

FROM THE LIST MANAGER

It will soon be approaching two years since I last had an issue of *Philosophy Pathways* all to myself (*Philosophy Pathways* 197 ‘Special Blogging Issue’, 27 October 2015). I hope that you will indulge me.

I have some new ideas I would like to share, and would very much appreciate some feedback. I have changed my mind about something that I thought was settled and beyond doubt: the truth of *physicalism*.

A fundamental shift of position does not occur very often, if at all, in the life of a thinker. You build on the results — successes or otherwise — of the past. Gradually, a settled view forms which you work on and elaborate; always considering objections, of course, looking for new angles, trying to see your theory from different points of view.

However, there may come a time when you realize that *you were wrong* about something fundamental. Ludwig Wittgenstein made this discovery, and successfully adjusted to his new perspective. The old view was not completely abandoned but became a target for his sustained reflection and criticism. Thus, we speak of the ‘early’ and ‘late’ philosophies of Wittgenstein. Bertrand Russell changed his views more than once, and indeed argued that more philosophers should be prepared to admit they were wrong about a position that their names are associated with.

In the background to all my philosophizing from my first year as an undergraduate at London University in 1972, I have always assumed that — in some broad sense — physics, or the natural sciences encompass all of reality. There are many ways in which one can finesse this general picture. There’s no need to be a reductionist or a ‘hard’ materialist. However, fundamentally, the place of philosophy is understood to be alongside science in partnership, not *against* science. Philosophers do not seek to challenge the factual claims of science in any fundamental way.

In *The Metaphysics of Meaning* (D.Phil thesis 1982, Amazon 2016) and then again in *Naive Metaphysics* (Avebury 1994, Amazon 2016), I attempted to describe the nature of what I first took to be an inescapable *illusion*, and then, shifting my view, as a fundamental *perspectival truth*: the ‘I’ or ‘I-now’ that is everywhere present in consciousness and yet cannot be described or pinned down.

Physics is ultimately true, I believed, so I must ultimately be a physical being. And yet here there is *something*, a ‘this’ that refuses to go away despite every argument that I could think of to bring it to heel. In my recent semi-autobiographical book *Philosophizer* (Amazon 2016) I called the intuition of the ‘this’ an ‘idiotic conundrum’.

Now the conundrum is apparently solved. I have become a Cartesian dualist. My motto has always been to ‘follow the argument wherever it leads’ — as Plato says in *Republic*. That’s all I have done here. But is the argument valid? One can’t always be so sure.

Below, are three pieces: The first, ‘I might not have been the author of this article’ was written recently. The second is a transcript of my first YouTube video, ‘Why am I here?’ which I made back in 2013. The third consists of selections from one of my former blogs ‘Hedgehog Philosopher’ composed during 2011–2.

The two latter pieces of writing help to fill in the picture where I was coming from and how I finally came to make my break with physical monism.

If you have any thoughts or comments, please write to me. If I get some objections to my argument for mind-body dualism that are suitable for publishing, I might consider setting aside another issue of *Philosophy Pathways* to respond to them.

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