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Modern Theories of the Mind and Spinoza's Legacy

Moderní teorie vědomí a Spinozův odkaz

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Poděkování

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracoval/a samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval/a všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze dne 4. srpna 2024

Jan Krajc

Abstrakt

Cílem této práce je kriticky prozkoumat filosofii vědomí Daniela Dennetta. V první kapitole identifikujeme tři hlavní složky jeho výkladu, konkrétně, koncept ne-inteligentního designéra, dualitu kompetence a porozumění, a koncept uživatelského rozhraní. Výchozím bodem tohoto zkoumání a Dennettova popisu vědomí bude tvrzení, že vědomí je iluzorní rys, který přinesla naše kulturní i biologická evoluce. Spolu se vznikem iluze vědomí uvidíme, že uprostřed komplikovaného fungování našeho mozku a kultury mizí také já.

Dennettovu filosofii vědomí budeme poté posuzovat s ohledem na dva kritiky fyzikalistického přístupu k vědomí, tj. přístupu, který hájí možnost vysvětlit vědomí pouze skrze fyzikální jevy. Těmito kritiky budou Thomas Nagel a David Chalmers.

Právě v Nagelově kritice najdeme inspiraci pro naši vlastní otázku týkající se Dennettovy filozofie vědomí. Naše otázka však nebude směřovat k subjektivitě napřímo, ale spíše nepřímo prostřednictvím pojmu nevědomí. Naše chápání nevědomí založíme na příkladu neurózy Sigmunda Freuda a budeme tvrdit, že Dennettova výpověď postrádá komplexnost, která by takový pojem pojala v jeho složitějším významu. Toto bude provedeno ve druhé kapitole této práce.

Nakonec navrhneme, že tento nedostatek Dennettovy filosofie vědomí v subjektu nevědomí otevírá dveře myšlence jiné. Touto myšlenkou bude myšlenka panpsychismu, která může získat, takříkajíc, to nejlepší z obou světů. Jednak může zachovat Dennettův přínos v otázce výzkumu naší přirozenosti a našeho vědomí, a druhak může poskytnout pomoc při řešení otázky zmíněné nekomplexnosti v oblasti nevědomí. Ideu panpsychismu založíme na myšlenkách Barucha De Spinozy. Zároveň s tímto založením budeme ovšem držet na paměti moderní verze této myšlenky. Toto bude třetí a závěrečná kapitola této práce.

Klíčová Slova

Materialismus, Panpsychismus, Nevědomí, Vědomí, Mysl, Tělo, Evoluce, Mozek

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to critically examine Daniele Dennett's conception of consciousness. In the first chapter, we will identify three main components of his account, namely, the concept of the non-intelligent designer, the duality of competence and comprehension, and the concept of the user-interface. The point of culmination of this investigation and of Dennett's account of consciousness will be the claim that consciousness is an illusory feature brought about by both the cultural and biological evolution our species has gone through. Together with the establishment of the illusion of consciousness, we will see that the self also disappears amidst the complicated workings of both our brains and our culture.

We will, then, consider Dennett's account in regards to two critics of the physicalist approach to consciousness, i.e., the approach which opts for explaining consciousness away via physical phenomena only. These critics will be Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers.

It will be within Nagel's critical remarks where we will find inspiration for our own question concerning Dennett's philosophy of consciousness. Our question, however, will not reach towards the subjective directly but rather indirectly through the concept of the unconscious. We will ground our understanding of the unconscious on Sigmund Freud's example of neurosis and claim that Dennett's account lacks the complexity to house such a concept in its more complicated meaning. This will be done in the second chapter of this thesis.

Finally, due to Dennett's inadequacy in regards to the unconscious, we will suggest that it is the idea of panpsychism that can get the best of the both worlds, so to speak. That is, it can both retain the ingenious contribution of Dennett's to the inquiry about our nature and about our consciousness while also providing aid in facing the issue of uncomplexity. We will attempt to ground the notion of panpsychism on Baruch De Spinoza's thought while also keeping in mind the idea's modern versions. This will be the third and final chapter of the thesis.

Keywords

Materialism, Panpsychism, Unconscious, Consciousness, Mind, Body, Evolution, Brain

Contents

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to thoroughly investigate Daniele Dennett's account of consciousness. The investigation will focus on the latest version of his account as described in his book *From Bacteria to Bach and Back*.[1] Although placed in the background for the most part, I will also use other instances of his philosophical work to pinpoint some of his claims and concepts, such as his rejection of Cartesian philosophy. The motivation behind such pinpointing is twofold: First, if the claims and concepts are of a recurring nature, I will use the opportunity to shine a clearer light on them. Second, if the claims and concepts are of a shallower description in *Bacteria* due to their establishment already being present in one of Dennett's previous works, I will use the opportunity to bring this shallowness to more tolerable levels.

Throughout our investigation we shall encounter what we will view as the three key points of the Dennettian approach to consciousness: The concept of the non-intelligent designer, the duality of competence and comprehension, and the concept of the user-interface. Our investigation will not only cover these three points but also be defined by them as we will consider them in a sequence and follow their gradual establishment from one to the next and, finally, to the last.

Upon establishing the concept of the user-interface, we will have already seen two critical standpoints to Dennett's account of consciousness. To put matters rightly, these critical standpoints will not be described to be critical towards Dennett in particular but towards the reductionist approach to consciousness which will be argued Dennett holds. Once equipped with the concept of the user-interface, then, we will return to one of these criticisms due to what will be perceived as a direct encounter between it and the user-interface. The criticism will be that of Thomas Nagel and I will claim that Dennett answers the criticism, or rather avoids it, by retaining the illusion of the subjective perspective which is vital to render Nagel's critical remark viable.

Influenced by Nagel's perspective, however, I will argue that Dennett's account of consciousness leaves out a pivotal structure which he himself mentions in *Bacteria*, the structure of the unconscious. The institution of this structure will be the overarching theme of the second chapter.

[1] From now on only *Bacteria*.

With the structure of the unconscious instituted, it will be our claim that the Dennettian account lacks severely in grasping its complexity. In order to bring this point forth, I will contrast the Dennettian understanding of unconscious with the understanding of Sigmund Freud: Based upon the example of neurosis, I shall argue that considering the unconscious to only be that-which-we-are-not-aware-of is not sufficient to capture what is at heart of the structure.

Finally, since the complexity of the structure is not taken into consideration in Dennett's account of consciousness, I will claim that it can pose a significant threat to his doing away with Nagel's critical remark: The unconscious can compose a domain that will remain utterly untouched by Dennett's argument for the illusory interface.

In order to aid Dennett's account, then, I will reach for another thinker whose influence has been undergoing quite a resurgence among present-time philosophers and scientists alike.[2] I will reach for Baruch De Spinoza and his doctrine of panpsychism. The establishment of similarities between the two thinkers and the particular strategy of how one can save the other will be the overarching theme of our third and final chapter. The main motivation behind our attempt to aid Dennett's account of consciousness is to retain the strength of some of his ingenious concepts, namely, the concept of the free-floating rationales, the idea of the non-intelligent designer, the different types of designs regarding the inception of things – humans, animals, AI –, and last but not least, the concept of memes. When it comes to retaining the idea of the user-interface, that I will leave to further questioning. Aside from proposing that the panpsychist idea is superior to the materialistic one while it can still enjoy the fruit of Dennett's philosophical exploits, the pivotal argument will go in the direction of the duality of competence and comprehension. First, I will claim that it is in the notion of competence where Dennett places the structure of the unconscious and, thus, makes the notion lacking in complexity for the perspective of the unconscious. Second, I will argue that Spinoza's panpsychist doctrine can enhance this notion to make up for this complexity. And third, I will claim that the Spinoza-influenced enhancement of competence can render the idea of the unconscious structure graspable and can, possibly, explain even Freud's notion of neurosis. Although all of my arguments will go against Dennett's user-interface and rather towards tracing some sort of subjective domain within the concept of consciousness, I am not prepared to close the door on him, so to speak, just yet for it is my honest belief that even with the

[2] The philosophers and scientists who has grown quite fond of the panpsychist idea in one version or another are, among others: Philip Goff, Carlo Rovelli, Sean Carroll, Marina Cortes, Lee Smolin, Clelia Verde, Luke Roelofs

structure of the unconscious being more complex, there is still a possibility for the idea of the user-illusion to resurface.

Without further ado, then:

Chapter I – The User Illusion

Consciousness is rather Simple

Let us suppose that consciousness, whatever the term might precisely mean, is not as complicated as one might think. Such a statement might be unwarranted and perhaps too daring to make but it is, nevertheless, a statement that summarizes well the attitude with which Daniel Dennett approaches the problem of consciousness.

Why does he feel the need to emphasize simplicity while discussing this topic you ask? The reason for this decision on his part is due to an accusation he makes. This accusation is aimed at no one in particular yet at everyone who dipped their toe in the currents of this philosophical problem at the same time. He accuses these folk, let us call them philosophers of the mind, that they stop only a tad bit too short with their scientific rigor and, consequently, fall prey to a certain mystical power. That is, they overextend their hitherto well-managed philosophical thinking and make it overtly complicated by adding a flavor of some sorts that is quite foreign to the approach they initially selected – the scientific approach.[3]

Now, you might ask: "Why is there such a pressure on these philosophers of the mind to implement a scientific approach and not any other?"

It is a justified question and I believe that Dennett also has a justified answer to it. The answer is twofold: One, the industrial development and progress of our society as whole has been rendered possible due to various gadgets, discoveries, and machines that simply would not exist without a thorough implementation of the scientific method and, thus, there is no reason to shy away from it in matters still alien to or perhaps just too complex to understand by us at this particular moment in history.

I infer this, first part of the answer from this statement of Dennett:

"Let's begin by looking back at Crick's "astonishing hypothesis." Those of us who insist that we don't find it at all astonishing fuel our confidence by reminding ourselves of the majestic array of well-solved puzzles, well-sleuthed discoveries, well-confirmed theories of modern, materialistic science that we all take for granted these days. When you think about it, it is just amazing how much we human beings have figured out in the few centuries since Descartes. We know how atoms are structured, how chemical elements interact, how plants and animals

[3] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. pp. 19-20.

propagate, how microscopic pathogens thrive and spread, how continents drift, how hurricanes are born, and much, much more. We know our brains are made of the same ingredients as all the other things we've explained, and we know that we belong to an evolved lineage that can be traced back to the dawn of life. If we can explain *self-repair in bacteria* and *respiration in tadpoles* and *digestion in elephants*, why shouldn't *conscious thinking in H. sapiens* eventually divulge its secret workings to the same ever-improving, self-enhancing scientific juggernaut?"[4]

Two, Dennett conceives of the possibility of a different method, other than the method of science, in a very specific way. His definition of what that method might look like is negative. That is, he first establishes his firm belief in the method of science and then describes methodological tendencies that seem to parasitize upon it.

I infer this, second fold from this statement:

"Many of the puzzles (or "mysteries" or "paradoxes") of human consciousness evaporate once you ask how they could possibly have arisen—and actually try to answer the question! I mention that because some people marvel at the question and then "answer" it by saying, "It's an impenetrable mystery!" or "God did it!" They may in the end be right, of course, but given the fabulous bounty of thinking tools recently put at our disposal and hardly used yet, this is a strikingly premature surrender. It may not be defeatist; it may be defensive. Some people would like to persuade the curious to keep their hands off the beloved mysteries, not realizing that a mystery solved is even more ravishing than the ignorant fantasies it replaces. There are some people who have looked hard at scientific explanations and disagree: to their taste, ancient myths of fiery chariots, warring gods, worlds hatching from serpent eggs, evil spells, and enchanted gardens are more delightful and worthy of attention than any rigorous, predictive scientific story."[5]

Accordingly, the parasitic tendencies of other methods seem to arise when there emerges a problem that is difficult to give an answer to, problems like consciousness. Instead, these methods arrive at mysterious answers that appeal to us. Why do they appeal to us, however? Is there a connection to the subjective?

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[4] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. pp. 17-18.

[5] Ibid. pp. 9-10.

We started off this chapter by talking about a certain mystical power that involuntarily pushes philosophers of the mind to become lax in their scientific approach to philosophical problems. We have also seen that the implementation of a method that is not scientific seems to correlate with not forming questions about these problems correctly. That is, we have seen that when we do not ask how the problems figure in the established network of science that is proven to be correct, we seem to conjure explanations that befit our appeal. What is then this mystical power that appears to stand at the forefront of this mistake?

When examined thoroughly, this mystical power is closer to us than we might at first think. It is a power that derives its potency from an all-too-human skill called intuition. It is because of intuition, Dennett says, that we suppose the existence of "intimately familiar items"[6] that play their role behind the scenes, so to speak – they hide in our minds distinct from the physical world and thus appear to be the vital stuff consciousness is composed of. What is the reason, however, for this extra step in the inference?

It is this extra step that for Dennett is at heart of the philosophers' appeal on intuition[7] and also the instance of the scientific laxness. He realizes that these items, although hidden from the outer world, stand on special grounds – they are subjective. Now, items reckoned as subjective bring about an epistemic difficulty for they lack an objective co point and cannot be easily evaluated as either wrong or correct, or existent or non-existent. Consider an instance when you are standing in front of a painting in an art museum with somebody and they do not like it. Disapprovingly, you ask why that is so and expect an answer founded upon the painting's certain features:

"I don't like the style the painting was painted in."

Or "The tree standing atop the hill is not shaped well."

Or "The building slightly off center is crooked."

Contrary to your expectations, though, the person next to you simply says: "Because I see it that way." Can you doubt this statement? Can you somehow verify whether this seeing is

[6] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 185.

[7] Dennett is referencing David Chalmers, Thomas Nagel, John Searle and also very likely the proponents of the concept known as "qualia".

actually present within the mind of this person? No, it is not so simple, hence, the special grounds of a subjective item.

Understanding the special character of these intimate items, it is still not obvious why they should be at the heart of consciousness. Yet, it should now be apparent why the un-scientific questions formed by un-scientific methods appeal to us – they reckon with explanations founded upon items we are intimately familiar with: The reasoning behind your friends evaluation of the painting might be lacking for your scientifically rigorous mind but it is beyond certain that it appeals to them, otherwise, they would not have said it. This appeal is assuredly akin to the appeal you feel towards the scientific reasoning you had in your mind that they would also provide, although your reasoning can be validified and theirs cannot.

We will come back to the problem of mystical intuition later in the thesis for I believe there is still much to be said. It is the case, however, that it is necessary to penetrate further into Dennett's thinking before this something can be understood. Let us, therefore, first consider what happens when we take Dennett's axiom of consciousness not in reality being that complicated seriously, let us adopt his view.

Consciousness as a Tool

Previously, we have posited an angle from which the topic of consciousness is not as daunting. This was D. Dennett's theory of consciousness. To describe this angle and, consequently, move forth with our philosophical investigation, we must first describe the environment Dennett's theory emanates from. We need not go far into his book *From Bacteria to Bach and Back* nor do we need to dig deep into the various other sources concerning Dennett's philosophy to glimpse such an environment, however. The reason behind mentioning this particular writing of Dennett and not any other is founded upon it being the latest of his philosophical exploits regarding consciousness. I believe it is not too far-fetched of an assumption to claim that it is due to the books chronological position that it also represents his most complete and up-to-date position towards the notion of consciousness and, thus, rendering it the book an aspiring scholar of the topic should take into account first and foremost. What is, then, the environment Dennett's thinking emanates from?

To answer the question, we can directly reference and read together with D. Dennett his introductory passage to the aforementioned book:

"The short answer is that minds evolved and created thinking tools that eventually enabled minds to know how minds evolved, and even to know how these tools enabled them to know what minds are. What thinking tools? The simplest, on which all the others depend in various ways, are spoken words, followed by reading, writing, and arithmetic, followed by navigation and mapmaking, apprenticeship practices, and all the concrete devices for extracting and manipulating information that we have invented: compass, telescope, microscope, camera, computer, the Internet, and so on. These in turn fill our lives with technology and science, permitting us to know many things not known by any other species. We know there are bacteria; dogs don't, dolphins don't; chimpanzees don't. Even bacteria don't know there are bacteria. Our Minds are different. It takes thinking tools to understand what bacteria are, and we're the only species (so far) endowed with an elaborate kit of thinking tools."[8]

I have decided to quote the words with which Dennett's reader begins their journey from Bacteria to Bach and then back in nearly their full extent for I believe there are well described three essential features that appear on the topical forefront throughout the entirety of the book. One, it is evolution both biological and cultural that caused such a revolutionary explosion

[8] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 3.

within our minds that we can even describe something within it via the term “consciousness”. Two, there is an obvious qualitative difference between our minds and the minds of other species. Three, there is a tight connection between our enhanced minds, in comparison to others, and the level of complexity of our “thinking tools”.

As Dennett himself says, this is only the short answer to the question of where his conception of consciousness emanates from, i.e., which axioms the environment he inhabits upholds as the fundamental ones. It is an answer that lacks the level of richness to be expected in a proper philosophical attitude towards an issue. Nevertheless, I believe that its degree of bareness can serve as a brilliant tool for our means and purposes for it provides structure that can aid us in navigating Dennett’s train of thought whose manifestation embodies the contents of this particular writing. Consequently, I propose that our interpretation of Dennett’s conception of consciousness be founded upon a thorough investigation of these three vital points and their subsequent inter-connectedness. Without further ado, then: How is it that consciousness evolves?

The Origin of Intelligent Design

In order to grasp Dennett's idea of how consciousness finds its way into the branches of the Tree of Life[9], or perhaps better, blooms upon them, we must first come to learn the supposed nature of this Tree.

When we talk about Evolution in the Darwinian sense, it is unduly easy to make the not at all obvious assumption that this process involves a purpose. Such purpose can be well described by the now very much notorious expression "survival of the fittest". This expression has nowadays essentially grown synonymous with the name of the deservedly glorified biologist. Nonetheless, the concept of a purpose arrives at our rationale with a feature that must be examined before its acceptance or rejection into the workings of the aforementioned process: The purpose must have been created by something or someone. In other words, there must be a reason for why Evolution works in the way that it does, and the reason must have been established in a particular way.

Naturally, this feature brings about the possibility of multiple explanations. God, god, or gods can be said to set up the properties of Evolution so that it functions in the way we have discovered it to function, for instance.[10] As it should be already apparent from Dennett's other books[11], however, to talk of an invisible hand of an Intelligent Designer[12] who set the sprouts of the Tree of Life into motion is to miss the breathtaking power Evolution possesses. Consequently, it is, in his view, rather the "something" that gives rise to the aforementioned purpose. Dennett says:

"Evolution by natural selection is not itself a designed thing, an agent with purposes, but it acts as if it were (it occupies the role vacated by the Intelligent Designer): it is a set of processes that "find" and "track" reasons for things to be arranged one way rather than another. The chief difference between the reasons found by evolution and the reasons found by human designers is that the latter are typically (but not always) represented in the minds of the designers, whereas the reasons uncovered by natural selection are represented for the first time by those human investigators who succeed in reverse engineering Nature's productions. Dawkins' title, *The*

[9] Referencing the brilliant depiction of Evolution by The Evogeneao Tree of Life.

[10] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 35.

[11] Darwin's Dangerous Idea (1995), or Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon (2006).

[12] Referencing D. Dennett's own term in *From Bacteria to Bach and Back*.

Blind Watchmaker (1986), nicely evokes the apparently paradoxical nature of these processes: on the one hand they are blind, mindless, without goals, and on the other hand they produce designed entities galore, many of which become competent artificers (nest-builders, web-spinners, and so forth) and a few become intelligent designers and builders: us."[13]

I avoided saying that the aforementioned "something" establishes the purpose of Evolution and rather gives rise to it, and it is the first sentence of the quoted paragraph that highlights the reason why: The idea of Evolution having a set purpose is a mirage that is conjured in front of our minds by the intricacies of its inner processes. It is the processes of Evolution themselves that render our thoughts of the possibility of a purpose being involved alive.

Nevertheless, one might argue that the disparity between the two terms is not large enough to fit Dennett's explanation, i.e., the difference between the two terms is miniscule which is not enough when we find a complete negation in the quoted text[14]. To that I would reply that although the proposed terminology might suffer from this slight discrepancy, its presence is still justified for it accounts for the subsequent typology of reasons that Dennett introduces in that same paragraph. This typology is of a twofold division: Those represented *in* the minds of the designers and those represented *by* human investigators who succeed in reverse engineering Nature's productions. To this typology Dennett says:

"Evolution by natural selection is not itself a designed thing, an agent with purposes, but it acts as if it were (it occupies the role vacated by the Intelligent Designer): it is a set of processes that "find" and "track" reasons for things to be arranged one way rather than another. The chief difference between the reasons found by evolution and the reasons found by human designers is that the latter are typically (but not always) represented in the minds of the designers, whereas the reasons uncovered by natural selection are represented for the first time by those human investigators who succeed in reverse engineering Nature's productions."[15]

The idea of reason-typology is tightly connected to another one of Dennett's philosophical exploits: The duality of competence and comprehension. Competence is simply one's ability to do X. Bees are competent to produce honey, wasps are not. Men are competent to produce

[13] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 37.

[14] Evolution by natural selection is not itself […] an agent with purposes.

[15] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 43.

sperm, women are not. A villager from the medieval period is well competent, i.e., he has the ability, to

announce the suddenly imposed danger upon a village by yelling "Fire!". Comprehension, on the other hand, means the ability to understand X and act in accordance. In our example of a villager yelling fire, comprehension would mean their ability to foresee the fact that the tree which has been struck by lightning and is currently on fire can cause the ignition to the nearby village palisade and, therefore, decides to warn his fellow villagers. In the first instance, the yeller simply sees fire and announces its presence without realizing the importance of their actions for the safety of the entire village. In the second instance, this eventuality is not only inferred and reacted upon but can also be enhanced by a further understanding that the yeller aims their vocality onto a nearby fire station – granted, the combination of a palisade and a fire station coexisting in one village is beyond low.[16]

Let us take a look at this typology in more detail in the next section. In establishing this typology, it will be only a short way to another one of D. Dennett's paramount notions – that of *free-floating rationales*. I believe it is here that the qualitative difference between our human minds and the minds of others is the most pronounced. I am, therefore, proposing further that it will also be in the next section that our second question will be answered, namely, the question as to the qualitative difference between our minds and the minds of other species.

[16] Dennett, Daniel. "Précis of From Bacteria to Bach and Back: The Evolution of Minds." Teorema: Revista Internacional de Filosofía, vol. 37, no. 3, 2018, pp. 107–10. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26510242.

Competence without Comprehension

We have briefly examined the meaning of "competence" and "comprehension" as implemented by D. Dennett in his writing. To not impede our progress, then, we begin by addressing the term we have also used precedingly yet not described: What are *free-floating rationales*?

Let us draw a different example of the duality of competence and comprehension than we did before. Consider a triangle. It is a fairly simple geometrical occurrence that is quite common to see in our everyday lives. We usually learn about it in elementary school, that is, in middle school if we avoid the Czech-influenced terminology. We quickly comprehend that a triangle has three sides and three angles whose sum must always be that of 180°. After some time, we also come to understand that there is something like the Pythagorean theorem which we can use to determine the length of one of the sides which has been hidden from us either by a textbook or an actual real-life example. Here is a question that is not discussed in a typical middle school class, however: Have these geometrical notions surrounding the triangle existed before we learned of them? Naturally, I am not speaking of us as particular people but of us as people in general. Did the Pythagorean theorem exist before Pythagoras of Samos himself discovered it?

Claiming that they have not might be an intriguing philosophical discussion to have but let us entertain that possibility later, with a different example, and only briefly. Suppose, then, that the notions existed. Who placed them there? Has no one been able to use them before we discovered them? I am, of course, not talking about the notions themselves here but about the geometrical shape they are notions of.

We already know that it is not necessary for "somebody" or "something" to create these notions from our discussion of the non-intelligent Designer. They were simply rendered this way upon the creation of the Universe and its subsequent transformation into the version Pythagoras and his contemporaries had a chance to glimpse. Hitherto, they existed uncomprehended, untouched, free-floating in the mindless realm of the Cosmos ready to be grasped. Have we been able to use them before their discovery, then?

Dennett seems to think that such a deed was indeed possible. We can easily claim the same thing about the two examples we have used previously. Men were definitely capable of procreating without them knowing what sperm, sex, or the difference between a man and a woman is. They did it uncomprehendingly. Bees produce honey but none of them really

understand what honey is or why they do it, do they? Hence, there once was a point when our knowledge was undeveloped enough for various reasons the world functioned in accordance with to be grasped by no one except for the mindless Cosmos. These reasons are Dennett's *free-floating rationales*.

Now, what about my point concerning numbers? Why has that been mentioned? I have mentioned it because geometrical shapes and their position in the universe independent of us is quite intuitively conceivable. Numbers, on the other hand, although are claimed to be founding blocks of reality perhaps even more fundamental than shapes themselves, do not possess such intuitive conception. Have they also floated before us?

From a similarly skeptical perspective, we can consider the wheel. Surely, wheel-like objects existed before humans invented the wheel but although they existed, did we "just use them" prior to our comprehension of the concept of the wheel? This skeptical remark comes more into light when we think of an example that is less up to grabs, so to speak. Humans could have inferred the use of the wheel based upon an accidental observation of a wheely object in nature. What if we think of a concept such as Freud's unconscious, however? Or trauma? Or dreams? Do all reasons float freely or is there an order among them?

I believe that Dennett's theory is comfortable in answering my objection based upon the occurrence of numbers but with the second, I am lacking to approach it. Let us table this topic for now, though, and return to it later in the thesis. Where does the establishment of the *free-floating rationales* take us?

Top-down and Bottom-up Design

We have established that there are reasons floating in the Universe. These reasons emerge in the manner that they do in accordance with how the non-intelligent Designer set them up to be. We have also established that there are beings, animals, for instance, which do not grasp these reasons, yet they act competently by them. Similarly, there are still reasons around us that we as comprehending beings do not grasp and yet act as if we did: We have been referencing the value of rationality ever since the time of Plato and perhaps even prior to Plato. Think of the sheer number of times you have heard the famous words: "How can you be so daft?" Are they not trying to indicate that you should be using the wits that are hidden deep within your brain? Assuredly, there is a more significant thought behind this expression rather than mere insult yet is your, father, let us say, fully comprehending why you should be using reason instead of listening to your heart, for instance, like your mother told you to sometime afore? Can he precisely state where does this urge for succinctly describable behavior comes from?

We are trying to find out what consciousness is, however, thus we are required to generate a comprehending picture of it rather than to describe beings that are competent in using it. Doing that would be an easy job for both you and me are viewing this thesis in our consciousness and are, therefore, instances of these competent beings. What is it that happens, then, when competence is accompanied by comprehension?

As the title of this chapter indicates, when comprehension enters the picture, so to speak, the design of this imaginary picture shifts or perhaps better, metamorphosizes. Let us focus on this metamorphosis, specifically, and see how it figures in relation to the two kinds of designing and to the concept of comprehension itself.

In the beginning of our discussing Dennett's philosophy, we have defined the environment within which he is ideologically enveloped. This environment was seen to be highly defined by Darwinian evolution. One of the features mistakenly attributed to Darwinian evolution by many is that its processes seem to be aimed at a particular goal. This impression is especially strong for the observer locked within these particular processes. The goal can be called "survival", but it can also be called "the human species" as we are commonly considered the final step on the evolutionary ladder. We have already seen, however, that this is not so.

Let us take one of the supposed aims – survival – and examine what is its actual design. In *On the Origin of Species* Charles Darwin says the following about the concept of survival:

"Can it, then, be thought improbable, seeing that variations useful to man have undoubtedly occurred, that other variations useful in some way to each being in the great and complex battle for life, should sometimes occur in the course of thousands of generations? If such does occur, can we doubt (remembering that many more individuals are born than can possibly survive) that individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving and procreating their kind? On the other hand, we may feel sure that any variation in the least degree injurious would be rigidly destroyed. This preservation of favorable variations and the rejection of injurious variations, I call Natural Selection. Variations neither useful nor injurious would not be affected by natural selection, and would be left a fluctuating element, as perhaps we see in the species called polymorphic."[17]

What we are looking at is, of course, the establishment of the concept of Natural Selection and, in essence, the summary of what lies in the heart of Darwinian theory of Evolution.[18] The quoted paragraph can be reasonably reduced to four statements: One, the appearance of variations, let us call them genetic variations, is a lingering process that takes millennia to take root. Two, depending on the usefulness of the variations, the carrier of such variations either perishes or endures. Three, not all variations are useful at any given time. Four, there is always an excess in the carriers of variations useful or injurious.

In accordance with these statements, let us compose a picture of a simple group of carriers. For the sake of the discussion, let us suppose that at time X, all possess the same traits and that these traits are useless, i.e., they are the traits that are "not affected by natural selection". This is, naturally, unthinkable in reality but it makes the picture a lot easier to draw out. As time goes by, these carriers have offspring. Again, for the sake of the picture to manifest easily, let us suppose that in some of these offspring already occurs a more useful set of traits that's different from their bearers, i.e., we are ignoring the first statement we have reduced Darwin's paragraph to. We shall call this difference between traits "a mutation". As a result of this mutation in the new members of the group, these new members can coincidentally wrestle with various world events more easily and, therefore, have a better chance of reproducing and sharing the mutated genetic variation with more members of the group over time, i.e., their

[17] Charles Darwin, On the Origin of Species, facsimile of first edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 80-81

[18] Paul, Diane B. "The Selection of the 'Survival of the Fittest.'" Journal of the History of Biology, vol. 21, no. 3, 1988, pp. 411–24. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4331067.

offspring will have a better chance to multiply, and the offspring of the offspring will have a better chance to multiply etc. until the variation settles.

Notice that the higher survival rate of the offspring with the mutated variation is not due to their reaction to the environment like Jean-Baptiste Lamarck thought[19] but due to an utterly incidental occurrence of useful variations within them over an unspecified period of time. Sometimes these mutations occur and sometimes they do not. Sometimes these mutations are useful, sometimes they are useless, and sometimes they are injurious. Thus, we are circling back to Dennett's idea of the non-intelligent designer. To make the circle complete, then, let us also dispel the idea of survival being the aim of evolution as we have set ourselves to do for it seems as if it is still lurking around.

In this paradigm, survival is not a goal of evolution that somebody has inserted into it. As we have said, some mutations work, and some do not. The sole reason why it seems that way and, especially, to someone like us who is suffering its processes is because it is only those who endure we are capable of describing. To put it straight-forwardly, the entire idea of evolution has been conceived on the good end of mutations and because of it, it still maintains around itself the aura of aim. The aura is false, however, and species either are or are not, but both are evolutionarily on equal footing.

We have roughly described the un-aimed direction Darwinian evolution seems to head in, it is the next step to describe what kind of designing is taking place during the evolutionary process.

Let us carry on using our example of the group. As more and more generations of offspring arrive, the likelihood of more mutations taking place during their creation also rises. These mutations make the new generations not only more endurable when facing world events directly, but also more indirectly endurable. A great instance of this distinction I am trying to make is the opposable thumb[20]. At the first glance, the opposable thumb does not influence the species that were lucky enough to develop into their toolkit like the different mutations of the famous Galápagos finches which permitted various species of the finches to feed upon what

[19] Burkhardt RW Jr. Lamarck, evolution, and the inheritance of acquired characters. Genetics. 2013 Aug;194(4):793-805. doi: 10.1534/genetics.113.151852. PMID: 23908372; PMCID: PMC3730912.

[20] Kivell, T. L. (2021). Human evolution: Thumbs up for efficiency. Current Biology, 31(6), R289–R291. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2021.02.021

type of food was available at their inhabited location[21]. Nevertheless, the appearance of the opposable thumb permitted the species who happened to possess it to, for instance, use tools. It is perhaps only upon the realization that tools can be used to aid in the battle against the environment that we understand the newly attained survival skill with this particular mutation. In essence, this is a mere emphasis of the fact that mutations can be useful, injurious, but also useless at a particular time. It is this notion of the indirect influence that brings us back to a previously mentioned concept, the concept of competence. Throughout the long processes of genetic mutation, species develop novel skills and features of their biology that make them not only more competent for survival, but also more competent in general. It is, then, the idea of incessantly growing competences that gives rise to the type of design we have been trying to find in evolution, the bottom-up design. We can, therefore, summarize this type of design together with Dennett with full understanding of the following text from *Bacteria*:

"I have argued that the basic, bottom-up, clueless R&D done by natural selection has gradually created cranes—labor-saving products that make design work more effective—which have opened up Design Space for further cranes, in an accelerating zoom into the age of intelligent design, where top-down, reflective, reason-formulating, systematic, foresighted R&D can flourish. This process has succeeded in changing the balance of selective forces that shape us and all other organisms and in creating highly predictive theories that retrospectively explain the very processes of their own creation. This cascade of cranes is not a miracle, not a gift from God, but a natural product of the fundamental evolutionary process, along with the other fruits of the Tree of Life."[22]

What, then, about the second type of designing them seems to take place within nature? How does that fair into the scientific scheme we have pictured Dennett to be so fond of?

We have already expressed the idea that it is when comprehension enters the picture that something happens to the bottom-up designing that is so evolutionarily common and pushes it towards metamorphosis. What exactly happens when we, or any comprehending species, come to also understand what our bodies and brains are capable of?

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[21] Grant, B. R., & Grant, P. R. (1989). Natural Selection in a Population of Darwin's Finches. The American Naturalist, 133(3), 377–393. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2462126

[22] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 379.

Let us, once again, draw an example and once it is finished, compare the example to the one of the groups we have developed previously. There are two instances of modern scientific exploits that fare well with the following inversion Dennett claims stands at the heart of the metamorphosis:

"As we learn more and more about the nano-machinery of life that makes all this possible, we can appreciate a second strange inversion of reasoning, achieved almost a century later by another brilliant Englishman: Alan Turing. Here is Turing's strange inversion, put in language borrowed from Beverley:

IN ORDER TO BE A PERFECT AND BEAUTIFUL COMPUTING MACHINE, IT IS NOT REQUISITE TO KNOW WHAT ARITHMETIC IS."[23]

The two exploits are Stockfish[24], an open-source engine used in chess to, predominantly, analyze chess games[25], and an AI using Genetic Algorithms to learn levels of Mario[26]. We will focus on the former example.

As we have said, Stockfish is an engine that focuses on examining chess during both amateur, online, and professional matches. What is more, however, Stockfish is also well capable of playing a chess match against both another engine[27] and against a human player. What Stockfish does during a game of chess is that it evaluates the current position on the board according to chess principles such as material balance, king safety, piece activity etc. It then calculates the position in relation to what can happen up to 20-30 moves ahead. This can happen regardless of the complexity of the position. The way it is able to do so is via a search algorithm called Alpha-Beta pruning. This algorithm, in laic's terms, proposes possible moves from a certain position and what they can cause to the game and "prunes away" those which are unlikely to make the position better in comparison to the one it is currently "looking at". [28]

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[23] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 55

[24] https://stockfishchess.org

[25] Manzo, A., Ciancarini, P. (2023). Enhancing Stockfish: A Chess Engine Tailored for Training Human Players. In: Ciancarini, P., Di Iorio, A., Hlavacs, H., Poggi, F. (eds) Entertainment Computing – ICEC 2023. ICEC 2023. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol 14455. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-8248-6_23

[26] Baldominos, A., Saez, Y., Recio, G., Calle, J. (2015). Learning Levels of Mario AI Using Genetic Algorithms. In: Puerta, J., et al. Advances in Artificial Intelligence. CAEPIA 2015. Lecture Notes in Computer Science(), vol 9422. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24598-0_24

[27] Another great example of the slowly growing number of chess engines is Leela Chess Zero.

[28] Maharaj S, Polson N, Turk A. Chess AI: Competing Paradigms for Machine Intelligence. Entropy. 2022; 24(4):550. https://doi.org/10.3390/e24040550

Based upon that evaluation, it then moves a piece or proposes to move a piece, if it is just a spectator of a game, in the best way possible.

The interesting thing about Stockfish for us, however, is not its mesmerizing capabilities and the specific type of algorithms it uses to accomplish this monstrous task – because analyzing the sheer amount of moves on a chess board at any given time is a monstrous task – but it is the way in which it approaches chess in comparison to a human player. Humans choose openings in chess. This choice is usually based upon their preferred style of play and their comprehension of what they can expect from the opposing player in response to the opening. Simply, human players limit the chess database they need to carry in their heads by understanding basic chess principles and by choosing openings that they have already seen, i.e., that they have practiced. Stockfish does not do that. The engine is calculating the endgame that is most likely to bring it to victory from the very first move.

We are, once again, bringing back the notion of competence without comprehension. This time, however, we are to highlight an important factor of this competence without comprehension because in this particular example, there must be someone with an understanding to first define the goal of this process. Stockfish have not emerged from clear skies, there first must have been someone to comprehend the goal Stockfish was built to achieve and then construct the engine accordingly. This is the second type of design we have been trying to bring to light, top-down design. Moreover, this is also an elaboration on the metamorphosis we have claimed was at the root of the distinction between bottom-up and top-down designing – the idea of a predetermined goal that on one side lacks (bottom-up design) and on the other is a fundamental necessity (top-down design).

What about our Consciousness?

We spent the last chapter talking about different types of designs. We have equated one to Evolution and another to Stockfish. We have also seen that Stockfish needs a comprehending designer present before it can be created, and that Evolution does not. The reason for this unnecessity was inferred from the initial idea of the non-intelligent designer who was argued to create the universe and subsequently supported by the idea of bottom-up design and its distinction from top-down design. In accordance with these arguments, it should be plain that the origin of our brain is a bottom-up process. Furthermore, if the argued perspective is to remain true, we must also argue that the notion of consciousness can also be explained via its means. Let us, therefore, assume the simplest variation of this perspective in regard to consciousness, for the sake of the argument and claim that consciousness can be reduced to the brain and its functions. This position is commonly known as physicalism[29].

Immediately, we encounter a flaw in this claim. Many have claimed that explaining the brain and its functions is not enough to explain the notion of consciousness fully:

Thomas Nagel says:

"It is impossible to exclude the phenomenological features of experience from a reduction in the same way that one excludes the phenomenal features of an ordinary substance from a physical or chemical reduction of it – namely, by explaining them as effects on the minds of human observers"[30]

And David Chalmers says:

"The really hard problem of consciousness is the problem of experience. When we think and perceive, there is a whir of information-processing, but there is also a subjective aspect. As Nagel (1974) has put it, there is something it is like to be a conscious organism. This subjective aspect is experience. When we see, for example, we experience visual sensations: the felt quality of redness, the experience of dark and light, the quality of depth in a visual field. Other experiences go along with perception in different modalities: the sound of a clarinet, the smell of mothballs. Then there are bodily sensations, from pains to orgasms; mental images that are

[29] Goff, P. (2017). Consciousness and fundamental reality. In Oxford University Press eBooks. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190677015.001.0001.

[30] Nagel, T. (1974). What is it like to be a bat? The Philosophical Review, 83(4). https://doi.org/10.2307/2183914. p. 437

conjured up internally; the felt quality of emotion, and the experience of a stream of conscious thought. What unites all of these states is that there is something it is like to be in them. All of them are states of experience."[31]

Since Chalmers himself references Nagel in the quoted paragraph, it is apparent that both of these claims have a common perspective from which they criticize physicalism. Yet, there is a slight difference between them. Chalmers' main point is that although physicalism can explain some phenomena commonly associated with consciousness:

"The easy problems of consciousness include those of explaining the following phenomena:

- the ability to discriminate, categorize, and react to environmental stimuli;
- the integration of information by a cognitive system;
- the reportability of mental states
- the ability of a system to access its own internal states;
- the focus of attention;
- the deliberate control of behavior;
- the difference between wakefulness and sleep.

All of these phenomena are associated with the notion of consciousness. […]"[32]

It fails to address why these phenomena are also accompanied by experience. This vital point that seems to be omitted by physicalism according to Chalmers is well described in what's known as "the knowledge argument". The knowledge argument, on the other hand, is best depicted in what is known as "the Black and White Mary Thought Experiment" where Mary is an expert on physical facts surrounding colors. What is extraordinary about Mary, however, is that despite her knowledge about colors, she has never seen, experienced any color except for the colors white and black. In accordance with the thought experiment, Mary eventually leaves her grayscale-world and gets to experience other colors as well. Now, if you were to say that upon leaving her world, Mary in fact does not experience anything new at all because her knowledge of physical facts surrounding colors already conveyed this experience, you would be a die-hard physicalist. If, however, you accept that her leaving the grayscale-world has a

[31] Chalmers, David (1995). Facing up to the problem of consciousness. Journal of Consciousness Studies 2 (3):200-19. p. 202.

[32] Ibid.

serious impact on her knowledge about colors, you are accepting the validity of Chalmer's claim about the hard problem of consciousness.

Nagel's criticism, on the other hand, is a bit less nuanced, so to speak, but there is an immense strength behind its simplicity. His claim is about the subjective aspect of consciousness and its objective indescribability. His position has famously entered the philosophical debates about consciousness via the following question: "What is it like to be something?"[33]

According to him, the inadequacy of physicalism being the right approach to the problem of consciousness is best shown in the instantiation of having an inner life. Things that are around us which we usually refer to with the word "object" can be very well objectively described yet there seems to be nothing beyond these objective descriptions. "There is nothing that it's like for a table to be cold,"[34] as Philip Goff says when facing Nagel's position. For humans and for animals, however, this seems not to be the case, according to Nagel. He says that this "being like something" is necessarily locked beyond the subjective and cannot be addressed via the physicalist means of objectivity.

Think about the previous example of our friend not being at all taken aback by a painting we found beautiful and mesmerizing. As we said before, we expected the friend to come up with certain specifics of the painting that they dislike or do not artistically respect. Instead, we have been faced with a simple response relying on an intuition or an inner feeling: "Because I see it that way." If we were physicalists, we could try putting our friend into an MRI machine and analyze their brain whilst they look at the painting to get a more objectively verifiable response. Perhaps, we would be able to satisfy our physicalist needs and truly discover whether the neural structures of the brain affiliated with disgust fire when our friend looks at the crooked tree atop the hill, for instance. Nevertheless, we would only be grasping that disgust was present and completely omit the fact that it was not just "disgust", but the "disgust" as phenomenally conceived by our friend.[35]

How does Dennett face these critical points in defense of his reductionist approach?

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[33] Goff, P. (2017). Consciousness and fundamental reality. In Oxford University Press eBooks. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190677015.001.0001.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

What is it like to be an Illusion?

Dennett's response to the Knowledge argument is very straight forward as per by the personal testimony of Philip Goff whose interpretation we have quoted before. Dennett relies on the incompleteness of the argument in his response to it. He deems the Mary thought experiment to be too far fetched from what one can encounter in reality. Goff quotes Dennett's Consciousness Explained where he says the following:

"It is of course true that in any realistic readily imaginable version of the story, Mary would come to learn something [when she leaves her black-and-white room], but in any realistic, readily imaginable version she might know a lot, but she would not know everything physical. Simply imagining that Mary knows a lot, and leaving it at that, is not a good way to figure out the implications of her having "all the physical information" any more than imagining she is filthy rich would be a good way to figure out the implications of the hypothesis that she owned everything."[36]

Now, although I have called Nagel's criticism less nuanced, dispelling it successfully requires another investigatively significant step into Dennett's philosophy. We have to look at the concept of memes.

Dennett draws a strong parallel between memes and a more broadly understood concept of a "gene". He says:

"Among scientists researching cultural evolution, there has been something of an embargo against using Dawkins's (1976) term "meme" to refer to the ways of doing and making things that spread through cultures, but every theorist I can think of countenances such items under one term or another: ideas, practices, methods, beliefs, traditions, rituals, terms, and so on. These are all informational things that spread among human beings more or less the way germs or viruses do. Information is what cultural evolution, like genetic evolution, deals in, […] When we talk about culturally evolved information we seldom if ever are talking about bits (Shannon style) of information, and it would be good to have a general term for a salient hunk or morsel of information, a term to go alongside —and contrast with—gene."[37]

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[36] Goff, P. (2017). Consciousness and fundamental reality. In Oxford University Press eBooks. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190677015.001.0001.

[37] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 209

Dennett's account of both memes and genes is that they are simply information. Thus, both of these phenomena are distinguishable only because of their varied affiliations – genes are the information that strains from the setting of DNA, that is, they are affiliated to the biological. Memes, on the contrary, are affiliated with culture and strain not from a single cultural phenomenon but from a multitude. One example of these cultural phenomena, Dennett says, are words. We will attempt to explain Nagel's remark of "What is it like to be something?" using the phenomenon of words on the basis of it being tightly connected with memes.

The emphasis of the similarity between memes and genes protrudes further than their definition. Memes, just like genes, undergo an evolutionary process. They battle for survival, but the survival is not physical, let us say, but cultural. That is, the survival of a meme does not depend on the physical health of its host or carrier but on its use by the carrier. Once, the carrier stops using the meme, it equals to the carrier's demise in the instance of a gene.

If, however, the spread of memes depends on their use and not on at all on the physicality of their carrier, i.e., the procreation of a being that once used specific memes does not necessitate their spread among their offspring. How do memes endure over time? In the following citation, Dennett develops a great picture of how spread is ensured:

"Other species have some rudiments of cultural evolution. Chimpanzees have a few traditions: cracking nuts with stones, fishing for ants with sticks or straws, and courtship gestures (and a few others) that are not transmitted genetically between the generations but rather are ways of behaving that depend on the offspring's perception of the elders' behavior. Birds have a well-studied variety of ways of acquiring their species-specific songs: the vocalizations of seagulls and chickens, for instance, are entirely instinctual and need no acoustic model to develop, while the fledglings of most other species have an "instinct to learn" (as ethologist Peter Marler put it) but need to hear their parents sing their species-specific song. Experiments in cross fostering place eggs from two different species in the "wrong" nests and reveal that the hatchlings copy their foster parents' song as best they can. A wide variety of animal dispositions (ways of behaving) that were long thought to be genetically transmitted "instincts" have proven to be "traditions" transmitted between parent and offspring via perceptual channels, not genes (Avital

and Jablonka 2000), but in none of these species are there more than a handful of such acquired ways of behaving."[38]

These examples of memes, as Dennett says in the paragraph, are rudimentary. The reason for their rudimentariness is rooted in an aspect of evolution we have talked about many times before – they are memetically competent to produce actions that are culturally spread, just like bees are genetically apt to produce honey, but that does not mean they are also memetically comprehending of their actions. This feature of memetic comprehension comes with a specific species, with a species that is capable of inverting the bottom-up design process into a top-down one – us. What happens, then, when an instance of memes becomes complex rather than rudimentary?

In the beginning of this chapter, we have posited that words are a great instance of memes to discuss. Dennett himself says that:

"Words are the best examples of memes. They are quite salient and well individualized as items in our manifest image. They have clear histories of descent with modification of both pronunciation and meaning that can be traced back thousands of years in many cases. They are countable (think of vocabulary sizes), and their presence or absence in individual human vectors or hosts is detectable by simple test. Their dissemination can be observed, and now, thanks to the Internet, we have a fine laboratory in which more data can be gathered."[39]

Let us use the notion of words, as described by Dennett, to draw out the topic of a complex meme. In the cited text, Dennett talks of words as being a part of our "manifest image", what does that mean?

In accordance with Dennett's philosophy, we can interpose the concept of the "manifest image" with something we could call "private ontology". Both of these terms signify the realm of items, or things both you and me are capable of coming in relation to. I am using the expression "coming in relation to" in order to stay thematically neutral because the relation I can enter into with the things in my personal ontology is numerous – I can hate them, point at them, or even understand them.[40] Moreover, this realm of things is personal due to the fact that it is affected

[38] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. pp. 176-177.

[39] Ibid. p. 207.

[40] Ibid. pp. 60-61.

by my nature, i.e. my species, by my parents, i.e., my upbringing, and by my interests, i.e., I can educate myself for this manifest image to become broader. In it finality, then, the image of my surroundings that becomes manifest to me via these processes achieves a level of complexity that it becomes difficult to replicate, i.e., private.

To carry this notion further, words are seen to be a specific section of the manifest image for us humans not only because our biology allows us to emit such sounds but also because we are taught how to use them. Or to be more precise, we observe how to use them as Dennett says:

"However much variation exists in a particular language, children normally acquire adult competence in recognition and articulation with little or no instruction. And no doubt the semantic properties their newly minted words share, once well installed, are heavily dependent on the structures of the nonlinguistic part of the human Umwelt, the manifest image of affordances and the actions that deal with them. Here too, children acquire the semantics with almost no instruction."[41]

Thus, we understand how words are inserted into our manifest image and, once again, we can see that it is done so without any comprehension on the part of the learner of the words. It is not a case of being locked in a classroom before we learn a word but rather a case of trial and error as we attempt to replicate what our parents and other folk around us say. Furthermore, it should also be apparent that although it is firstly our biology that at certain point permitted us to make the sounds that we do, it is the bottom-up process on the memetic level that eventually pushed these sounds into utterances, expressions, and sentences.

Let us stay on this comparison of biological and cultural evolution and recall a point that was made earlier – the endurance of a genetic information is ensured by the survival of its carrier while the endurance of a memetic information is ensured by its use by the carrier. If we now populate this point with the example of words, we are left with the following and simplistic statement: The survival of words is ensured by their incessant appearance in the lives of peoples, i.e., in their languages. Similarly, we have said that genetic information is provided with the comfort of procreation, i.e., its survival is not limited to a single individual but can be easily transmitted and thus endure potentially *ad infinitum*. The procreation of the carrier of memetic information, on the other hand, does not necessitate the endurance of it. Or, at least,

[41] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. pp. 194-195.

it does not ensure the endurance of the entire plethora the carrier possesses. How does memetic information spread then?

The answer to this question is also somewhat comparable to the one we would give were we talking about genes – the greater the number of its carriers, the greater likelihood that the information is going to be passed on the next generation of offspring (recall our example of "the group"). This angle of the comparison of biology and culture brings us to a significant point of departure between these two instances of bottom-up design. The spread of a genetic information among a greater number of people takes years and years on end whereas a mass spread of a memetic information can take place within the bounds of a single generation. How is that possible?

We have said that a great example of memes are words. Words, just like any meme, can be passed onto both me and you by another member of our people by mere use, i.e., by their utterance. How is, then, that we become apt to share them with other members of our community?

For the third time, we are drawing a parallel between the biological sphere we have concerned ourselves with in the first section of our exploration of Dennett's philosophy. Namely, it is the parallel of free-floating rationales. We previously explained that free-floating rationales are, in essence, the reasons according to which we find out the universe to be. The finding out is conditioned by us growing comprehending of them. It is the same case with memes and, especially for our case, with words. This can be inferred from the emphasized incomprehensiveness on our part when we learn how to use words. To put it plainly, in the beginning of our efforts to learn, we try what we hear around us and hope for the best. We hope that we are understood. Once, however, we achieve comprehension we uncover, just like we did with our biology and the universe's structures, the hitherto hidden reasons for why the words function as they do. What does this comprehension of words look like? Dennett says:

"One of the landmarks of twentieth century philosophy of language is H. P. Grice's account (1957, 1968, 1969, 1989) of the necessary conditions for communication, or what he called "non-natural meaning." Grice's central claim was a three-part definition of what it is for a person to mean something by doing something. As clarified by Strawson (1964) and others, to mean something by

doing x, S must intend

(1) x to produce a certain response r in a certain audience A,

(2) A to recognize S's intention (1), and

(3) A's recognition of (1) to function as at least part of A's reason for A's response r."[42]

As Dennett adds a couple of pages later[43], what Grice did by positing this "three-part definition" of communication if it was to have "non-natural meaning", was to "reverse engineer human

communication, adducing the free-floating rationales that would naturally be uncovered by eons of cultural and genetic evolution once the basic Good Trick of using words as tools had been established."[44]

Accordingly, he described a level of communication that had been refined with comprehension on the part of the speaker for it is the speaker's intention that plays the pivotal role of the three-part definition. In consequence of the speaker-oriented reasoning when Dennett talks about the appearance of comprehension in communication, I believe the arrival of comprehension to also be the central point of the next step of our evolutionary progress, namely, the development of a self. We can elaborate on this progress in the following way:

In order for the memetic spread of words to occur, the words need to grow in number. Since procreation does not influence the spread of words in the best way possible but only accidentally, they need to be first and foremost communicated to other people. Communication happens without comprehension but once comprehension enters the picture, communication gains in efficiency and, therefore, ensures better spread. One of the effects of better efficiency is that the spread is not randomized but intentional, i.e., it is an intended meme that is being spread and not a meme distorted[45]. In order for this to take place, we must know what we are saying, so to speak. Hence, a habit of self-examination must be established for us to communicate rightly. Or as Dennett says:

"Our habits of self-justification (self-appreciation, self-exoneration, self-consolation, self-glorification, etc.) are ways of behaving (ways of *thinking*) that we acquire in the course of

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[42] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 288.

[43] Ibid. p. 292.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Compare someone telling you a story in a language they are not entirely comfortable with, and a story told by a native speaker.

filling our heads with culture-borne memes, including, importantly, the habits of self-reproach and self-criticism."[46]

Let us now return to the issue with which we have started this chapter. We posited that Nagel's question of "What is it like to something?" is a paramount obstacle in the ways of a physicalist explanation of consciousness. It is an obstacle because it seems to point out a subjective aspect of consciousness that cannot be touched via reductive means. In other words, there would always be something the physicalists would not be able to account for in their explanations. I then suggested that it is through Dennett's conception of meme and specifically words that physicalists are able to bridge this obstacle. It is here that my suggestion gains warranty. I believe that the Dennettian approach is capable of claiming that the subjective aspect of consciousness is tightly connected to the emergence of a self through the use of language. Furthermore, I believe that the "feeling of being like something" is the expression of this self. This possess a natural question: What is the nature of this self? To gain this answer, however, it is first paramount to draw out Dennett's account of consciousness to its completeness. Thus, we shall first do just that and glimpse what this self-reflection causes to happen in human beings.

[46] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 341.

Consciousness as a User-interface

Let us imagine a picture of a more "real" human being than we did at the end of the last chapter. That is, let us imagine a person that speaks not only a single word but several, a person that wants to allow for the spread not of one meme but an entire plethora. Such a person would not only implement self-examination once but for every meme they are willing to share. In other words, this person would suddenly have their reasons for why they are possessing this meme, that meme, but also the other meme – they would understand themselves according to the plethora of the ways of behaving (memes) they are apt to communicate to their peers. Consequently, they would develop a sense of their self as the instance under which all of these reasons are unified. Does this self, however, truly exist?

Dennett's answer to this question is very straightforward – no, it does not.[47] It is merely a very useful tool in comprehending the world, in unifying the world into a single image which we can then easily orient ourselves in. It is a user illusion.

In summary, we can say together with Daniel Dennett:

"Here is yet another strange inversion: this practice of sharing information in communicative actions with others, giving and demanding reasons, is what creates our personal user-illusions."[48]

[47] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 341.

[48] Ibid. p. 343.

Chapter II – The Issue of the Unconscious

Is the Matter of Consciousness that Simple?

This is not where the thesis ends, however, we not only need to return to Nagel's exclamation about bats but also reduce the reduction, i.e., to entertain the idea of where this concept of a user-illusion emanates from. Let us then see why it is not like something to be us.

In accordance with Dennett's rejection of the self, I believe the response to Nagel's argument would go as follows:

It indeed may seem like there is a subjective aspect to the manner in which the user-interface operates. It may seem possible that the self somehow adds something to the examination of the reasons taking place. This is, however, truly only a seeming for the subjective, first-person perspective of the self-examination is rendered palpable by the incessant workings of our finding reasons in various domains and the false assumption that it is all done by a single entity and not by a myriad of mechanisms designed specifically for such a task.[49]

Why do we fall prey to such false assumption then?

The assumption has its roots in a phenomenon we have touched upon in the very first chapter of the thesis, the phenomenon of a certain mystical power. Dennett calls this mystical power the Cartesian Gravity[50] and it is this Cartesian Gravity that makes us believe that we are the viewers of in Cartesian Theater. What are these two concepts and where did they come from?

According to Dennett, the dualistic philosophy of René Descartes has proven obsolete and should be rejected[51]. As has been shown, he thinks that in the matter of explaining what consciousness is, materialism is the best approach up to date. He also claims, however, that Descartes' influence is still very much alive in today's philosophy of the mind and can be seen to even penetrate into the fundamentally different materialistic attitude towards consciousness. He calls this influenced materialism "the Cartesian materialism"[52]. It is within the bounds of this type of "materialistic" thinking he beliefs to have unearthed the aforementioned concepts.

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[49] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. pp. 348-349 and p. 370

[50] Ibid. p. 20.

[51] Dennett, D. C. (1991). Consciousness explained. Little Brown. p. 33.

[52] Ibid. p. 107.

According to Dennett's explanation Cartesian materialism applied to the problem of consciousness is characterized by an unfounded supposition on the part of the thinker that there is a centrality to the events that happen during our conscious experience. Let us draw an example:

The brain is divided into two parts. The left hemisphere and the right hemisphere. The left hemisphere is commonly associated with logic while the right hemisphere is associated with creativity. In accordance with this division, let us assume that there are typical activities of the left-brain side and the right-brain side. When we perform these activities, we are usually conscious of them. That is, we see them happen. We can therefore say that there are two instances of being conscious – L-conscious activities and R-conscious activities. The hemispheres typically communicate on a biological level, i.e., they are connected via nerves, but let us suppose for the sake of the analogy that they do not. If we do so, we are left with an L-conscious activity happening at time x and R-conscious activity happening at time y while each of these activities is performed in a separate region of the brain and does not "know" about the other. In accordance, the only commonality between these two activities is that they are taking place within us and that we are conscious of them – they unfold in front of our "eyes" at time x and time y.

It is here, Dennett says, that the next steps in our argumentation can be influenced by the Cartesian Gravity and, consequently, give rise to the Cartesian Theater.

The problematic steps are the following: The assumption that our "seeing" of these activities unfold provides us with an intimate knowledge of them. The assumption that there is a single "I" watching the activities unfold. And the assumption that the activities are manifesting in a single place to be grasped rather than being scattered in their appropriate locations. It is the assumption about our intimate knowledge of these activities Dennett calls the Cartesian Gravity[53] and it is the image of a person watching the various activities as if broadcast on a screen in a designated place that is based upon the other two assumptions.[54]

Now, Dennett does not deny that these false concepts have strength, quite on the contrary. The concepts are so strong that his entire concept of consciousness, as we have described it in the

[53] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 20.

[54] Schneider, S. (2007). Daniel Dennett on the Nature of Consciousness. In Blackwell Publishing eBooks (pp. 313–324). https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470751466.ch25

first part of the thesis, seems to not only be a take on consciousness but also an attempt to include the possibility of their mistaken appearance. Let us briefly return to this point to emphasize it.

We have seen that it is due to our urge to communicate that the self and, therefore, consciousness as a user-interface arises. If we compare these findings with the assumptions connected to the Cartesian Theater, we can clearly see their implemented use. The pivotal difference, however, is that they are not the fundamental blocks of the theory, but its final results and they are illusory, useful, but illusory. They come about because of the incessant workings of a multitude of systems within us that we are trying to comprehend and communicate with others and due to the fact that their existence proved useful for doing so, they remain at our disposal. They remain so for now.

Is Dennett's Rejection Fair?

In one of the previous chapters, we have proposed two critical stances towards physicalism. The first one was the Knowledge Argument or the example of Black and White Mary. This example pointed out that it is possible that even if we know all the physical facts about a thing – colors, for instance – there is still something missing until we experience them. This was shown of a lady that supposedly knew everything about colors but lived her entire life locked in a black and white room until one day, she was allowed to leave.

Dennett' response to this argument was, simply, that such an occurrence is unthinkable in reality and, therefore, holds no merit.

The second stance was that of Thomas Nagel. His point was that although modern science might end up being capable of rendering consciousness into objective facts, there still remains something subjective from the position of the being whose consciousness the scientists are trying to describe. There still remains something which is what it is like to be them.

I argued that Dennett's reply to this objection lies in his concept of communication or language. Since we have an urge to describe various instances in which we find ourselves during normal, everyday situations, we can enhance this process by comprehending them first. This ability to comprehend does not only entail physical occurrences – to understand what a triangle is since we want to tell our colleagues, for instance – but also occurrences of a memetic nature. The best example of memes are words because they have a tight connection to this urge to spread information. To achieve comprehension on the level of words, we have to uncover reasons according to they function that have been left in the memetic universe by its non-intelligent designer. To do so, we have to engage in self-examination, and it is due to this process that the illusion of a subjective perspective emerges. The subjective perspective, however, is illusory for it is only a reflection of your relationship to the comprehended reasons, i.e., you either comprehended the reasons and was rendered apt to either share them or refrain from sharing them, or you didn't comprehend them at all and are, therefore, in no relationship to them.

Are Dennett's rejections of these critical points fair?

The Problem of Unconscious Information

Although I find myself friendly towards the materialistic view and, especially, to Dennett's idea of the non-intelligent designer mindlessly designing the universe, I am rather skeptical of his rejections of the aforementioned critiques. I will attempt to justify my skepticism with regards to the rejection of Nagel's critique. I will begin the description of my skepticism by highlighting a specific aspect of Descartes' philosophy.

In Fourth Set of Replies, Descartes clearly states that there are not thoughts of which we would be unconscious:

"As to the fact that there can be nothing in the mind, in so far as it is a thinking thing, of which it is not aware [conscius], this seems to me to be self-evident. For there is nothing that we can understand to be in the mind, regarded in this way, that is not a thought or dependent on a thought. If it were not a thought or dependent on a thought it would not belong to the mind qua thinking thing; and we cannot have any thought of which we are not aware [conscius] at the very moment when it is in us. In view of this I do not doubt that the mind begins to think as soon as it is implanted in the body of an infant, and that it is immediately aware [conscius] of its thoughts, even though it does not remember this afterwards because the impressions of these thoughts do not remain in the memory."[55]

Regardless of the statement's supposed clarity, there is still much discussion as to how exactly is Descartes' sentiment supposed to be explained through the modern lens of the problem of consciousness.[56] I wish not to make any judgements upon this issue, I have raised it only to highlight one simple factor that might have influenced how Dennett conceived of the Cartesian Theater and other Descartes-related concepts: Descartes was not aware of the significance of the unconscious as we are aware of it now due to the works of many psychologists and philosophers[57].

Now, I can polemize whether Dennett would recognize the exploits of modern psychology as scientific work (I am leaving out the philosophical ones from the get-go) but he does praise the

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[55] CSM II 171–172 / AT VII 246

[56] Consider NADLER, S. (2011). Consciousness Among the Cartesians. *Studia Leibnitiana*, *43*(2), 132–144. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43695740, for instance, or Radner, D. (1988). Thought and Consciousness in Descartes. *Journal of the History of Philosophy 26*(3), 439-452. https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.1988.0064.

[57]Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Friedrich Nietzsche, Eduard von Hartmann, Herbert Marcuse

work of Sigmund Freud in regards to the problem of consciousness[58]. Nevertheless, I believe the mere existence of such phenomenon as the unconscious would pose a significant threat to his concept of the illusory self.

We know that Dennett himself is aware of this phenomenon and wrestles with it in *Bacteria* although only scarcely. Let us take a look at these instances:

"It starts with what Darwin calls "unconscious" selection, with people willy-nilly or inadvertently favoring some offspring at the expense of others, thereby creating a selective force that later becomes more focused and more directed. Eventually we get to "methodical" selection, in which pigeon fanciers, or rose growers, or horse or cattle breeders, for instance, have specific goals in mind, specific targets of features they are trying to select for, and this is a major step toward top-down intelligent design, where the domesticators *have* reasons (good or bad) for what they are doing and what they hope the outcome will be. In the case of the domestication of words, this emerges when individuals begin to become reflective or self-conscious about their use of language, shunning words they find unimpressive or offensive or old-fashioned (or too slangy and new)."[59]

And further:

"Contact between adults speaking different languages tends to produce varieties of language in which morphological complexity is stripped out" (p.148). The obvious way of seeing the "motivation" here is that speakers unconsciously "gravitate" to simpler utterances, in response to the incomprehension of their interlocutors. This "gravitation" might in some instances really be something like erosion, a simple economizing response to the physical demands of utterance, an effect of laziness or thrift, coming up with a shortcut that others copy. But it also might be accomplished not by any such slide down a gradient under the influence of economy, but by mutation and selection of ways of making oneself understood, as homed in on by following subtle cues of facial expression and other reactions from interlocutors, with little or no deliberate or methodical guidance by the speakers. Such gradual "gravitational" changes could just as well be intensifications or elaborations as energy-saving, time-saving simplifications. As usual, though, we can see Darwin's bridge of "unconscious selection"

[58] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. pp. 100-101

[59] Ibid. p. 198.

leading seamlessly to "methodical selection" and eventually to "intelligent design," which itself can be seen to come in degrees, with relatively unimaginative trial and error (like the repetitive yelling of naïve tourists trying to get the natives to understand "plain English") giving way to insightful innovations scaffolded by gestures and pantomime, and quickly settling on nonce "conventions" whose meaning is readily seen in context (you shake your head and blurt out "smaller" to the fishmonger who knows no English, and from then on, the more diminutive species on sale are known to both of you as *smollar*)."[60]

From the quoted paragraphs, we can infer that the unconscious seems to operate on both the genetic or biological level and on the memetic or cultural level. It is also clear that the unconscious' influence is not particularly easy to describe. In the first instance, Dennett seems to say that the influence of the unconscious is "inadvertent", and that this inadvertence gradually grows more "focused" and "methodological". In the second instance, the definition of the unconscious is still fleeting but he seems to be in favor of it being pragmatically driven – to have an easier time communicating or to communicate quicker.

What is more interesting about the manner in which Dennett speaks of the unconscious, however, is that he seems to understand it in its most literal sense – that-which-we-are-not-aware-of. Or, to put it in his own terminology, the unconscious seems to entail all the activities which we are competent to perform but not comprehending of them. I infer this, specifically, from his statement that when cattle breeders achieve methodological selection, they perform "a major step toward top-down intelligent design, where the domesticators *have* reasons (good or bad) for what they are doing and what they hope the outcome will be".

It is true that Dennett allows for a gradual development of the unconscious and it, therefore, seems not to simply be that-which-we-are-not-aware-of but something slightly more complex but is this enough? Is this the sole purport of the unconscious?

Let us briefly discuss the purport of the unconscious as described by Sigmund Freud, the psychologist Dennett himself references in good will. The discussion is not aimed at establishing what the unconscious' true definition, it should merely serve as a highlight of its supposed complexity which we criticize Dennett for lacking.

[60] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 271-272.

Although Freud accepts the existence of the layer of our mind that we have just described, namely, that-which-we-are-not-aware-of, it is far from his most groundbreaking thoughts. He calls this layer the preconscious or the kind of the unconscious, which is unconscious only descriptively, i.e., it can become conscious at any given moment[61]. It is precisely the idea of the other kind of unconscious, the dynamic kind, that is the groundbreaking idea that brings complexity to the concept of unconscious as a whole. The dynamic unconscious or "the unconscious" brings forth an entire plethora of Freudian concepts which we will omit for they do not bring value into our discussion. Where we will stop with omitting, though, is at Freud's understanding of what a neurosis is.

Neurosis appears, according to Freud, when that which is dynamically unconscious wants to get out, so to speak, but the part of us that is in charge of motility refuses to let it so. We are of course speaking of the dynamic between the famous ego and the id, a dynamic which ultimately leads to the id's urge to be repressed. Once repressed, the dynamically unconscious power, let us call it an impulse, "creates for itself, along paths over which the ego has no power, a substitutive representation (which forces itself upon the ego by way of a compromise) – the symptom"[62]. In other words, both of the domains – the dynamically unconscious and the center of motility – ease off from their respective pretensions and arrive at a more positive kind of relationship. The center of motility does not completely reject the dynamically unconscious' impulse and the dynamically unconscious' impulse is not as crude but rather smoothed out. Regardless of the change, the center of motility still dislikes the presence of an impulse emanating from the unconscious domain, and it thus represses it still though only partially. That which makes it through the center of motility's strict lenses, is the symptom. Furthermore, it is the second repression, i.e., that which generates a symptom that Freud calls neurosis[63]. This is because neurosis is an ailment of the mind which causes distressing behavior on the part of them who suffer from it[64] and since the distressing behavior is seen in their functioning on the outside, it must have at some point made it passed the gateway overseen by the center of motility, i.e., the symptom.

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[61] Freud, S. (1975). The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud. p. 14.

[62] Ibid. p. 50.

[63] Thompson, M. G., & Leavy, S. A. (1994). The Neurotic and the Psychotic Experience of Reality. In The Truth About Freud's Technique: The Encounter With the Real (pp. 27–36). NYU Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfvqq.10.

[64] Consider an example of this from Freud.

Now, why are we bringing up this point about neurosis? I believe that Freud's conception of neurosis that strains from the concept of the unconscious, the dynamic unconscious, brings up greatly just how little ground the pronouncement that we seem "not to be aware of something" covers the entire domain. Frankly, it seems to ignore the most valuable part. The mere fact that

Neurosis highlights the complex inner workings of our mind. It highlights the "decisions" that go under our conscious radar and still make our relations to the outside world, and to ourselves in that matter, of a very specific kind. One might say that they render our minds into states in which the responses to the objective inner and outer phenomena make it seem like it is genuinely something like to be us.

We have seen that Dennett figures the concept of the unconscious into his philosophy of consciousness. Moreover, we have seen that the concept seems to find its way into his philosophy via the duality of competence and comprehension – it seems to describe the domain of competence without any comprehension. If, therefore, we have rightly grasped just how much emphasis Dennett lays on the concepts of competence and comprehension in the matter of building up a false pretense for the "self" and if it is truly via the means of a false "self" that Dennett would answer Nagel's criticism of physicalism, the phenomenon of a more complex unconscious we have just described seems to discredit this very answer.

Chapter II – The Aid in Panpsychism

Is There a Way Out?

We have argued that the pivotal philosophical statement of Dennett's is his rejection of the Cartesian model of looking at the world, i.e., dualism, and his attempt to do away with the remnants of this model, i.e., the Cartesian Theater and the Cartesian Gravity. There is, however, another anti-Cartesian framework of thought that has generated interest among philosophers and scientists alike in the recent years[65] and it has its roots reaching to Descartes himself. I am talking of the philosophy of Baruch de Spinoza and his influence on a model of looking at the world called panpsychism.

At the first glance, it might look like Dennett and Spinoza have nothing in common except for their respective claims that Descartes was wrong in his thinking from one perspective or another. Spinoza is commonly described as a rationalist[66] and I believe that nothing can be farther than *a priori* models of thinking and an excessive power of reasoning from Dennett's conception of knowledge as shown on the duality of competence and comprehension. Nevertheless, there has been a recent attempt to tweak just this view of Spinoza being a rationalist in the Cartesian sense of the word.[67] This view relies heavily on Spinoza's relations between Substance, Modes, and Attributes. The author of the attempt, Genevieve Lloyd, says:

"Spinoza's epistemological concerns in Part Two of the Ethics have to be understood in relation to his metaphysical treatment of Substance, Attributes, and Modes in Part One. These connections make his version of reason both stranger and of more consequence than talk of his 'rationalism' can capture. Underpinning his account of reason is his treatment of thought as an Attribute of Substance. Those category terms are of course familiar from earlier philosophical systems. However, in Spinoza's philosophy they operate in a way that is quite startling. There is but one Substance—identified with God. Thought and Extension are two among an infinite number of Attributes, each of which totally 'expresses' the infinite being of Substance."[68]

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[65] Goff, P., & Moran, A. (2022). Is Consciousness Everywhere?: Essays on Panpsychism. Imprint Academic.

[66] Seager, W. (2019). The Routledge Handbook of Panpsychism. Routledge.

[67] Genevieve Lloyd (2020) Reconsidering Spinoza's 'Rationalism', Australasian Philosophical Review, 4:3, 196-215, DOI: 10.1080/24740500.2021.1962647.

[68] Ibid. p. 197.

Based on Spinoza's claim that both Thought and Extension express or depict Substance completely, only from a different perspective, so to speak, Lloyd argues that hiding Spinoza under the umbrella of rationalism obscures important aspects of his view. His claim is not that he is not a rationalist, but that he is not a rationalist *par excellence*.

The most vital obscuration this may cause, according to Lloyd, is the importance of imagination in Spinoza's thinking. This claim is inferred from these specific paragraphs of Spinoza's Ethics:

"The mind does not err from the mere fact that it imagines, but only insofar as it is considered to lack an idea that excludes the existence of those things that it imagines to be present to it."[69]

And:

"An imagination is an idea which indicates the present constitution of the human Body more than the nature of an external body—not distinctly, of course but confusedly. This is how it happens that the Mind is said to err."[70]

In accordance with the argument above and the re-emphasis of the tight connection between Thought and Extension, Lloyd claims that the position of reason within Spinoza's philosophy is not as dominant as it is commonly believed among rationalists. Lloyd says:

"For Spinoza, reason guides the vagaries of imagination; yet it never entirely transcends it. The challenge of understanding reality is a collaborative process between different aspects of mind. In that collaboration, reason has less dominance over other aspects of thinking than is commonly expected of a 'rationalist' philosophy."[71]

Spinoza is not a pure-bred rationalist, then, but how does that make him in any way more akin to Dennett and his philosophical sentiments?

Inspired by Lloyd's own remark about the similarity between Dennettian treatment of metaphors as "tools of thought" and Spinoza's unique treatment of imagination in the same paper on page 211, Walter Veit sets off to answer just this very question. He identifies three aspects of this similarity that are if importance to us. First, Spinoza too criticizes what Dennett coined by the term "Cartesian Theater". Second, Spinoza too establishes what Dennett coined

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[69] Spinoza 1677 (1985): IIP17Schol., 465.

[70] Spinoza 1677 (1985): IVP1Schol., 547.

[71] Genevieve Lloyd (2020) Reconsidering Spinoza's 'Rationalism', Australasian Philosophical Review, 4:3, 199, DOI: 10.1080/24740500.2021.1962647. p. 199.

by the term "free-floating rationales". Third, Spinoza too allows for the possibility of having competence without comprehension. Let us look at these similarities more closely.

As we have seen, Dennett's criticism of the Cartesian Theater is that there exists not a "self" in our heads which would view things happening in front of them as if on a giant screen. According to Veit, then, a similar thing is taking place in Spinoza's thought when he "calls into question the very ('undoubtable') idea that the mind is somehow trying to grasp a reality external to itself"[72]. Furthermore, Veit claims that Spinoza "can be seen as one of the first philosophers to advocate 'embodied cognition'"[73]. Although Veit fails to specify where this inference comes from, I believe the roots are in a passage he reflects upon very shortly before. In this passage Spinoza says:

"*The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things*."[74]

In this proposition, Spinoza is establishing a view that will later be known as parallelism. The building block of this passage is his view of Attributes and of Substance. In accordance with ID7 where we learn that God is the one and only Substance, Attributes become means of expressing His essence. When in P7[75] Spinoza then assimilates ideas, i.e., concepts of the mind by IID3, and things, i.e., a specific means of expressing God as an extended thing by IID1, he is "merely" saying that both these means express the same thing only differently and that for every idea pertaining to God, there must be a thing for that idea.[76] To perhaps gain more clarity upon this argument, Spinoza himself offers a great example:

"For example, the circle existing in Nature and the idea that is in God of an existing circle are one and the same thing which is manifested through different attributes;[…]"[77]

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[72] Veit, W. (2020). Dennett and Spinoza. Australasian Philosophical Review, 4(3), 259–265. https://doi.org/10.1080/24740500.2021.1962653.

[73] Veit, W. (2020). Dennett and Spinoza. Australasian Philosophical Review, 4(3), 259–265. https://doi.org/10.1080/24740500.2021.1962653.

[74] De Spinoza, B. (1996). Ethics. Penguin Classics. p. 35

[75] While referencing a passage in plain text I will be following this format: Roman numeral – number of the chapter, A, P, D etc. will stand for Axiom, Proposition, Demonstration etc. as it is in accord with the book's own format, and Arabic numeral will specify which Axiom, Proposition, Demonstration etc. we are talking about. IP27, therefore, stands for the 27th Proposition in the first chapter of the Ethics.

[76] Seager, W. (2019). The Routledge Handbook of Panpsychism. Routledge.

[77] De Spinoza, B. (1996). Ethics. Penguin Classics. p.35.

To come back to Veit's claim, since in Spinoza's formulation of the relation between a thing and an idea, there is not an abyss that must be traversed and that the concepts are rather fundamentally close knit, he believes that the notion of the Theater disappears. That is, since there is not space for a detached perspective, but the perspective is rather necessarily engulfed in both the physical and the mental the gravitation to both centrality and self-ishness shatters.

Second, we have understood that the Dennettian notion of free-floating rationales has been derived from the fact that there is no intelligent designer, yet the universe seems to be intelligently designed. In accordance, they are the reasons why things are ordered in the way they are that are waiting to be grasped by a being competent to do so, i.e., they are flee-floating.

Veit says that we can find a similar concept in Spinoza:

"Finally, it is surprising that Schliesser [2018] doesn't see the resemblance between Dennett's notion of free-floating rationales and the Spinozist suggestion that reason is found in and as part of nature rather than human minds."[78]

Once again, Veit fails to mention where exactly is the root of this claim and, once again, I believe he is referencing a passage discussed only moments after:

"Similarly, when they see the structure of the human body, they are struck by foolish wonder, and because they do not know the causes of so great an art, they infer that it is constructed, not by mechanical, but by divine, or supernatural art, and constituted in such a way that one part does not injure another."[79]

Here, I believe Veit's point to be that since Nature is orderly structured in a chain of necessary causes as proved by IP11D2:

"For each thing there must be assigned a cause, *or* reason, both for its existence and for its nonexistence."[80]

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[78] Veit, W. (2020). Dennett and Spinoza. Australasian Philosophical Review, 4(3), 259–265. https://doi.org/10.1080/24740500.2021.1962653. p. 263.

[79] De Spinoza, B. (1996). Ethics. Penguin Classics. p. 29.

[80] Ibid. p. 7.

And since our reason is mediated by imagination which our reason can "never entirely transcend", as Lloyd says[81]. And since the imagination is influenced by various affects due to which we feel either joyous or sorrowful as by IIIP16:

"From the mere fact that we imagine a thing to have some likeness to an object which usually affects the mind with joy or sadness, we love it or hate it, even though that in which the thing is like the object is not the efficient cause of these affects."[82]

And since it is our "nature" to strive towards joy and abstain from sorrow as by IIIP13:

"When the mind imagines those things that diminish or restrain the body's power of acting, it strives, as far as it can, to recollect things which exclude their existence."[83]

The reasons for why the world is structured in the way that it is await the arrival of knowledge that must be built upon the workings of imagination that never go away.

Let us rephrase this again with some more consistency: The world is structured in a very particular way. That is, there exist reasons for why the world appears in the way that it does due to the necessary existence of causes pertaining to it.[84] When the human mind initially enters the picture, so to speak, it is only concerned with what its imagination proposes to be joyous and what it proposes to be sorrowful and acts in accordance, i.e., it is rather hedonistic and cannot distinguish whether that which it proposes truly does create these affects and not something else instead. Once, however, the human mind attains knowledge, it can see more clearly which of these affects are caused by what and whether they are there at all. The mind is rendered apt to do this due to its uncovering the causal chains that pertain through nature, i.e., it can glimpse the reasons.

Spinoza himself offers us a great example of this "uncovering":

"Similarly, when we look at the sun, we imagine it as about two hundred feet away from us, an error which does not consist simply in this imagining, but in the fact that while we imagine it in this way, we are ignorant of its true distance and of the cause of this imagining. For even if

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[81] Genevieve Lloyd (2020) Reconsidering Spinoza's 'Rationalism', Australasian Philosophical Review, 4:3, 196-215, DOI: 10.1080/24740500.2021.1962647

[82] De Spinoza, B. (1996). Ethics. Penguin Classics. p. 79.

[83] Ibid. p. 78.

[84] Koistinen, O. (2003). Spinoza's Proof of Necessitarianism. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *67*(2), 283–310. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20140604

we later come to know that it is more than six hundred diameters of the earth away from us, we nevertheless imagine it as near. For we imagine the sun so near not because we do not know its true distance, but because an affection of our body involves the essence of the sun insofar as our body is affected by the sun."[85]

What follows is that these facts that the sun is way farther away from us than we at first deem it to be, for instance, Veit considers to be akin to Dennett's free-floating rationales. They exist due to the orderliness of nature, they exist prior to our developing a way to get to them and are, consequently, there patiently waiting to be grasped.

Third, we have seen that Dennett uses the expression "competence without comprehension" when speaking of things – animals, humans, AIs – that are very well capable of doing a certain task while not having the ability to very well explain or grasp the task at question. Many birds are well capable of migrating when winter is near but none of them grasp the purpose of their action in the same way that we, comprehending humans, do. Veit claims to have found our final pattern of similarity between Spinoza and Dennett in the following way:

"Spinoza's recognition that 'men judge things according to the disposition of their brain, and imagine, rather than understand them' [ibid.: 114] might very well be equated with Dennett's recognition that we can have competence without comprehension."[86]

Fortunately, I believe this inference to be only a further exploitation of the passages we have quoted afore. We have seen that Spinoza talks about our "natural" propensity for joy and avoidance of sorrow. We have also seen that sometimes it can happen that we judge a thing to cause us sorrow or joy even though it is not that which produced the sorrowful or joyous affect. Furthermore, it is also true that some things may cause joy or sorrow accidentally as by IIIP15:

"Any thing can be the accidental cause of joy, sorrow, or desire."[87]

Consequently, we can say that it is conceivable for a mind to imagine the cause of an affect rightfully solely on the basis of the imagination having a propensity towards the joyful and also to imagine a thing sorrowful solely on the basis of its affect being repugnant. In other words, it is conceivable that we imagine a thing to be the cause of an affect rightfully without having

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[85] De Spinoza, B. (1996). Ethics. Penguin Classics. pp. 53-54.

[86] Veit, W. (2020). Dennett and Spinoza. Australasian Philosophical Review, 4(3), 259–265. https://doi.org/10.1080/24740500.2021.1962653. p. 263.

[87] De Spinoza, B. (1996). Ethics. Penguin Classics. p. 78.

any knowledge of it, i.e., without being able to construe the chain of causes leading to this being so.

Thus, I believe Veit understands the likeness between Spinoza and Dennett in his final remark.

How does the establishment of the likeness between Spinoza and Dennett help our aim of facing the issue of the unconscious, however?

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

My proposition is the following: I believe the three points of similitude between Dennett and Spinoza at least partially questionable. In the stead of their complete argumentative strength, I find an emphasis on a valuable phenomenon unique to Spinoza that addresses the aforementioned gap in Dennett's perspective. Let us conclude this thesis by first pointing out the issues of Veit's interpretation and second describing Spinoza's unique concept.

We have said that Dennett's account of "consciousness" or user-illusion, seems to fall short when addressing the issue of complexity of the unconscious powers that might at any time influence our being. We claimed that by mere locking away of their status into the realm of unawareness leaves out an important feature of how our consciousness is formed, i.e., it seems to leave out that which we might call the "what it is like to be us ".

As a consequence, we proposed that there might be a way to bridge this issue while maintaining the otherwise ingenious points made by Dennett in *Bacteria*. We argued that this bridge can be found in Spinoza's philosophy. In accordance with our conviction, we turned to drawing out points of similitude between Spinoza and Dennett in their respective thoughts. Let us return to these points and examine them once more. I believe one of them to be quite convincing while the rest though true somewhat, lacking in some respect.

Regarding the first argument, then, when Veit says that Spinoza's thinking adheres to the Dennettian rejection of the Cartesian Theater, I believe an affirmation is in order.[88]

Regarding the second argument, when Veit suggests that Spinoza's thinking includes a concept similar to what Dennett refers to as "free-floating rationales", I believe it is advisable to proceed with caution. I justify this proposed caution on the fact that for Dennett's free-floating rationales the existence of a non-intelligent designer is vital. The reasons for why the world is the way that it is were not set at a given point in time after which followed the period of implementation or rather the period when things slowly began embodying these reasons. Instead, these reasons simply manifested as the things in the world interacted with one another.

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[88] The justification of this claim is supported by the proposed argument, but it is my belief that there is an even stronger point present in Spinoza's thinking. This point can be found in IIP15. Since, however, this point involves a highly discussed concept of Spinoza's, namely, the concept of *idea ideatum*, I choose to omit it from our discussion. Consider Nadler's *Spinoza and Consciousness*, Curley's *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, or Della Rocca's *Representation and The Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*, as only a couple of instances of just how complicated this issue is. To unravel it, then, only as a side-note of a more general discussion would be to treat it lightly. The concept of *idea ideatum* would, simply, require a thesis of its own.

We can, once again, recall the idea of bottom-up design: It is sheer trial and error and for each success and failure there is a reason, but such reason can only become known after the fact. Consequently, it then makes no sense to talk about reasons prior to the things' existence. I believe this occurrence to be well represented by my attempt to dispel the idea of survival being the aim of evolution which we have talked about previously.

In comparison, Spinoza's approach to the reasons according to which the world operates is slightly different. It is rather that these reasons are not only quite clearly grasped by an intelligent designer, God, who produced them as per IP33:

"Things could have been produced by God in no other way, and in no other order than they have been produced."[89]

But it also seems that they are set prior to things embodying them. This can be inferred from Spinoza's definition of necessity where these reasons appear to always exist rather than there having been time when the relations between things and, therefore, the reasons governing these relations have not manifested yet[90]. The passage I am referring to is ID8:

"By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing. Exp.: For such existence, like the essence of a thing, is conceived as an eternal truth, and on that account cannot be explained by duration or time, even if the duration is conceived to be without beginning or end."[91]

In summary, we can see the similitude that Veit described between Spinoza and Dennett from the perspective of free-floating rationales holds only to a certain degree. This degree is the degree of reasons existing due to various causal chains operating in the world. The similitude fails, however, on the level of the non-intelligent designer.

Finally, regarding the third argument, when Veit claims that Spinoza defends the concept of competence without comprehension, I believe, once again, that it is advisable to proceed with caution. I justify my appeal to caution in the context within which the pivotal passage Veit quotes finds itself to be. While speaking of "men judging things according to the disposition of their brain rather than understanding them", Veit is referencing a passage in the Appendix of

[89] De Spinoza, B. (1996). Ethics. Penguin Classics. p. 22.

[90] Garrett, D. (2022). The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza. Cambridge University Press. p. 76.

[91] De Spinoza, B. (1996). Ethics. Penguin Classics. p. 2.

the First part of the Ethics. Namely, it is the part of the Appendix that concerns itself with, and only briefly with the notions of praise and blame. Spinoza says:

"After men persuaded themselves that everything which happens, happens on their account, they had to judge that what is most important in each thing is what is most useful to them, and to rate as most excellent all those things by which they were most pleased. Hence, they had to form these notions, by which they explained natural things: *good, evil, order, confusion, warm, cold, beauty, ugliness*. And because they think themselves free, those notions have arisen: *praise* and *blame*, *sin* and *merit*. The latter I shall explain after I have treated human nature, but the former I shall briefly explain here."[92]

From a broader perspective on the Appendix, Spinoza's main interest seems to be a refusal of a *telos*, of a goal-directedness to his description of the universe. This goal-directedness he traces to a "prejudice" with the mention of which he begins the Appendix as a whole. The paragraph just quoted, then, pictures the prejudice in one of its manifestations, namely, the manifestation into the realm of ethics. Here, we can see that the ethical realm embodied in the mentioned phenomena – good, evil, order etc. – is granted egotistical, self-centered connotations.[93] It is precisely in these connotations the statement that "men judge things according to the disposition of their brain rather than understanding them" gains a slightly different meaning than Veit initially described. It seems to be a statement aimed at the epistemology of ethical judgements rather than making a point about judgement in general.[94]

If we now look at the Dennettian duality of competence and comprehension in comparison to what has just been said, there arises a discrepancy between the accounts. Dennett talks about comprehension in relation to any competence we are endowed with and perhaps even more (we can understand the competences of bees as well, can we not?) whereas in the referenced passage, Spinoza seems to only be interested in the "comprehension" regarding our ethical "competences".[95]

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[92] Ibid. p. 29.

[93] Della Rocca, M. (2008). Spinoza. Taylor & Francis US.

[94] Ibid.

[95] It is not my intention here to disprove Veit's claim that Spinoza does have a similar take on judgements in general. Instead, I am merely pointing out the inadequacy of the referenced passage.

What about Spinoza's example of the sun? Is not that enough to make the transition from ethical judgements to judgements in general justified?

At first glance, it might appear so but at a closer examination, I believe that passage is only highlighting another inadequacy in Veit's comparison: There seems to be nothing akin to Dennet's notion of competence involved in Spinoza's treatment. That is, at least in the treatment of this passage. The manner in which the distance of the sun appears to us before learning, "comprehending" how far it truly is has very little to do with a "competence" of any sort. Perhaps we could say that it is an aspect of the sun which we "comprehend" accidentally, so to speak, that is an aspect which is not vital. Therefore, the hidden "competence" behind this feature is our usage of other vital aspects of the sun which we comprehend together with it. If we relate this to our initial example of the triangle when describing Dennett's account, it would be similar to comprehending that there are various types of triangles – the type of a triangle is not a vital part of learning what a triangle is but it is nevertheless something we learn as we get more comprehending. I, however, think that this is quite a leap we have to take while rather being in need of a solid ground to establish that this notion exists in Spinoza's account at all.

In summary, I once again must conclude that the similitude between the two thinkers Veit argues for is lacking. It seems to retain some validity from the perspective of being able to do something while not comprehending, especially, from an ethical perspective. There also seems to be some validity about us learning more and more about the world and, consequently, becoming more efficient with our understanding. Overall, however, I once again emphasize that we must be cautious about how far this similitude goes.

Now, let us pose a more pivotal question. It is not pivotal in terms of our comparison of Spinoza and Dennett, but it is pivotal for the purport of the thesis. We have argued that Dennett's philosophy of consciousness or user-illusion leaves essentially no space for the unconscious. We have also claimed that this emptiness of space might cause problems in his rejection of Nagel's criticism of physicalism – there is something it is like to be a human being. Can Spinoza aid in this issue? My argument is that if he can, the fragility the similitude of the concepts we have just discussed suffers from is not too much price to be paid in comparison to the phenomenon of unconscious tearing apart Dennett's rejection of subjectivity.

Panpsychism and Complexity

We have seen that for Dennett, the phenomenon of the unconscious finds its place within the duality of competence and comprehension. Furthermore, we have said that it appears to reside in competence itself. That is, whatever we are competent of but are not comprehending of seems to also equate to what we are unconscious of. Competence is both what we are biologically and culturally, memetically capable of. Let us assume two examples of these competences each corresponding to one of the domains: We use words but cannot explain them and we have feelings but cannot explain them. Consequently, the words "I love you" and the feelings corresponding to this expression fall into the domain of the unconscious if I cannot explain them, i.e., comprehend them. Since there cannot be anything added to these competences aside from comprehension, we have argued they lack in complexity. The example we have used to pinpoint this complexity was Freud's treatment of neurosis. The question, therefore, becomes: How do we make competences more complex in order for them to account for a more complex unconscious life?

To get a solid answer to this question, we first need to become more acquainted with how memes emerge. Both Dennett and the creator of the term "meme" in the definition we are using it, Richard Dawkins, do not mention the origin of memes. That is, they do not specify, for example, what was the first instantiation of memes. What they both do, however, is talk about the way in which they replicate. Dawkins says:

"The new soup is the soup of human culture. We need a name for the new replicator, a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation."[96]

And Dennett says:

"Linguistic and nonlinguistic ways of transmitting hard-won information still coexist, after all, so, as usual, we can suppose that human interaction over the millennia led to the gradual adoption of ever more effective and systematic ways (memes), including ways of acquiring memes, such as the passage from brute imitation to apprenticeship (Sterelny 2012)."[97]

In accordance with both of these passages, we can say that: The first memes emerged as a result of imitation. If we then go back to the example of "chimpanzees cracking nuts with a stone"

[96] Dawkins, R. (2006). The Selfish Gene. Oxford University Press, USA. p. 194.

[97] Dennett, D. C. (2018). From bacteria to Bach and back: The Evolution of Minds. Penguin Classics. p. 261.

which Dennett himself introduced, the spread of this meme is achieved when another chimpanzee sees this practice and chooses to do the same.

Since we possess no further information about this practice. That is, we lack the "why" behind this tendency to imitate.[98]I propose the following: There is a biological, genetic ground for the tendency to imitate. It is a behavior that has been accidentally found to be beneficial for the replication of genes and, by another accident, the same behavior gave rise to a genetic counter-pole: memes. I believe this line of reasoning to be in line with Dawkins' who Dennett quotes on many an occasion. Dawkins says:

"Much of an animal's life is devoted to reproduction, and most of the acts of altruistic self-sacrifice that are observed in nature are performed by parents towards their young. 'Perpetuation of the species' is a common euphemism for reproduction, and it is undeniably a consequence of reproduction. It requires only a slight over-stretching of logic to deduce that the 'function' of reproduction is 'to' perpetuate the species. From this it is but a further short false step to conclude that animals will in general behave in such a way as to favor the perpetuation of the species. Altruism towards fellow members of the species seems to follow."[99]

In accordance with this reasoning, then, we can reduce the talk of complexity of both the cultural competence and biological competence to biological competence only, i.e., it is the genetic that creates the memetic sphere. I justify this appeal to reduction to be applicable to Dennett's philosophy from both the aforementioned fondness of Dennett's to Dawkins' thinking but also on the fact that Dennett is a self-proclaimed reductionist as he says in the Preface to Consciousness Explained:

"How on earth could my thoughts and feelings fit in the same world with the nerve cells and molecules that made up my brain?"[100]

Now, if it is the case that the issue of competences finds itself reduced to material, biological phenomena, the task we have set ourselves on, namely, to render these competences more complex in order for them to account for a more complex unconscious life, seems to be more and more difficult to complete. The difficulty of a more complex unconscious life, of course,

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[98] Another strange complexity we seem to be unable to account for.

[99] Dawkins, R. (2006). The Selfish Gene. Oxford University Press, USA. p. 7.

[100] Dennett, D. C. (1991). Consciousness explained. Little Brown. p. xi.

does not arise with reductionism itself.[101] It is rather that the difficulty arises with Dennett's notion of competence. Let us explain this difficulty:

Whether there is complexity on the biological level or there is not, the resulting effect of these un/complexities is always either competence of incompetence, i.e., we are either biologically equipped to do something or we are not. Consequently, if the unconscious is what we are competent of but uncomprehending of, the level of complexity of the unconscious will always remain the same. We can describe this level of complexity, just like Dennett did in a quoted passage we have discussed beforehand, as pertaining to awareness only.

Now, I have said that it is the work of Baruch de Spinoza that will both safe , at least partially as we have shown, some of Dennett's ingenious ideas and bridge this issue of uncomplexity of the level of the unconscious. Thus, only the last question remains: How does he do so?

I argue that it is Spinoza's panpsychism that can render the task of complexity of the unconscious life complete.

We have seen that Dennett's concept of competence is derived from material, biological phenomena. In accordance, these phenomena render us capable of doing things which we can eventually comprehend. It is my proposition to endow the material, biological phenomena with another set of phenomena that will not prevent the inception of the realm of competence, i.e., these phenomena will not make us incapable of doing the things we are equipped to do. This addition I propose to go in line with the following statement of Spinoza's as taken from IIP13:

"For the things we have shown so far are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate. For of each thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause in the same way as he is of the idea of the human Body. And so, whatever we have said of the idea of the human Body must also be said of the idea of any thing."[102]

This is Spinoza's establishment of the panpsychist doctrine.[103] Following this passage, it is the case that for every material phenomenon there is necessarily a psychical, mental phenomenon as well. We can imagine, then, that every material part which composes our body and, thus, our

[101] Consider Steven Pinker's *The Blank Slate* (2002).

[102] De Spinoza, B. (1996). Ethics. Penguin Classics. p. 40.

[103] Seager, W. (2019). The Routledge Handbook of Panpsychism. Routledge.

capabilities is accompanied by a counterpart[104] of a mental type. This applies not only for the smallest of parts but also for composites of these smaller parts.[105] Let us quote Michael Della Rocca to emphasize this point:

"Just as there is in God's mind an idea of my body, so too there is in God's mind an idea of each extended mode. And just as the idea of my body is my mind, so too the idea of each extended mode is, in some way, the mind of that mode. Thus all extended objects, no matter how apparently unthinking and inanimate, do indeed have minds. Not only I, but the rock, the plant, the kitchen clock, and the pan on my kitchen stove have minds. Mentality, for Spinoza, extends everywhere. Such a view is known as panpsychism."[106]

If we then talk of competences in the Dennettian sense of the word, we are describing our capabilities as they go in line with the material, biological realm but we are emitting that which is manifesting on the other side of the coin, so to speak – the mental. I argue that it is within the realm of the mental where we find enough complexity in order for it to account for a more complex unconscious life. How can the mental be complex then?

With this question, we approach the last piece of the puzzle. The argument goes as follows: Upon re-entering into the duality of competence and comprehension with the domain of competence being endowed with a mental realm that, in a sense, exists on the outskirts of it, the treatment of comprehension must change slightly. It is suddenly not that whatever we do not comprehend, we are not aware of, we are unconscious of but rather that whatever we do not comprehend, we first must unearth from the mentally endowed competences. We can imagine the mental components as if they were rubble that we need to clear off first in order to get to the competences to comprehend them.

This last piece of inference of the mental being almost rubble which is, of course, a hyperbole, has its roots in IIP24, IIP25, and IIP29. Let us cite only a part of IIP29, namely, the corollary, for it is my belief that it is the most relevant to our discussion:

"From this it follows that so long as the human mind perceives things from the common order of Nature, it does not have an adequate, but only a confused and mutilated knowledge of itself, of its own body, and of external bodies. For the mind does not know itself except insofar as it

[104] Counterpart in the sense that it is related to the same thing only from a different perspective.

[105] Seager, W. (2019). The Routledge Handbook of Panpsychism. Routledge.

[106] Della Rocca, M. (2008). Spinoza. Taylor & Francis US. p.110.

perceives ideas of the affections of the body (by P23). But it does not perceive its own body (by P19) except through the very ideas themselves of the affections [of the body], and it is also through them alone that it perceives external bodies (by P26). And so, insofar as it has these [ideas], then neither of itself (by P29), nor of its own body (by P27), nor of external bodies (by P25) does it have an adequate knowledge, but only (by P28 and P28S) a mutilated and confused knowledge, q.e.d."[107]

If we examine this passage closely, we come to learn that the argument is in line with what we have identified as Veit's third point of similarity between Dennett and Spinoza. Since the direction of the passage we have referenced, however, is broader and not interested only in ethical judgements, and since it is clear from the passage that we are not only talking of the comprehension of external bodies, i.e., the sun, but also of the comprehension of our mind and, more importantly for our present purposes, of our own body, I believe the criticism that we have raised previously in regards to Veit's argument does not apply to us.

It appears, therefore, that the realization of our competences into comprehension may suffer greatly in terms of adequacy simply due to the fact that it is not mere difference between awareness and unawareness but rather an act more complex. Such complexity arises, according to what has been quoted, due to the interference of bodily, material affects and their respective mental counterparts as per IIP13. Furthermore, the complexity is elevated even further by the fact that we possess propensity to some of these affects (joy) while we are also repulsed by others (sorrow) as per IIIP16 which was shown earlier.

It is here, I believe, where our investigation comes to its culmination for we have opened up a space between competences and comprehension that allows for a more lively manifestation of one into the other. That is, it is not a simple question of coming to awareness but rather an interplay between bodies, minds, in/adequacies, and various kinds of affects. It is with this complexity, I argue, that we would be able to bridge the lack in complexity in regards to the unconscious and, ultimately, explain away Freud's example of neurosis.[108] Such exposition, however, would require more arguments than we have space for in this thesis and I, thus, must only finish with pointing my finger in what appears to be the right direction. That is, I must

[107] De Spinoza, B. (1996). Ethics. Penguin Classics. p. 51.

[108] Morejón, G. (2022). The Unconscious of thought in Leibniz, Spinoza, and Hume. In Edinburgh University Press eBooks. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781399504829.

conclude by showing that it is the case that panpsychism supplies the complexity that lacked in the Dennettian understanding of competence but I have to leave the question as to the full explanation of neurosis open.

Conclusion

We have seen that Dennett's exploits in the philosophy of consciousness are ingenious and should not go unnoticed. Among these are the concept of the free-floating rationales, the non-intelligent designer, the different types of designs regarding the inception of things – humans, animals, AI –, and last but not least, the concept of memes.

We have also seen, however, that the philosophy seems to not do justice to a very influential psychological concept – the unconscious. The injustice to this concept was done on its apparent uncomplexity. An example of this injustice was supplied by Sigmund Freud and his phenomenon of neurosis. We have claimed that this complexity could be understood as what gives rise to the notion of "being like something" and, therefore, might be understood as an extension of Nagel's criticism based on the inability to picture a private, subjective sphere by the reductionist approach to consciousness.

We have proposed that Spinoza could provide aid to handle this issue. This proposition was founded upon similarities between the two thinkers as described by both Walter Veit and Genevieve Lloyd in their respective papers. Although we have identified issues with some of the similarities, we were able to retain some of the value of the Dennettian concepts. These concepts were the flee-floating rationales, the criticism of the Cartesian Theater, and the duality of competence and comprehension.

Within Spinoza's thought, we have then been able to find the aid we were hoping for in the notion of panpsychism. The panpsychist doctrine has supplied us with the aforementioned complexity and rather transformed the duality of competence and comprehension through the interplay between bodies, minds, in/adequacies, and various kinds of affects. Finally, we have argued that it is within this interplay that Freud's phenomenon of neurosis could be accounted for upon further investigation.

In summary, it is my view that although the Dennettian view of consciousness brings certain fruit to the discussion – from the fruit that has not been mentioned, I think the overarching one is the somberness as to how far solid science can take us without the appeal to overtly mystical thinking in regards to the problem of consciousness – the view fails to account for all the intricacies of our mind[109]. Instead of reductionism, I propose panpsychism to be the answer as

[109] I am choosing the term mind purposely as to cover both the conscious and the unconscious levels of our consciousness.

I have tried to show that it is both capable to retain the somberness of science and account for the complexities our mind finds itself riddled with. Aside from my philosophical attempts to bring this forth, I think the argument to also be supported by the recent upheaval of panpsychist-friendly thinkers in both the scientific and the philosophical fields.[110] Granted, some of these panpsychist ideas might be very far removed from what Spinoza originally proposed. Nevertheless, I think there is still a lot to learn from Spinoza aside from his panpsychism and that we should all take a good look at just how far Spinoza has gone in claiming *Deus sive Natura*.

[110] Philip Goff, Carlo Rovelli, Sean Carroll, Marina Cortes, Lee Smolin, Clelia Verde, Luke Roelofs

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