studied. Whether one agrees or disagrees with what Searle has argued in various places (and this reviewer happens to agree with Searle that most of the philosophy of mind has been wrong-headed for too long, and that traditional materialism, as Searle describes it, is straight up false in any of its presentations), the book is genuinely informative of the current status of the philosophy of mind and provides remarkable insights into the core arguments for the major positions, although occasionally, as we shall see, in crucial places the opposition gets the strawman.

As others have noted, the book is mainly about the nature of consciousness and argues for three main theses. The first is the rejection of both traditional

mind-body dualism of any type and traditional materialism. The second is the emergence of both mental states as neurophysiological features of the brain caused by the brain, and the subjectivity of consciousness. The third is the falsity of the computational theory of the mind.

This book has been reviewed by various people some of whom (Ned Block, 1992, and John Heil, 1994) have thought Searle's biological naturalism an outstanding and brilliant contribution to philosophy of mind. Others have found it seriously flawed (Dennett, 1993, and Beloff, 1994), and some have been willing to accept part of the book (especially the falsity of strong AI and the irreducibility of consciousness to brain states) while lamenting the basic claim of the book that the subjectivity and irreducibility of consciousness does not imply mind-body dualism rather than a biological naturalism wherein mental states are biological states, or higher order physical features, emerging from brain states but not reducible to an analysis of material states. Such a position he describes as physicalism and dualism, and while traditional materialism is false, and Cartesian dualism is false, his form of dualism is supposedly a defensible form of physicalism that implies neither neither classical materialism nor any form of Cartesian dualism.

In asserting the latter he says, for example,

At the most extreme, some philosophers are reluctant to admit the existence of consciousness because they fail to see that the *mental* state of consciousness is just an ordinary biological, that is *physical*, feature of the brain. Exasperatingly, they are aided in this error by those philosophers who cheerfully acknowledge the existence of consciousness, and in so doing, suppose they must be asserting the existence of something non-physical. (p. 13)

For Searle, materialism is false, dualism is false, but biological naturalism is true:

Thus we are supposed to believe that if something is mental it cannot be physical, that if it is a matter of spirit, it cannot be a matter of matter, or if it is immaterial it cannot be material.... But these views seem to me obviously false, given everything we know about neurobiology. The brain causes certain "mental" phenomena, such as conscious mental states, and these conscious mental states are simply higher level features of the brain. Consciousness is a higher level or emergent property of the brain in the utterly harmless sense of "higher-level" or "emergent" in which "solidity" is a higher level emergent property of H₂O molecules when they are, roughly speaking, rolling around on each other (water). *Consciousness is a mental and therefore a physical property of the brain in the sense in which liquidity is a property of systems of molecules... the fact that a feature is mental does not imply that it is not physical; the fact that a feature is physical does not imply that it is not mental. [emphasis added].... When I say that consciousness is a higher level physical feature of the brain, the temptation is to hear that as meaning physical-as-opposed-to-mental, as meaning that consciousness should be described only in objectively behavioral or neurophysiological terms. But what I really mean is that consciousness, qua mental, qua subjective, qua qualitative, is physical*

because mental. [emphasis added]. *All of which shows, I believe, the inadequacy of the traditional vocabulary.*" (p. 15)

My own view is that even though Searle may argue convincingly for the irreducibility and subjectivity of consciousness and mental states (along with the falsity of strong AI) in the latter part of the book, there is something hopelessly confused and confusing about the major claim of the book that is an attempt to establish a position which is neither dualism nor materialism. Let me explain.

As is readily apparent from the sections quoted above, the major claim of the book is that

- a. mental states and consciousness exist and are irreducible to brain states;
- b. mental states are higher-level physical, or biological, states without being material states of the brain (because materialism is false) and they emerge from brain states from which they are distinct because irreducible;
- c. although irreducible to brain states, the existence of mental states and consciousness implies no form of traditional substance or property dualism (because such dualisms are false); and
- d. consciousness and other mental states, qua mental, are physical and biological because mental (p. 15 as in the quote above).

Searle seems so intent on refuting both traditional materialism (especially the sort implied by strong AI) and mind-body dualism, that he is compelled to claim that his answer here is a middle path between the two and that therefore the history of the mind-body dispute must root in a fundamental mistake, that is, the mistake of thinking that either materialism is true or mind-body dualism is true. He assumes, as we do, for the sake of assumption, that idealistic or Spinozistic monism is not true.

Interestingly, Searle classifies himself as a thoroughgoing materialist but rejects traditional materialism insofar as traditional materialism simply asserts that mental events cannot be physical events. He also classifies himself as a dualist, but not a traditionalist, because mental events are not reducible (even as physical features of the brain) to other features of the brain.

But Searle's alleged mediating third position between dualism and materialism is indefensible and must reduce to one or the other. After all, are biological states not material states of the system? Searle asserts that mental states as biological states are physical states rather than material states of the brain, but never defines the difference between the physical and the material or justifies asserting the alleged difference in any way that would make the position he adopts as an alternative to materialism comprehensible. He wants mental states to be physical states but they do not reduce to states of the brain even

though they are physical features of the brain and caused by them. How can this be possible? And if biological states are material states, would not mental states and consciousness then reduce straightforwardly to material states of the brain? He denies as much because materialism, he believes, is false. But how can that reduction be avoided as long as mental events are construed as higher-order physical or biological states (or features) emerging from, and caused by brain states?

Moreover, if consciousness or mental states are irreducible to material or brain states, as Searle alleges, then those states cannot be *identical* with material states; but Searle says consciousness and other mental states "*are* physical and physical because mental" (p. 15). What can this latter claim mean? Some traditional materialists (non-eliminative materialists) are given to saying that being in a particular state of consciousness just is being in a particular brain state, and that claim makes sense because it is asserting a reductive identity to brain states and seeks to eliminate belief in mental states as irreducible to brain states. But this move is not open to Searle because he has argued that all forms of materialism are false (because they leave out consciousness), although to be sure he never considers carefully non-eliminative materialism before refuting the position of the eliminative materialist.

Searle asserts repeatedly that his position is superior because it avoids the mistaken belief that either materialism is true or some form of dualism is true; and it bothers him that some have called him a property dualist while others have claimed he is a materialist. (p. 249, note 11)

The simple truth of the matter, however, is that mental states, understood as in some basic way distinct from and irreducible to physical or material events, either exist or they do not. If they do, then some form of mind-body dualism must be true, and materialism false; if they do not, then some form of traditional materialism must be true. Try as he may, Searle cannot *show*, rather than simply assert, that this disjunct is false; and that is the justification for thinking traditionally that one must be either a materialist in some way or a dualist in some way.

But perhaps Searle has a way out of this disjunct by granting its truth and asserting that his view is a materialism to be distinguished from traditional materialism which asserts that mental events cannot be material events? This would be to say that he is a materialist who asserts the view that mental events simply are material events... in the sense in which it is false to assert that there are mental events as distinct from physical events (p. 50). But if that is all, it amounts to then there is nothing new here. Truth to tell, non-eliminative materialists, for example, do not deny the experience of consciousness or the experience of having a desire or feeling thirst; rather they say that being in such a state is simply being in a particular brain state alternatively well described (for the purposes of empirical adequacy) purely in the language of neurophysiology. Sometimes it is difficult to avoid feeling that that is all Searle really wants to say, but then again that has already been said, frequently. The only way he

could have a mediating position which is a superior form of materialism is to misclassify all forms of traditional materialism under the rubric of asserting that people never feel pain or have thirst or are conscious.

Finally it is disturbingly humorous that Searle asserts the falsity of any form of Cartesian dualism on the grounds that most philosophers do not take it seriously (because it conflicts with everything we know about neurophysiology), and that it is obviously true that if some form of Cartesian dualism were true then it would entail spiritualism. Besides, on his view, the only justification one could have for any form of dualism would be based on some form of religious belief. This claim has also been discussed by John Beloff in his recent negative review of Searle's book (JSE, Winter 1994, p. 515).

Somebody should send Searle a copy of Stevenson's *Children Who Remember Previous Lives*, along with a good discussion on what counts for a claim being a good scientific claim. Searle's kind of ignorance marshalled against any form of Cartesian dualism is also disturbing because it shows that the level of critical review prior to publication is defective even in otherwise good presses that end up preaching to the choir boys.

Dennett's review of this book was thought to be needlessly non-collegial; and that may be true. Even so, although some have claimed that Searle is absolutely right in most of what he says, and although others have claimed that this is a brilliant work in philosophy of mind, this reviewer feels the same frustration Dennett must have felt while reading the first chapter. If only Searle had begun by defining what he meant by "mental", "material", "physical" and "consciousness", then his claims that there must be a third way between dualism (which he fears is unscientific and leads to spiritualism) and materialism (which he has good reasons to think false), would have dissolved and forced a movement in the direction of classical dualism. The failure here is simply a matter of bad philosophical methodology coupled with unusually strong antecedent bias.

Robert Almeder

Dept. of Philosophy, Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303

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