ROCZNIKI FILOZOFICZNE
Tom LXXII, numer 4 – 2024
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18290/rf24724.15

VITOR MANUEL DINIS PEREIRA

NAGEL'S EXPLANATION OF THE ILLUSION OF CONTINGENCY

INTRODUCTION

The explanation of the illusion of contingency in the case of psychophysical identities of types also has advocates in literature. For example, Nagel argues that there are the following two explanations: that of the two types of imagination ([1974] 1980, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?") and that of the tripartite essence of pain or of the fixers of the reference (1998, "Conceiving the Impossible and the Mind-Body Problem"; 2002, "The Psychophysical Nexus"). Hill (1997, "Imaginability, Conceivability, Possibility and the Mind-Body Problem"), an essay to which Nagel refers in a note both in "Conceiving the Impossible and the Mind-Body Problem" (350) and in "The Psychophysical Nexus (218), in turn, defends Nagel's two types of imagination.

If, in the case of psychophysical identities of types, an explanation for the illusion of contingency is available analogous to that of the theory identities, then, for example, it is explained that the identity of pain with C-fiber stimulation not only seems contingent but is indeed necessary.

Before we go to Nagel's two explanations, we want to make some considerations about Hill's explanation. In the third section of his essay, he distinguishes intuitions about the separability of the mental and the physical due to our ability to imagine possible situations from intuitions due to our ability to conceive of these same situations. This distinction is that the former are qualitative, but the latter are conceptual or propositional. Hill then defends the explanation that we are going to summarise as follows.

VITOR MANUEL DINIS PEREIRA, MA in Philosophy, University of Lisbon; correspondence address: Rua Cláudio Nunes, 56,2 DTO 1500-177 Lisboa, Portugal; email: crebillonfils@gmail.com; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8430-5674.

Since the conditions typically justifying the attribution of "sensory" (HILL 1997, 73) concepts differ from the conditions that typically justify the assignment of neurophysiological or neuroscientific concepts, nothing *a priori* binds them ("even if, as type-materialism maintains, sensory concepts coincide with certain neuroscientific concepts in point of denotation", 73–74). Since sensory concepts are not linked *a priori* to neurophysiological concepts, it is consistent to assign one of the concepts and not the other. For example, *a priori*, the assignment of the concept of pain is consistent with the non-attribution of the C-fiber stimulation concept :"If there are no substantive a priori ties between two concepts, then it is possible to conjoin either of the concepts with the negation of the other without producing an inconsistency. That is to say, it is possible to use the concepts to conceive coherently of situations (i.e., to construct internally coherent descriptions that purport to represent situations) in which there are particulars that fall under one of the concepts but do not fall under the other concept" (75).

So, unless we have any *a posteriori* reason to think that it is impossible to assign one and not the other, we believe *a priori* that one can be assigned and not the other.

Usually, we have no reason *a posteriori* to think that it is impossible for pain to occur without C-fibers stimulation (and vice versa). Therefore, it is possible for pain to occur without such a stimulation (and vice versa). But this explanation of the apparent conceivability of pain without the co-occurring physical state of the brain (and vice versa) is not evidence of the possibility of pain without the co-occurring physical state of the brain (and vice versa). Because, for Hill, by the mechanism he just described, under normal circumstances, it seems that we conceive of numerous impossibilities; for example, that of water not being H_2O, that of heat not being the mean movement of the molecules, and that of gold not being the element of atomic weight 79—but, water is H_2O, heat is the average movement of molecules, and gold is the atomic weight element 79. And by analogy, pain is the stimulation of C-fibers. It seems that it is possible to have one without the other: water without H_2O, average heat without motion of molecules, gold without atomic weight 79, and, by analogy, the mental without the physical, but this possibility is merely apparent. It seems conceptually possible, but it is not possible.

Gordon Barnes (2002) objects, on the one hand, that Hill's explanation of the apparent psychophysical contingency is nothing more than a mere

insistence on a characteristic of our concepts of sensations. Hill, according to Barnes, merely insists on the following characteristic of our concepts for sensations: the conditions that justify their attribution typically coincide with the conditions of truth of the attribution of these concepts to ourselves. And, on the other hand, it objects that Hill's explanation of the apparent psychophysical contingency tacitly assumes a principle such as the following, which Barnes calls the "Principle of Explanatory Defeat" (328): if the possibility of a situation S is the best explanation for the conceptibility of S, then the conceivability of S is evidence for the possibilities of S. Otherwise, if the possibility of S is not the best explanation for the conceivability of S, the conceptibility of S is not evidence for S's possibility. In other words, according to this principle, the conceptibility of a situation S is supposed to be evidence for its possibility, but if we find that the best explanation for the conceivability of S does not imply the possibilities of S, then the concept of S is defeated as evidence for S's possibility. What, to be true, Barnes argues, results in such a generalisation that whatever we conceive about sensory states is defeated as evidence for their possibility, a radical modal scepticism that for Barnes is unacceptable. Hill's (1997) answer, already given in the fifth section of his essay, is that only a very narrow class of intuitions is beaten: only those which are called "*a posteriori modal intuitions*" (82) are beaten. These tend to be incorrectly formed by us in the absence of relevant scientific information, but it does not follow that we are unable to form them correctly (Hill observes on page 85, note 16, that modal scepticism "deserves a great deal more attention than I am to give it in a paper that is primarily concerned with other matters").

But we can defend Hill's explanation in the following way. On the one hand, the conditions for the assignment of sensory concepts are different from the conditions that typically justify the assignment of neurophysiological or neuroscientific concepts. The type of epistemic access involved —pain in one case and C-fiber stimulation in the other—is not the same. They differ conceptually from each other in that the first, as McGinn (1996) says, contains its essence and the second does not (see further the second of Nagel's explanations). But a difference in concepts does not result in a difference in properties. The conditions typically justifying the assignment of concepts may differ epistemologically, but it does not follow that the property of being a pain is not the property of stimulation of C-fibers. An epistemic difference does not follow an ontological difference. The property is the same: pain is the stimulation of C-fibers, but its concepts

and, therefore, the conditions that typically justify its assignment are different. The conditions that typically justify the attribution of sensory concepts depend on the sensations that we have, but the conditions that typically justify the assignment of neurophysiological or neuroscientific concepts depend on the theories we have. From what is possible in terms of epistemic access, nothing can be inferred as to what is ontologically possible.

On the other hand, in cases such as that of water without H_2O (and heat without average motion of molecules gold without atomic weight 79), Hill will say, we usually have reasons a posteriori to think that it is impossible for one to occur without the other. Epistemologically, Hill will also say, we did not always have these reasons a posteriori. But it does not follow that the blank spaces, respectively, water = _____, heat = _____, and gold = _____, are to be filled anyway. They're not. Similarly, in the case of pain = _____, the blank space is also not to be filled anyway. If we currently do not have, in relation to the identity of pain with C-fiber stimulation, *a posteriori* reasons to think that it is impossible for one to occur without the other (see further the second of Nagel's explanations), this is not problematic because one thing is the way through which we know reality, or we represent it, and another thing is what is reality.

Having made these observations about Hill's explanation, let us now move on to Nagel's two explanations. We start with the two types of imagination and leave for later, after the section devoted to Kripke and descriptivism, that of the tripartite essence of pain or the fixers of reference. This explanation develops as follows.

A theory that explains how the mind-brain relationship is necessary still leaves us, according to Nagel, with the problem raised by Kripke (1980) of explaining why this relationship seems contingent. For McGinn (1999), given the so-called Cognitive Closure thesis, according to which human cognitive abilities are not fit to solve a problem such as that of mind–body, the discovery of a relationship of this type is beyond human cognitive abilities.

1. TWO TYPES OF IMAGINATION

Nagel's explanation is that when we imagine something representing it for ourselves, we can do it in two distinct ways: either empathically (as far

as symbolic imagination is concerned, Nagel excludes it from its considerations) or perceptually. If we empathically imagine something (for example, the occurrence of a mental state), what happens is that we are in a conscious state analogous to the thing itself (it seems that the mental state is not a certain physical state of the brain, but they may well be identical). The analogy is with the thing itself. If, at the same time, we perceive a thing perceptually (for example, the non-occurrence of a certain physical state of the brain), what happens is that we are in a conscious state analogous to the one we would be in if we actually perceived that thing (but the physical brain state is identical to the mental state). The analogy is with the state of consciousness in which we would be if we really perceived that thing.

When we imagine a mental state without the physical state of the brain associated with it, we imagine that this physical state does not occur, but it actually does. If it seems to us the opposite, it is because what we imagine in relation to the mental state we imagine empathically, and what we think in connection with the physical state we imagine perceptually.

A mental state is identical to a certain physical state of the brain, but if we imagine the mental state without the physical state, our imagination of the mental state is different from our imagination of the physical state of the brain. From this it does not follow that the mental condition is not identical with the physical condition of the brain.

The imagination of phenomenological characteristics (see further the second of Nagel's explanations) is empathic, but the imagination of physical and functional characteristics is perceptual. It seems that we can imagine the phenomenological state without the physical and functional states, but from the two types of imagination it does not follow that phenomenological states and physical and functional states will not be identical.

When we imagine a mental state without the physical state of the brain co-occurring with it we imagine that this physical state does not occur but is actually occurring. If it seems the opposite, it is because what we imagine in relation to the mental state we imagine empathically, and what we imagine in relation to the physical state we imagine perceptually. In other words, imagining a mental state contrasts with imagining a physical state in that the imagination of a mental state is empathy and the imagination of a physical state is perceptual. Imagining one's perception is empathy for his mental state and perceptual of his perception.

However, it is impossible that my brain will be directly involved in my act of empathetically imagining the mental state of tasting chocolate (for example) and not be in the co-occurring physical state.

The illusion of contingency of the psychophysical type-type or token-token identities is explained by the false inference of a difference in the way of imagining the mental state without the physical state of the brain to a difference between the mental state and the physical state of the brain.

A mental state is identical to a certain physical state of the brain. However, it seems possible that the mental state is not identical to the physical state of the brain in question because, as Nagel explains, the state in which we are when we imagine the mental condition (empathically) is dissociated from the state we are in when we think of the non-occurrence of the physical brain state (perceptively) that is associated with that mental state (and vice versa).

According to Nagel, the illusion of contingency of psychophysical identities, type-type or exemplary, is explained by two types of imagination: that of mental characteristics is empathic, but that of physical features is perceptual.

It seems that we can imagine the mental state without the physical state of the brain, but from the distinction between the two ways of imagining the same situation, one empathically and another perceptually, it does not follow that mental states and physical states in the brain are not identical.

The types of imagination are distinct, but it does not follow that mental types, such as the property of being a pain, are different from the associated physical types of the brain, like the property of being a stimulation of the C-fibers.

If we empathically imagine the mental properties of the occurring state, like that of being a pain, it leads us mentally to a state resembling that state. If, at the same time, we perceive perceptually the physical properties of this occurring state, such as the property of being a stimulation of C-fibers, then it seems that it is possible for the mental state of pain to occur without the physical state of the brain.

But, of the types of imagination about this state being distinct and independent, it does not follow that the pain $\neq$ stimulation of C-fibers. And if the properties are one and the same, then when one is exemplified, the other is also. And this is different, irrespective of what we imagine about that state.

If we perceive the physical state of the brain, its non-occurrence is illusory. This non-occurrence of the physical state of the brain is imagined. What we imagine is that the physical state of the brain does not occur, but that the brain's physical state itself occurs.

If the imagination of the mental characteristics is empathic and the imagination of the physical characteristics is perceptual, then it seems that we are in a position to imagine a mental state without the physical state of the brain (and vice-versa). But if we are able to imagine a mental state without the physical state of the brain associated with it, it does not imply that the mental state is not identical to that of the physical brain.

The relationship between mental and physical states of the brain is necessary, but it seems contingent because the types of imagination about each of these states are distinct and independent. For example, the statement "pain = C-fiber stimulation", if it is a statement of true identity, is necessary (if "a = b", in which "a" and "b" are different names of the same object, "a = b" is a necessary truth, true in all possible worlds) but seems contingent because what we imagine in relation to that state is distinct and independent.

We are empathically in a state similar to the pain itself (but the mental state we are in is not pain; it resembles it mentally), and perceptually, we are similar to that in which we would be if we actually perceived a C-fiber stimulation (but our physical state of the brain is not a stimulation of the C-fibres; it is physically similar to it).

If Nagel imagines the same situation in two ways, Kripke imagines two different situations. What is crucial in Nagel's strategy to explain the illusion of contingency of type-type or token-token identities (his method, according to Nagel, can only be used to imagine mental states or events, ours or others), is the distinction between these two ways of imagining *the same situation* (one empathically and the other perceptually). The situation of a mental state without the physical state of the brain that is associated with it is imagined in two ways, but the mental state is identical to that of the physical brain.

But, and the contrast is suggested by Hughes (2004, in other terms), what is crucial in Kripke's strategy to explain the illusion of contingency of theoretical identities (and to the alleged failure of the identity-type typical materialist strategy) is the distinction between the following *two situation*s, one possible and another impossible:

1. The situation in which a colourless, transparent, drinkable liquid in which you take a bath is not water (= H_2O) is a possible situation (as opposed to the case of pain), but

2. The situation in which water is not H_2O is an impossible situation (analogously to the case of pain).

The situation in which it seems possible that water is not H_2O is not imagined in two ways, but it is an epistemic situation qualitatively identical to the situation where a colourless, transparent, drinkable liquid in which you take a bath is not water (= H_2O): this situation is possible but different from the situation in which water isn't H_2O, which is impossible.

But, in addition to the strategy, so to speak, of the two types of imagination, Nagel argues that there is still another strategy available to explain the illusion of contingency of type-type or token-token identities. The strategy of the tripartite essence of pain, or the fixers of the reference, is also available. In short, for Kripke, the reference to a term like "water" is fixed by contingent characteristics of the water (it is a colourless, transparent, drinkable liquid, in which one takes a bath, etc.), but for Nagel, the references to a term like "water", pre-scientifically, are fixed not only by these contingent properties but also by manifest non-contingent characteristics of water (its density, liquidity, its propensity to freeze or evaporate under certain conditions). Before, however, we move to the second of Nagel's explanations of the illusion of contingency of psychophysical identities of types, we need to say something about Kripke and descriptivism.

2. KRIPKE AND DESCRIPTIVISM

Kripke's discussion of descriptivism (there are variants of descriptivism, such as the disjunctive variant or the variant of descriptive aggregates, in addition to the classic variant with a single description, but here we can ignore this type of distinction) occupies most of *Naming and Necessity*, but here we are only interested in the application of what results from it to the discussion of the identitative materialism of types (in the present paper).

Kripke argues that theoretical identities are necessary but seem contingent, and that alleged psychophysical identities of types are not in fact identities. In line with Kripke's strategy for explaining the contingency

illusion of theoretical identities (and for the alleged failure of the type-type identitative materialist strategy), while an explanation is available for the illusion of contingency in the case of theoretical identities, in the case of alleged psychophysical identities of types, an analogous explanation is not available.

Kripke argues that theoretical identities seem contingent and that the appearance of contingency is due to the confusion between the reference of names and other terms (for example, terms for natural categories) being able to be fixed by definite descriptions and the meaning of these names and terms being the same as that of the definite description that is typically associated with them: the appearance of contingency results from confusion between the way in which the reference to terms is fixed (by definite descriptions) and the meaning of those terms (which is not the same as the definite description that is typically associated with them).

It is one thing for the reference of a term, for example "water", to be fixed by a definite description, for example, "the colourless, transparent, drinkable liquid in which one bathes" and another for the sense of that term to be the same as that of that definite description.

If, for example, we recall Kripke's discussion of the standard meter (1980, 54–56, 63, 75–76, 107, 135) and the distinction between using "the length of *S* where *S* is a certain stick or bar in Paris" (54) to fix the reference of "one meter" (54) and using the definite description "the length of *S* where *S* is a certain stick or bar in Paris" (54) as the definition of "one meter" (54), the distinction between the reference of a name being fixed by the definite description that is typically associated with it and the meaning of the name being the same as that of the typically associated definite description gives rise to the distinction between two types of descriptivism, the descriptivism of reference and the descriptivism of meaning, the second of which being false does not imply the falsity of the first: definite descriptions can fix the reference of names and other terms (for example, terms for natural categories) without the meaning of names and other terms being the same as that of the typically associated definite descriptions (hereinafter, and unless the context results in the contrary, what we say of names, we shall say of terms for natural categories).

Kripke's modal argument against the second type of descriptivism (1980, 48–49, 72–78), that of meaning, can be summarised as follows:

1. Proper names are rigid designators.

2. The definite descriptions typically associated with names are not rigid designators.

3. Therefore, proper names do not have the same meaning as the definite descriptions typically associated with names.

The defining thesis of actualized descriptivism (which has been discussed whether it survives modal arguments) is: for each proper name **n**, for each competent user **u** of proper name **n**, and for each use of proper name **n** by competent user **u** in a context **c**, there is a singular definite description of the form **The Actual F** such that the competent user **u** associates the description **The Actual F** with the proper name **n** in context **c** and such that the sense or content of the proper name **n** in context **c** is the sense or content of **The Actual F** in context **c**, the proper name reference **n** in context **c** being determined on that basis to be an object **x** if and only if **The Actual F** denotes **x** in context **c**.

Kripke (1980) distinguishes between a *de facto* rigid designator, a designator whose rigidity is due to logical reasons, and a *de jure* rigid designator, a designator whose rigidity is due to a semantic stipulation: "Clearly my thesis about names is that they are *de jure*; but in the monograph I am content with the weaker assertion of rigidity. Since names are rigid *de jure*—see p. 78 below—I say that a proper name rigidly, designates its referent even when we speak of counterfactual situations where that referent would not have existed" (p. 21, note 21). Kripke's idea is that names have the second form of rigidity, while rigid descriptions, even the actualized ones, have the first: they are rigid in fact because the circumstance of having the same object as a referent in all worlds in which there is a referent results from their containing predicates that happen to be true of that object in all worlds.

The modal argument against actualized descriptivism, given the distinction just made in the previous paragraph, can be summarised as follows:

1. Proper names are rigid *de jure* designators.

2. Actualised defined descriptions are rigid *de facto* designators.

3. Therefore, proper names do not have the same meaning as actualised defined descriptions.

The appearance of contingency of theoretical identities (for example, "water = H_2O") is explained by the misleading confusion between the circumstance that defined descriptions fix the reference of names and the meaning of names being the same as that of typically associated defined descriptions.

For example, we can fix the reference to a term as "water" with the defined description "the colourless, transparent, drinkable liquid in which one takes a bath". But it does not follow that the meaning of the term "water" is the same as that of the defined description "the colourless, transparent, drinkable liquid in which one takes a bath". The reference to a term as "water" is, in this case, fixed by the contingent (accidental) properties of the water, in particular, by its contingent properties as a colourless, transparent, drinkable liquid in which one takes a bath (the descriptivism of the meaning is a false theory for Kripke).

But, according to Kripke's strategy to explain the illusion of contingency of theoretical identities (and to the alleged failure of the type-type identitative materialist strategy), in the case of alleged psychophysical type-identities (for example, "pain = C-fiber stimulation"), the reference of a term as "pain" is fixed not by its contingent (accidental) properties but by its essential properties: the property of being a pain and the property of being a sensation are essential properties of any sensation of pain.

If the description we use to fix the reference to the term "pain" is not misleadingly used to give the meaning of the term, and if the illusion of contingency is explained by this confusion between reference and meaning, then, concludes Kripke, there is no explanation for the illusion of contingency in the case of the alleged psychophysical identities of types as there is in the case of theoretical identity.

The description that we use to fix the reference to the term "pain" is a rigid description; it is a description that will seek the essential, phenomenological properties of pain, the mental state with such and such phenomenology. A reference fixer has to be something that the user of the term "pain" immediately brings to his head to fix the reference of the word "pain" in his mouth; and what he brings immediately to the head, in the case of mental terms, of terms for sensations, Kripke argues, is the phenomenology and not flexible descriptions of the genre "the sensation to which I am most adverse" or "the feeling for which I spontaneously nurture the greatest hatred".

Therefore, Kripke argues, there is no available explanation for the appearance of contingent of alleged psychophysical identities of types: these are not in fact identities, and the identitative materialism of types is false.

But for Nagel, it is. And it is now time to introduce the second of Nagel's explanations for the contingency illusion of alleged psychophysical identities of the types that we develop in the next section. Nagel's strategy, so to speak, goes beyond Kripke's strategy for explaining the contingency illusion of theoretical identities (and for the alleged failure of the type-type identitative materialist strategy).

Think of the way to fix the reference (in the Kripkean sense) of a term like "water". Pre-scientifically, the reference to a term like "water" is fixed not only by contingent characteristics of water (it is a colourless, transparent, drinkable liquid in which one bathes, etc.), but, according to Nagel, also by manifest non-contingent characteristics of water (its density, its liquidity, its propensity to freeze or evaporate under certain conditions).

The explanatory role of identities is discussed, for example, by Kim (2005, 131–48). Kim argues that the point of view that identities play no explanatory role and that they only enable us to rewrite facts is plausible, but that we need not argue that identities play absolutely no role in explanatory contexts, as identities increase the domain of our explanations, helping us to defend or justify our explanations. Identities play a simple but important role in our explanations, although by themselves they do not generate new explanations of facts and regularities. For example, Hill (1991) and McLaughlin (2001) argue that psychophysical identities explain psychophysical correlations; Block and Stalnaker (1999) argue that they do not and that they only enable us to rewrite in ordinary language the phenomenon that has already been explained. Identities, for Block and Stalnaker, are not explainable.

If we think of functional states as non-contingent fixers of the reference of mental terms, then, Nagel argues, we can adopt the Kripkean way of fixing the reference of mental terms (and not a reductionist way of doing so).

The correct view is not that characterizations of functional roles contingently fix internal states whose intrinsic nature must be physically or phenomenologically specified, but that all sorts of characteristics by which we normally identify mental states, so to speak, from within and from outside are non-contingent features of these states and that their physiological nature is equally non-contingent.

If mental states are identified with neurophysiological states whose connection, at least dispositionally, with the characteristics of their functional role in the organism is not contingent (the visual and motor systems integrated in the brain may be part of the specification, for example, of the neurophysiological nature of color), then what Nagel says about identifying mental states with neurophysiological states is not incompatible with the way of fixing the reference of a term like "pain" (according to Kripke, the reference of a term like "pain" is fixed by a description that seeks out the essential, phenomenological properties of pain, the mental state with such and such a phenomenology), but, so to speak, goes beyond it.

Nagel's suggestion goes beyond the notion of what fixes the reference of a rigid designator like "pain" (Kripke): the immediate phenomenological quality, functional role, and physiological basis of pain are essential properties of pain; conscious mental states have a tripartite essence: phenomenological, functional, and physiological. And if the immediate phenomenological quality, functional role, and physiological basis of pain are essential properties of pain, the apparent conceivability of their separation is an illusion. If it seems the opposite to us, it is because the phenomenological and physical characteristics imply the functional characteristics (and the phenomenological and physical characteristics imply each other), but the functional characteristics do not imply the phenomenological and physical characteristics.

3. THE ESSENCE OF PAIN

The essence of pain is tripartite, but since we can apparently have functional characteristics without the phenomenological and physical characteristics, we can explain the illusion of contingency of psychophysical identities as "pain = C-fiber stimulation".

There may be an aqueous liquid that is not H_2O (and therefore not water). Similarly, a mental state may exist that is functionally equivalent to pain in a mechanism with an internal constitution different from that of organisms such as human beings, but if this state is also physically and phenomenologically different from that which occurs in organisms such as human beings, then the mental state is not the same and is not pain.

The phenomenological and physiological characteristics of mental states necessarily imply their functional characteristics, but these do not imply

the former. Phenomenological properties imply functional properties, and physiological properties imply functional properties, but the latter do not necessarily imply the former.

A difference regarding the phenomenological properties of water explains, for Kripke, the disanalogy of the case of water with the case of pain: the phenomenological properties, such as being a colourless liquid, etc., of water are contingent, but those of pain are essential.

But, for Nagel, in addition to those contingent phenomenological properties, water also has non-contingent phenomenological properties such as its liquidity, etc. These are essential properties of water, and, at least in relation to them, the case of water is analogous to that of pain.

The physical nature of water is necessary to water. Similarly, the physical nature of pain is necessary to pain.

The disanalogy between the case of water and the case of pain can be explained, for Nagel, by a difference in functional properties. The kind of possibility here is that if we have the same phenomenology and physiology, we have the same functional characteristics, but not the other way around. And that it is a difference between these functional characteristics that explains why the identity of pain with C-fiber stimulation seems contingent but is not.

4. AN EXPANSIONIST CONCEPTUAL REVISION

If there is a necessary relationship between the phenomenology and the physiology of, for example, enjoying coffee, the need for this relationship is not evident *a priori* just based on the concept of the experience of enjoying coffee. Possession of the concept of the experience of enjoying coffee, for example, by me is possession of the concept of a conscious experience, even though I am not conscious of anything about the brain.

Contrary to behavioural connections (in which the relationship to the brain is hidden in the use of the concept from the first person point of view, in the use of the concept of the experience of enjoying a coffee for me, that I enjoy a coffee), the relationship between phenomenology and physiology is completely absent from the concept and cannot be, so to speak, reestablished by philosophical analysis.

However, according to Nagel, if there is a necessary relationship between phenomenology and physiology, my possession of the concept of,

say, the experience of enjoying a coffee (including the first-person aspect) requires having a brain, and even though the involvement of the brain is outside my experience of enjoying a coffee, a brain that is directly involved in the act of empathically imagining a mental state (putting myself in a conscious state analogous to the thing itself). Yet it is impossible for my brain to be directly involved in my act of empathically imagining the mental state of sipping coffee without being in the corresponding physical state.

The alleged contingency of the relationship between mental states and physical states cannot be based on the apparent conceivability (or imaginability) of the separation between phenomenology and physiology, because I can know in advance that this act of imagination subjectively looks the same whether the relationship is contingent or necessary.

Now, if we think that the two modes of description, through the phenomenological concept and the physiological concept, fix the same reference in each case rigidly, we can form the conception that the relationship between mental and physical states is necessary, as opposed to not being able to discover *a priori* that it is not.

The relationship between mental states and physical states is not discovered by directly inspecting the concepts but by inspecting what connects them to the referent. The relationship between water and H_2O is not discovered by directly inspecting the concepts but by inspecting what connects them to the referent. And, for Nagel, by analogy to the case of water, the relationship between pain and stimulation of the C-fibers is not discovered by directly inspecting the concepts but by examining what connects them to the referent.

The concepts, phenomenological and physiological, apply to the same referent non-contingently. Similarly, the water concept and the H_2O concept apply to the same reference non-contingently. The physical conditions of the H_2O concept can only be given *a posteriori*.

Similarly, the concepts of pain and C-fiber stimulation apply non-contingently to the same referent. The physiological conditions of the substitute concept of the concept of mind (a concept resulting from an expansionist, not reductionist, revision of our conception of mind) can only be given *a posteriori*.

Nagel's point is that, in relation to the identity of pain with C-fiber stimulation, the theory that gives *a posteriori* the physiological conditions of the concept of pain is not, at this time, conceptually possible.

The concept of mental concept is acquired, for example, if I taste a coffee, by me in both perspectives (first and third person). The one who tastes coffee is me—the person whose mental state is to taste coffee, which has the special character of consciousness and introspective accessibility. The physiological concept (not yet specified) describes the physical state of the relevant brain; for example, in the experience of tasting coffee, it would be the physical condition of my brain when tasting coffee.

To admit the possibility of a necessary relationship between mental states and physical states is, Nagel argues, to recognise that the mental concepts with which we operate at present say nothing about the physiological conditions of their own operation. Thus, it is to consider the hypothesis of a substitute concept of the concept of mind that includes the physiological conditions of its own operation.

Nagel argues that the physiological conditions of the substitute concept of the concept of mind can only be given *a posteriori* by a theory that, contrary to present conceptual possibilities, makes transparent the relationship between the mental and the physical, not directly but through the transparency of their common relationship to something that is not merely neither mental nor physical (not specified, for the time being). Nagel's suggestion is that a theory of this type cannot be constructed by merely merging the mental and the physical. The mental excludes the physiological; the physical includes the behavioural and functional manifestations of the mental, but, given the tripartite essence of mental states (and therefore the falsehood of conceptual reductionism), it excludes phenomenology. A theory that does not leave out the physiological and phenomenological will allow us to describe internal states, the functional relations of these states with behaviour, their phenomenology, and their physiology, not in parallel but simultaneously.

In the same way, while in physics we have, for example, concepts such as electromagnetic field, gravity, atom, or any other theoretical postulate that had to be created, in the kind of theory of mind argued by Nagel, the conception of a necessary relation between mental and physical states will have to be created (the success of which depends, as e.g. in physics, on theoretical concepts, not on natural concepts) out of concepts whose justification is that they allow us to replace mere correlations with explanations.

Nagel argues that we need, in the way of conceiving the mind, matter, or both, not what he calls a reductionist or eliminitivist review but what he calls an expansionist review.

Our problem, according to Nagel, is that there is no place for a necessary connection with physiology in the space of possible development defined by the concept of mind. But, since such a conceptual expansion does not imply a contradiction with the essential nature of subjective experience, nothing prevents a substitute concept for the concept of mind from preserving the characteristics of the previous concept and allowing the discovery of such a connection.

The analogy is with what happens all the time in the history of science. For example, conceptual expansion in relation to the concept of sound does not imply a contradiction with the essential nature of the subjective experience of sound. Other examples from Nagel are the concepts of element, species, space, or number.

What Nagel calls psychophysical analytical reductionism is false. But what interests Nagel is how some kind of mind-body identity can be a necessary truth. And if the mind is only partially available to introspection, it is not contradictory that a substitute concept for the concept of mind preserves the characteristics of the previous concept and allows the discovery of the necessary connection with physiology. For Nagel, even if one cannot imagine how to discover the necessary connection between subjective experience and physiology, such a discovery is not impossible.

McGinn (1999), in relation to the mind only being partially available for introspection, argues that conscious mental states themselves have a hidden aspect. Further, there is more in the conscious mind itself than what introspection reveals to each of us: introspection can be understood as the awareness of our mental states, but there is more in our mind states (first order) than what we are conscious of through introspection (second order). For example, when we see something red, there is more in the mental state that is seeing something red (first order) than what we are aware of through introspection (second order) when we have the experience of red; the distinction is between the conscious mental state and its introspection. In vision, for example, according to McGinn, there is a symbolic process of which we are not aware through introspection: so to speak, when the retina is affected by light and a chain of neurons fires, our visual system performs a sequence of complex calculations with the received data, whose result is

the three-dimensional perception of the outside world (we are only aware of the final result in the form, for instance, of a chair).

Similarly, according to McGinn, we are equipped with a so-called information processing unit that converts information about the acoustic properties of sound waves that affect our ears into the perception of what someone tells us.

Nagel (1998) argues that mental states have a tripartite essence: phenomenological, functional, and physiological. But, since modal intuitions are contrary (in particular, the intuition of a zombie, the apparent conceptibility of an exact physical-functional replica of a conscious human being without phenomenological "inner"), we do not understand how mental states can have a tripartite essence.

According to McGinn (1999), there are actually three levels in what we call the mind: the surface of consciousness, the hidden structure of consciousness, and the unconscious itself. But, through introspection, we only have access to the surface of consciousness; two distinct areas of the mind, the hidden structure of consciousness and the unconscious properly said, are barred from introspection.

CONCLUSION

The position of Nagel, as he himself acknowledges, is very close to that of McGinn, but without the pessimism of this one, which McGinn, in turn, acknowledges, despite resisting that his position be purely negative, since he is interested in examining the reasons for the mystery of the existence of consciousness and the consequences of our constitutive ignorance.

McGinn defends, in relation to the mind-body problem, what he calls mysticism (different from materialism, dualism, panpsychism, and religious positions): consciousness no doubt exists and is connected with the brain in an intelligible way, but the nature of this connection, given the cognitive closure, necessarily escapes us.

It is not that we do not know what can explain the existence of consciousness, but we have difficulty finding evidence in favour of one explanation to the detriment of others. What is happening is that we have no idea of what might be an explanation for the existence of consciousness; we do not have a single explanation for what causes consciousness, as

opposed to, for example, competing explanations for the extinction of dinosaurs.

Now, it is considerations of this type that allow us to defend, like Nagel, the idea that intuitions that depend on the point of view of the first person are illusions (due to the limitations of human understanding). For example, intuitions such as that it is conceivable for a functionally intact and normal human physical organism to be a completely unconscious zombie depend on the first-person point of view. And if they depend on the first-person point of view, they are an illusion.

According to Nagel, we must be extremely cautious about the use of these intuitions. The disparity between the two forms of conception (first person *versus* third person) that give rise to intuitions of conceivability should make us suspicious of them, as they may hide a necessary connection.

The apparent conceivability of zombies tells us something about our concepts, but, according to Nagel, not about what is actually possible: the conceivability that depends on the relationship between the first and third persons is a very treacherous ground.

Nagel (1998) says that the concept of water is, so to speak, an unsaturated concept (or, as argued in McGINN 1996, it does not contain its essence right away), since it has a blank space; or, as we said, between the physical concepts and the essential properties of the phenomena denoted, there is, as it were, room for the contingent properties of these phenomena. This space is to be filled by the discovery of the real and essential chemical composition of water, and just as we make that discovery possible by denying that the manifest properties of water exhaust the nature of water, so we make possible an *a posteriori* answer to the mind-body problem by denying that the manifest properties of experience (or of pain, whose concept, as McGinn defends, already contains its essence) exhaust the nature of pain.

If, as McGinn defends, the concept of water (for example) does not immediately contain its essence (or, as Nagel defends, it is a concept, so to speak, unsaturated), and if the concept of pain immediately contains its essence (a saturated concept, to run the analogy with Nagel), the difference is in terms of concepts, not in terms of properties. The concept of water and the concept of H_2O are different concepts, but this does not imply a difference in the properties referred to. Analogously, the concept of pain

and the concept of C-fiber stimulation are different concepts, but this does not imply a difference in the referred properties.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is in memory of Armando Amado, Pedro Monteiro. Thanks to some neighbours and my neighbourhood administration, who know why. I also thank my mother Maria Dulce, my aunt Maria Ivone, Joaquim Teixeira, Susana Lourenço, Gonçalo Miguel, Adriana Gomes, and Neuza Gonçalves. Last but not least, I thank the anonymous reviewer.

REFERENCES

BARNES, Gordon. 2002. "Conceivability, Explanation and Defeat." *Philosophical Studies* 108 (3): 327–38.

BLOCK, Ned and Robert STALNAKER. 1999. "Conceptual Analysis, Dualism, and the Explanatory Gap." *Philosophical Review* 108 (1): 1–46.

HILL, Christopher S. 1991. *Sensations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

HILL, Christopher S. 1997. "Imaginability, Conceivability, Possibility and the Mind-Body Problem." *Philosophical Studies* 87 (1): 61–85.

HUGHES, Christopher. 2004. *Kripke — Names, Necessity and Identity.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

KIM, Jaegwon. 2005. *Physicalism, or Something Near Enough*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

KRIPKE, Saul A., 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

MCGINN, Colin. 1996. *The Character of Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MCGINN, Colin. 1999. *The Mysterious Flame — Conscious Minds in a Material World*. New York: Basic Books.

MCLAUGHLIN, Brian P. 2001. "In Defense of New Wave Materialism: A Response to Horgan and Tienson." In *Physicalism and its Discontents*, edited by Barry Loewer and Carl Gillett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NAGEL, Thomas. 1974. "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *Philosophical Review* 83 (4): 435–50. Reprinted in *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology*, edited by Ned Block, 1:159–68. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

NAGEL, Thomas. 1998. "Conceiving the Impossible and the Mind-Body Problem." *Philosophy* 73 (285): 337–52.

NAGEL, Thomas. 2002. "The Psychophysical Nexus." *Concealment and Exposure and Other Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press.

NAGEL'S EXPLANATION OF THE ILLUSION OF CONTINGENCY

Summary

Kripke argues that theoretical identities are necessary but seem contingent, and that alleged psychophysical identities of types are not in fact identities. In line with Kripke's strategy for explaining the contingency illusion of theoretical identities (and for the alleged failure of the type-type identitative materialist strategy), while an explanation is available for the illusion of contingency in the case of theoretical identities, in the case of alleged psychophysical identities of types, an analogous explanation is not available. Nagel argues that there are the following two explanations: that of the two types of imagination and that of the tripartite essence of pain or of the fixers of the reference. Hill, in turn, defends Nagel's two types of imagination.

Keywords: body; concept; contingency; descriptivism; essentialism; identity; illusion; imagination; intuition; materialism; mind; property; reference

WYJAŚNIENIE ZŁUDZENIA PRZYGODNOŚCI PRZEZ NAGELA

Streszczenie

Kripke argumentuje, że identyczności teoretyczne są konieczne, choć wydają się przygodne, a rzekome psychofizyczne identyczności typów nie są w rzeczywistości identycznościami. Zgodnie z przyjętą przez Kripkego strategią wyjaśniania złudzenia przygodności teoretycznych (i rzekomej porażki strategii materializmu typicznego), podczas gdy dysponujemy wyjaśnieniem złudzenia przygodności w przypadku identyczności teoretycznych, analogiczne wyjaśnienie nie jest dostępne w przypadku rzekomych psychofizycznych identyczności typów. Nagel argumentuje, że istnieją następujące dwa wyjaśnienia: wyjaśnienie w kategoriach dwóch rodzajów wyobraźni oraz wyjaśnienie trójdzielnej istoty bólu czy ustalaczy przedmiotu odniesienia. Hill z kolei broni zaproponowanego przez Nagela wyjaśnienia w kategoriach dwóch typów wyobraźni.

Słowa kluczowe: ciało; pojęcie; przygodność; deskryptywizm; esencjalizm; identyczność; złudzenie; wyobraźnia; intuicja; materializm; umysł; własność; odniesienie