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De-Conditioning and Images of the Mind: Scientific Images and Dualistic Images

Abstract:
"De-Conditioning and Images of the Mind" explores the categories of Stephen Priest as developed in his article, "The Unconditioned Soul." Through an analysis of historical and contemporary examples of the "conditioned" mode in recent philosophical and scientific discussions of the mind, the article articulates limitations of the proposed methods and advances examples of "de-conditioning" the mind that point in the direction of what Priest calls the "unconditioned."

Keywords:
conditioned, de-conditioning, unconditioned, dualism, eliminativism, reductionism, materialism

The scientific image serves as an example of a limiting or, as Priest puts it, a "conditioned" (more on that below) paradigm concerning the nature of persons, minds, and consciousness. In his valuable essay, Priest distinguishes between "conditioned" and "unconditioned" approaches to philosophy. According to Priest, scientistic and naturalistic approaches are "conditioned" in that they arise from various pressures on human understanding that distract us from the truth. The "conditioned" approach, then, is contrasted with metaphysics and theology, which Priests describes as "unconditioned." In what follows, I explore the "conditioned" paradigm and "de-conditioning" in light of recent examples from history and the analytic philosophical tradition.

In one important place, Stephen Priest describes "de-conditioning" in the context of talking about persons. He states:

> It is your own particularity as you which is most difficult to explain about you. This own-most particularity not only exceeds any empirical identity and difference but is not even exhausted by this very human being's having the modal properties of being self-identical and numerically distinct from any other. The fact of someone's being you cannot be generalized. You escape the language of anonymity. You are the opposite of anonymous.[1]

Priest describes the de-conditioning from the conditioned frame that he argues, later on in the essay, leads to the unconditioned. At this point, we find a useful point of departure to consider why "conditioned" approaches limit or eliminate what it is that makes us *us*. And, it is here that we need "de-conditioning." What is clear about persons, selves, and minds, according to Priest, is that there is something about subjects or agents of experience that defy what I will later call a sufficient explanation in the empirical sciences and, even, in analytic philosophy with their descriptions of persons in terms of parts, properties, and lawful events. In what follows, I will explore the meaning of de-conditioning by building on Priest's treatment with contemporary examples. I will proceed in four sections. First, I will survey Priest's definitions of the conditioned, de-conditioning, and the unconditioned. Second, I will explore contemporary examples of the conditioned paradigm in materialism, naturalism, and scientistic approaches of the mind. Third, I will explore the metaphysical assumptions and entailments from recent neuroscientific studies of the mind that are often assumed as examples of the conditioned frame, but I will argue that we actually begin to see instances of what Priest calls de-conditioning of the mind. Fourth and finally, I will continue exploring examples of de-conditioning of the mind that suggestively point us to what Priest describes as the unconditioned.

Conditioned, De-Conditioning, and Unconditioned

Stephen Priest offers an explanation of his way of conceiving of the conditioned paradigm and the unconditioned paradigm in the context of exploring its relation to the soul. The middle way between the paradigms is what he calls de-conditioning – certainly a fitting name. He defines the two paradigms on each end in the following way:

> There is a distinction to be drawn between conditioned and unconditioned philosophy. Unconditioned philosophy entails ultimate explanation of how philosophical problems may be formulated. Conditioned philosophy is the attempt to solve philosophical problems without disclosure of their fundamental possibility. A philosophical problem is one we have no method of solving.[2]

In short, a conditioned paradigm is a patterned way of thinking and investigating a set of data governed by specific rules and practices that, arguably, place limits on our understanding of the subject and the world. The

1) Priest, "The Unconditioned Soul," 206. For a similar perspective on consciousness through the lens of psychology, see the computer scientist Gelernter, *The Tides of Mind*, see especially 107. Gelernter develops the notions of the up-spectrum and down-spectrum of consciousness as pointing to something like a soul (that is beyond matter) and distinct types of knowledge that come from different domains of inquiry.

2) Ibid., 295.

conditioned paradigm limits the possibilities of the subject for which an unconditioned paradigm gives us an ultimate explanation.

The conditioned paradigm has different senses. It can have the following meanings: necessary condition, a state of being, or a shared idea conditioned by etymology and the rules of grammar. This conditioned approach gives rise to productive thinking as it follows a strict set of rules procedurally and meticulously.

Conditioned thinking tends to be directed, and controlled by a pattern or a school of thought. In other words, it works according to the rules of the game as set out by the exemplars of that school of thought. Like social communities, schools of thought function according to a grammar. They have rules and in order to work within that school of thought one must philosophize according to a set of rules established by the community or discipline. There are two results when one is a practicing member of a school of thought. One, is that when one operates according to a set a rules, then progress is made. Two, when one solely operates according to a set of rules within a school of thought, then those rules can disguise a portion of reality for the purposes of arriving at some determinative content.

Means-to-end thinking is defined by Priest as that which is: conducive to the manipulation of nature for the perpetuation or destruction of biological life. Means to end thinking is sharply contrasted with what Priest describes as the existential experience of life, of subjects, and of the objects in the world. In other words, there are specific existential realities that are left unaccounted for in a conditioned frame as exemplified by a fixation on means-to-end thinking. For example, we are lost in regret for the past and hope or fear for the future. Always on the way, we are never all here now. Noticing this "all," this "here," and this "now," and not just moving on, is necessary for the disclosure of the soul.[3]

Third-person thinking is what is publicly available. It is characteristically distinct from first-person perceiving. When a conditioned pattern takes a third-person approach solely, then it misses the first-person predicates that are descriptive of a portion of reality. There is no way to capture all that is meant or signified by the first-person in the third-person. The two are, as Descartes so carefully showed, mutually irreducible.

Object-thinking is another characteristic of the conditioned paradigm. Concerning oneself with objects through a meticulous and patterned investigation trains us to see only the objects in view. This might also be thought of as part-whole thinking, which is common when thinking about persons, selves, and consciousness. If one thinks, as is not uncommon, that they could arrive at a complete understanding of the topic by parsing out all of the parts in relation to the wholes, their properties, states, and so forth, then they are involved in object-thinking. But, this way of thinking, arguably, misses what is most valuable and, as reflected in the distinction between third-person and first-person thinking, irreducible.

Thinking and perceiving in generalities are related to the above as a characteristic mode or pattern of the conditioned paradigm. By attending solely to the generalities, one is systematically training the mind to focus on general patterns. This is common in the natural sciences as there is a tendency to think about events in the world and attempts to explain those events by arriving at testable conclusions that reveal the generables of the objects involved. By attending in this way in a patterned systematic manner, one can train the eye to see only the generalities of the world, which disguise one from seeing what Priest has pointed out in the quote first cited, namely what you might think of as the subject, the particular – the thing that is not anonymous.

Priest's focus on the philosophy of mind leads him to narrow what he considers under the category of de-conditioning. He considers the following: dualism and idealism as de-conditioning philosophies. These depart from the patterns that are governed, controlled, and limiting in perspective by a condition and they are not limited to the rules of one particular school of thought that is governed by the above characteristics,

3) Ibid., 296.

for example, means-to-end reasoning, generality thinking, third-person thinking, and object-thinking. Other philosophies that break from the conditioned paradigm, according to Priest, include: agnosticism, pantheism, Buddhism, and solipsism because they break from the patterns dominated by scientistic thinking.[4]

In what follows, I focus on one set of representations of the so-called "conditioned" paradigm as I transition to de-conditioning represented by dualism. I focus on what some have called a version of "scientism," and others might think of as the scientific image. Appropriately, this is so termed because the paradigmatic representation of conditioned thinking is narrowed to the characteristics given already: means to end thinking, generality thinking, third-person thinking, object thinking, and the commitment to the belief that sense-experience is the only means or the primary means of knowledge. These representative examples systematically excise, eschew, or ignore what it is that Priest describes in the original quote above, namely, the subject, the first-person, and the particular. Accordingly, they become clear examples that build on Priest's original and insightful article.

The "Conditioned" Science of the Mind: The Scientific Image

It seems fitting that we begin with explicit instances of the "conditioned" paradigm. The scientific image represents explicit instances of the "conditioned" paradigm. I am defining the scientific image as the picture given by some that is limited solely to the third-person perspective and the deliverances of the empirical method. The most apparent examples deserving recognition include strong physicalists, naturalists, and those famed "new atheists."

By strong physicalism, I have in mind those who take what is oft termed the "hard problem" of consciousness (famously named by David Chalmers) and attempt to eliminate the problem by identifying consciousness with matter, reducing it to physical parts (e.g., neurons firing), or eliminating the nature of consciousness as characteristically a phenomena of what it is like to experience the world. These varying positions present us with explicit instances of the "conditioned" paradigm in that they commit to paradigmatic instances that ignore, disguise, or eschew the realities of consciousness and its implications for the nature of subjects as minds or souls. Strong physicalists are naturalists and worthy of being called "conditioned" paradigms. "New Atheists" themselves, are a hodgepodge of thinkers (both scholars and popularizers), committed to strong physicalism and naturalism.

New Atheists like Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris affirm, along with Sean Carroll, that the soul (i.e., taken to be something of a substance entirely distinct from the body and physical objects in the world), is an idea not to be taken seriously in the scientific age in which we live. Sean Carroll has famously argued that the soul is effectively a nonsensical idea in light of what we know from the sciences (by which he means the empirical sciences). In one of his famous articles, he recounts a conversation where he suggests just this. He states: "When we disagree it's with the kind of respectful dialogue that should be a model for disagreeing with non-crazy people. But here he couldn't be more wrong." Furthermore, he claims: "Claims that some form of consciousness persists after our bodies die and decay into their constituent atoms face one huge, insuperable obstacle: the laws of physics underlying everyday life are completely understood, and there's no way within those laws to allow for the information stored in our brains to persist after we die."[5] Along with the likes of Sean Carroll and the New Atheists, Developmental Psychologist at the University of Bristol, Bruce Hood has described the soul-idea or the self by claiming: "It seems almost redundant to call for the retirement of the free

4) I explore Priest's categories describing "conditioned" elsewhere in a similar way, see Farris, "Ensouled Identity," 383–85.

5) Carroll, "Physics and Immortality."

willing self, as the idea is neither scientific nor is this the first time the concept has been dismissed for lack of empirical support."[6] In all these instances, there is a limiting of what we know about consciousness, the self, or persons in terms of what we can say from a strictly empirical method.

Two popular instances of strong physicalism and naturalism include the famous scientist Francis Crick and the philosopher of science Owen Flanagan. The well-known scientist Francis Crick confirms the absurdity of the soul because of his recognition of what science explains about persons, when he says: "You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules."[7] The philosopher Owen Flanagan tasks science with a mission. He thinks it is the job of science to excise the soul through an ordered, disciplinary process of applying ourselves to what only science provides – a surer way of knowing. Accordingly, "desouling is the primary operation of the scientific image."[8] They advocate a position called eliminativism, which takes it that the common-sense or folk psychological positions and its attendant items: beliefs, desires, experiential consciousness do not exist. Why? Because the science does not permit it. These are explicit examples, then, of the "conditioned" paradigm at work because of the systematic exclusion of consciousness and its properties from a scientific frame.[9]

Upon examining some of the common trends in neuroscience, while there is a tendency to assume the perspective of physicalism and a reductionist philosophy to science, there are also cracks in neuroscience that point to what Stephen Priest describes as "de-conditioning" because of the explicit tendency in some practitioners to affirm not only a dualism of mind and body, but a strong substantial dualism in the spirit of Renes Descartes.

Neuroscience

One of the clearest instances of the "conditioned" mode is the limiting cases we find in neuroscience studies of consciousness and the self. These provide ample reflection for how the "conditioned" mode is handled by well-known neuroscientists. What appears to be common in the neuroscience of consciousness literature is the overwhelming commitment to a variety of metaphysical theses. This despite the protestation to the contrary that neuroscientists are simply doing science (and, at times, explicitly stating that they are not doing metaphysics). What is even more profound is the metaphysical commitments and what appears to look like substance dualism of consciousness and the self, even a version resembling what Descartes articulated so long ago.

Interestingly, the positions we are now seeing articulated in cognitive neuroscience are not only addressing similar problems to what Descartes originally confronted, but the solutions are beginning to look strikingly like what Descartes advanced in response to those problems. William Walsh, a historical metaphysician, highlights the role Descartes continues to play in science and the mind in way that shows his significance for articulating the problems with the conditioned mode and the need for deconditioning.

> Descartes, who had unbounded confidence in the prospects of the new science, was acutely aware of this threat. He sought to meet it by a division of spheres of influence: body, including human body, could be handed over to the physicists and understood in exclusively mechanical terms, whilst mind was reserved for theologians and philosophers and taken to be a different sort of thing

6) Brockman, *This Idea Must Die*, 147.

7) Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, 3.

8) Flanagan, *The Problem of the Soul*, 3.

9) Also see, Farris, "Ensouled Identity."

> altogether. In offering this compromise, which has still not entirely lost its appeal, Descartes was proposing what he took to be a reasoned alternative to materialism, a new comprehensive philosophy which could take the place of scholasticism to which the Christian Church had previously pinned its faith.[10]

William Walsh highlights the unique place Descartes' new science has in highlighting the role mind plays in the history of philosophy and science. Interestingly, the Georgetown moral philosopher Daniel Robinson argues that it is the radical distinction of mind and body represented in the thought of Descartes which still has significant impact on today's neuroscientists, despite reports to the contrary. Daniel Robinson states: "Rather, I hope to show that the 'Cartesianism' that confers leading-edge modernity on those who criticize and oppose it bears little relationship to what Descartes actually affirmed, and that what he did affirm is not radically different from what is widely endorsed by today's cognitive neuroscientists."[11] Descartes scholar Desmond Clarke affirms a similar thesis: "the problem with which Descartes struggled in the 1640's its not much closer to resolution today, despite significant advances in our understanding of the properties of matter."[12] What we will consider below is not only the problems with a conditioned mode in the neuroscience literature, but the places in which deconditioning occurs.

They have not been alone in their assessment of neuroscience, and in fact, upon a close examination it appears that many of the most famous neuroscientists studying the self and consciousness are implicitly presuming a form of substance dualism that defies the conditioning regnant in their own professed strategies. This is, undoubtedly, fascinating itself. Yet it points to something that is deeper and implicit in the structures of consciousness and that despite their best attempts, these neuroscientists can neither remain committed to the limitations of their own method nor the metaphysical assumptions they believe are implied by their scientific method. In other words, what we find are examples of conditioned thinking that places pressure on how we are to think about the mind, and yet more interesting, is that there are signs that suggest de-conditioning along the lines described by Priest are in order. The scientific image has cracks and the neuroscience literature is one place where it is clearly exposed. Let us consider, then, some of these examples after laying out the implicit theses and the method espoused. It is the cracks in recent neuroscientific studies of consciousness that furnish one way for seeing the need for deconditioning of the mind, as we return to a first-person or mind-first ontology of the world, and this captures what deconditioning should look like in the philosophy of mind.

Metaphysics and Neuroscience Method

Whilst many neuroscientists of consciousness and the self are superficially committed to what they see as materialism and a strictly empirical method compatible with it, they are committed to two metaphysical ideas that open up discussion beyond their own empirical and material commitments. Furthermore, these studies suggestively open up the possibility that there is more going on in neuroscientific study than their limiting method and "conditioned" perspective can accommodate.

There are two metaphysical ideas implicit in much of the literature in neuroscience. The first is the commitment to a form of internalism. The second is a commitment to what some scholars call Cartesian materialism. Neuroscientists Riccardo Manzotti and Paolo Moderato in their fascinating article, "Neuroscience: Dualism in

10) Walsh, *Metaphysics*, 97.

11) Robinson, *Consciousness and Mental Life*, 62.

12) Ibid.

Disguise," discuss these two key ideas common to literature of the neuroscience of consciousness and the self. Internalism is the view that the properties of mental events are located in neural events. In other words, mental events are predicable of neural events. Cartesian materialism follows close to this commitment insofar as the mental events are predicated of the brain or its neural events, yet not in the same way as the neural bits. Mental events, then, are claimed to be here where the neural events reside, yet not in the same way as the neural events are there. This, surprisingly, begins to look like a sort of Cartesianism enfolded in materialist ontology.

On internalism and Cartesian materialism, Manzotti and Moderato claim:

> Frankly speaking, the impression is that internalism's adoption and its inability to find any phenomenon akin to consciousness call back into service the ghost in the machine – albeit in disguise. Yet, this outcome runs afoul of the heralded rejection of dualism. This rather embarrassing situation resulted in entering into oddest relation with ontology by ontological promissory notes that, so it is promised, will be paid back in the future.[13]

And, as they discuss, this leads quite naturally to a commitment that resembles Descartes' distinction of two types of properties, one mental and the other physical (e.g., what analytic philosophers call property dualism), albeit as a form of materialism (where x representing mental events are located here where y representing neutral events reside, but not in the same way). It is the distinction of properties between the mental and the physical that opens up space beyond the limiting modes of empirical inquiry in the neurosciences and suggestively lays bare properties that render their own reductive methods insufficient.

Cartesian materialism is the view that these properties are predicated of neural events, but they are distinct properties from the neurons themselves. The language of how to define what they are and where they are is difficult, and begins to open up space for a distinct inquiry into the nature of minds, the self, and consciousness. These properties are here at location x (where the neurons reside), but not in the same way as the neurons. They are not located in the same way as neurons are at location x. But, this becomes rather a mysterious ontology that seems to be a magical wave of hand. It is not clear what merits are attributable to Cartesian materialism. What is clear is that the phenomena under investigation begins to look a lot like what materialist science sets out to reject, namely, the substance dualism of body and soul originally defended by Renes Descartes.

But, upon reflection, these two properties signify something that is distinctively recognized by Descartes and those that affirm dualism. They point to a set of distinct properties that require property dualism. One set of properties is characterized by the epistemic nature of first-person awareness, phenomenal experience, and private knowledge. The other is distinct and characteristic of the empirical method that when limiting to the areas of the self, the mind, and consciousness closes the discussion because of the limitations in the ontology and method respective to it. These characteristics of the empirical method include features of the third-person perspective that are public in nature (i.e., they are accessible to all persons investigating in a way distinct from content of the mind that is privately available to the first-person perspective). Similar to Descartes, the first set of characteristics yield something about the mind, self, and consciousness that signifies a type of property that is ineliminable, irreducible, and furnishes a privileged access position on the mental properties. These are by their very nature distinct from empirical or physical properties that are public in nature. But, where the "conditioned" method shines a light on the limitations of the scientific image is in the explicit language employed and the method adopted amongst neuroscientists of consciousness. It is here that scientists have embraced that which blinds them from the obvious truth regarding the distinct types of properties.

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13) On empirical knowledge and dualism, Manzotti and Moderato, "Neuroscience: Dualism in Disguise."

The method or strategy employed actually disguises the investigator from seeing the distinctions that transcend empirical analysis. Neuroscientists explicitly adopt a language that commits them to ontological assumptions that remain materialist in nature. The language adopted consists in code-talk, computation-talk, model-talk, and information-talk. These are often motivated by philosophical commitments of materialism and limit the inquiry into the self to brain discussions of neurons firing. The discussion, then, limits what is arguably, not limited when discussing persons and minds. And in many cases, this adoption is intentional for the sake of progressing a research-project within materialistic science.[14] But, let us consider how the method is applied in two famous representatives in the neuroscience of self and consciousness literature, Shaun Gallagher and Kai Vogeley.[15]

Gallagher and Vogeley explicitly adopt a language strategy with hidden ontological commitments to avoid the problems of dualism and, you might call it, Descartes' ghost. They advance a proposal for how to explore the neuroscience of self in their article: "The Self in the Brain." Therein they explicitly describe the dualism found in the neuroscientists Eccles and Popper, yet quickly dismiss them as scientists engaged in metaphysics rather than science. Instead, Gallagher and Vogeley opt for a pure empirical method that purportedly avoids the metaphysics of Eccles and Popper.

They begin with the neuroscientific data and argue that we need to consider the self in light of the growing developments in the mapping of the Neural Correlates of Consciousness. In so doing, they advance a language for talking about the self and consciousness that maps onto the Neural Correlates of Consciousness. The language adoption explicitly eschews or moves the dualistic language so common to discussions about neurons and the conscious self to a ruled discussion about the neuronal activity itself. By using a language that terminologically converts talk about conscious selves, experiences, and so forth, into talking about neurons and their relationships in the brain, Gallagher and Vogeley are able to limit the discussion of the relationship between consciousness and brain parts to a discussion just about the empirical phenomena of neurons firing in the brain. They suggest that we adopt the "operationalization of key features" of the self and the mind in order to map out the neural correlates. They describe "various definitions of first-person perspective" along the lines of the different parts of the brain that appear to be causally related to them and are identifiable by brain scans. But it is important to point out that these triggers might suggest a robust causal relation of some sort, but they do not signify that the different definitions of the self are identical to the neurons they are related to or reductively explained by them. To adopt this sort of linguistic device is to effectively eliminate what it is that is distinctive about the self, consciousness, and the properties of mental beings. Again, Gallagher and Vogeley are vested in a "conditioned" way of thinking about neuroscience that is implicitly metaphysical.

Vogeley and Gallagher are convinced that there is a way to map out the conscious self in neuroscientific terms.

> The first-person perspective is relational or intentional insofar as having a first-person perspective on anything that relates that thing (some object in the world, another person, even the self-as-object) to the experiencing subject. Legrand and Ruby, (2009) thus suggest that this concept can be cashed out at a basic neurophysiological level, namely, the level of sensorimotor integrative processes involving efferent and reafference. The fact that one can find activation in sensorimotor areas not

14) In addition to the article mentioned, Bennett and Hacker develop the problems with the cognitive neuroscience literature and its dualistic implications that are often suppressed or disguised in their: *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*.

15) Gallagher and Vogeley, "Self in the Brain," 111–39.

> only when none is perceiving and acting, but also in tasks related to language, emotion, and inter-subjectivity, strengthens their suggestion.[16]

In other words, the language adoption strategy employed in a neuroscientific methodology systematically weeds out the language of folk psychology and replaces it with talk about the neurological activity (data that dualists take to be related to it).

However, such an approach seems to create an ambiguity between the properties of the mind with the properties under the study of neuroscience. By limiting the study in this way, Vogeley and Gallagher make a move that eschews the nature of the properties that otherwise point us beyond the objects of neuroscientific study.[17] This, then, is a clear example of a "conditioned" approach through the lens of the scientific image. But it is not the only one. Ironically, analytic philosophers sometimes practice the same sorts of "conditioning" that limits the prospects of study concerning persons.

Examples of Deconditioning: The Dualistic Image

In what follows, there are arguably, two features representing de-conditioning with the conditioned paradigm of the scientific image. The first is a kind of transcendence beyond the objects of the physical. The second is a form of particularity that defies the characteristic approach described above under the conditioned paradigm of the scientific image. The following representative examples of dualism extend the prospects of de-conditioning advanced by Priest in a way that helpfully exposes further areas of reflection beyond the modes of inquiry advanced by the scientific image.

In recent analytic philosophy of mind, the most apparent departures from a strict materialism including eliminativism, identity theories, and reductionism, there has been a flurry of literature defending versions of property dualism. Property dualism is the view of mental events as legitimate ontologically novel and irreducible to neural events. Not to be confused with what might be described as linguistic dualism, which takes seriously different descriptions of reality representative of neural events and mental events, property dualism takes seriously the mind as ontologically novel. David Chalmers, mentioned above, is one example of de-conditioning as he takes seriously the novelty of mental events.[18] Accordingly, he takes the hard problem of consciousness as a mark that materialism is insufficient as an accounting of mental events because of the irreducibility of phenomenal consciousness to neural events (i.e., the qualitative experience which cannot be reduced to quantitative measurement in empirical studies). But, David Chalmers and his property dualist colleagues do not go far enough. While Chalmers advances a more plausible picture of the mind that moves beyond the inadequacies of their materialist explanation, he remains committed to certain pressures that limit our understanding of the mind to the mind's scientific explicability and the presumption of the principle of the causal closure of the universe.

An even better place to start our reflection on de-conditioning on the mind is appropriately represented historically in Renes Descartes:

> I saw that while I could conceive that I had no body. … I could not conceive that I was not. On the other hand, if I had only ceased from thinking. … I should have no reason for thinking that I had

16) Gallagher and Vogeley, 129.

17) Also see Farris, "Descartes' 'New Clothes,'" 66–69.

18) See Chalmers, "Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness," 200–19. Also see, Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*.

> existed. From this, I knew that I was a substance the whole nature or essence of which is to think and that for its existence there is no need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing.[19]

Descartes famously directs attention toward the radically distinct types of properties under investigation. Working from a mode of knowing rooted in the first-person perspective (i.e., the cogito), Descartes exemplifies de-conditioning from the atomists of his day (a project he saw as leading to a form of philosophical skepticism) and opens up space for reflection on the fact of the irreducibility of mental substances as thinking, experiencing things contrasted with material things of spatial extension. This train of thought as it concerns the contemporary scientific image finds ample progress in recent analytic developments of what one might think of as the dualistic image (an image, in large measure, that we owe to Renes Descartes himself).

Daniel Robinson signals what might be construed as a direction toward de-conditioning by highlighting the transcendent feature implicit in our study of the brain,

> The brain has no motives and seeks no solace. That actual persons – possessed of brains and other anatomical structures – are, indeed, motivated and do, indeed, strive to find deeper meaning in an otherwise indifferent cosmos is beyond dispute. That such motives and longings are somehow enabled by the brain should be readily granted but not as a fact that would give the motives and longings to the brain or locate them in the brain. Such inferences might well trigger activity in the anterior cingulate cortex in any creature expecting propositions to be meaningful.[20]

This transcendent feature (or set of features) of consciousness, arguably, precedes the knowledge we have of bodies and things like "anatomical structures" and, what we do know about them mediated by phenomenal consciousness is distinct from the stuff of phenomenal consciousness (e.g., motives, solace, meaning, purpose). This prior thesis presumed in Robinson's summary of neuroscience on the self is developed by Richard Fumerton where he argues that phenomenal knowledge is immediate and mediates knowledge of physical things.

In a characteristically Cartesian way, Richard Fumerton argues for the radically distinct properties as irreducible and lending themselves to distinct domains of knowledge. Richard Fumerton argues for a form of epistemic or property dualism in *Knowledge, Thought and the Case for Dualism*. In his characteristically clear way, he defines the two properties and reasons demanding that we distinguish them in the following:

> I have argued that there is no denying the fact that there are phenomenally given properties that resist classic reductions to physical properties. Moreover, our phenomenological acquaintance with such properties gives us both propositional knowledge that such properties are exemplified and also the capacity to represent directly such properties are exemplified and also the capacity to represent directly such properties in thought. I have conceded that there is an odd sense in which one might still find room for such properties within a physicalist world view. The reconciliation will not be attractive to most physicalists for it gives epistemic and conceptual priority to the phenomenal. But there is the epistemic possibility that the very phenomenal properties that the physicalist wants to reduce to paradigmatic physical properties are (1) the realizers of the dispositional properties that define for us physical objects and their properties, (2) properties that

19) Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, 101.

20) Robinson, "Theological Anthropology," 79.

> are co-exemplified by the same processes that exemplify intrinsic physical properties (whatever they are), or (3) properties exemplified by the state of affairs that it is the exemplification of those intrinsic physical properties (whatever they are).[21]

Let us suppose for simplicity that there are two and only two people in the world – you and I. We exist act the same times have various perceptions. I am in pain while I have a visual image of a red apple. You experience euphoria as you have the visual image of an orange. The bundle theorist says that the pain and the visual redness go together to make up me, while the euphoria and the visual orangeness go together to make up you. Why is that true? What do the redness and the pain have in common that makes them both my experiences?[22]

Richard Fumerton advances possibly the most sophisticated defense of epistemological dualism and the necessity of property dualism in the spirit of Renes Descartes. That said, the case he advancesd provides strong support for the ineliminable place to different sources of knowledge given the respective types of properties. By doing this, he highlights the necessity of mental properties and the inability to eschew the properties in the way that a "conditioned" mode instanced in physicalism and the scientific mode will not do. Furthermore, he argues that neuroscience as a conditioned mode cannot account for properties that are properly basic to our epistemic wherewithal concerning physical objects. In other words, there is a priority thesis that Fumerton highlights given phenomenal knowledge permitting knowledge of physical things. We know physical things by way of phenomenal knowledge (the former is mediated by the latter). This opens the door to the question of the distinct type of thing or substance bearing properties of phenomenal consciousness – a question not answered by Fumerton. It is a question of which there are different answers, but what is clear is that the self as a mental particular is where the de-conditioning continues.

Three recent examples working in a genuinely Cartesian frame represent continued de-conditioning of the mind even beyond property dualism and epistemological dualism to the necessity of a novel substance of these novel events.

John Foster defends the notion that these novel mental events logically require a sufficient subject, (i.e., what he calls a "basic subject of consciousness"). By highlighting the unique nature of mental events, he argues that the particular must be a logically sufficient bearer of mental events.[23] It is on this ground that defenders of substance dualism agree that unique mental events require not only unique properties (i.e., property dualism), but unique property bearers.

William Hasker argues, as well, that these mental events depend upon a subject or substance unique to them. But for him, this requires a rejection of the principle of causal closure that does not limit our understanding of the mind to natural events. While Hasker is committed to a version of substance dualism, his view could only be described as a quite deviant version of Cartesianism because he denies what some take to be the radical independence of the mental substance from the bodily substance and prefers an emergentist account of the mind from the brain.[24]

Finally, Richard Swinburne represents a genuinely Cartesian substance dualist account of humans and takes the mind seriously not simply as a novel set of events, but as logically requiring a substance appropriate for those events. Swinburne argues for the distinctive mental substance from what he views as the distinctive mark of the mental, namely "privileged access."

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21) Fumerton, *Knowledge, Thought and Dualism*, 257–58.

22) Ibid., 258–59.

23) Foster, *The Immaterial Self.*

24) Hasker, *The Emergent Self.*

Accordingly, he takes it that there is at least one capacity that is predicable of a unique substance, which takes us beyond property dualism to substance dualism.[25] Although he does not argue for a pure mental substance from what is commonly conceived as the modal reasoning found in René Descartes, he does argue that one can move from logical conceivability to metaphysical conceivability when we have "the whole story of the world," which he argues can only be told when we consider substances that instantiate privileged access – something that is not instantiated by physical objects because of the distinction between the informative designators of mental beings from physical beings (the former of which depends on the subject of consciousness having the power of privileged access and the latter being informatively described by its public properties).

E.J. Lowe continues the deconditioning of the mind with his brand of non-Cartesian substance dualism (i.e., the view that the mind is a distinct substance as the bearer of phenomenal experiences but that the substance is functionally dependent on at least some parcel of matter to exist). He explores a unique feature that is not adequately isolated in the variants of property dualism when reflecting on the nature of particularity. He highlights the distinct particularity of the self from the body, entailing dualism, when describing the particularity necessary to make sense of personal identity.

E.J. Lowe argues:

> It is strongly arguable that the only adequate criterion of identity for mental states and events will be one which makes reference to their subjects. … Part of what makes an experience of mine numerically distinct from a qualitatively indistinguishable experience of yours is the very fact that it is mine as opposed to yours.[26]

E.J. Lowe argues for a distinctive substance as the bearer of mental properties on the basis of the particularity that is needed to instantiate qualitatively distinct events, which according to him, require not simply property dualism, but substance dualism. But his analysis raises a further question about the nature of the particularity itself and whether the de-conditioning leads to a something 'I' cannot define or what it is that has a sufficient designation. In their respective ways, the following two representatives affirm the necessity of dualism as a dualism of mental property-bearers from physical property-bearers and the need to explore the particularity that eludes the materialist naturalist and the scientific image described earlier. Both accounts overlap in their commitment to the necessity of mental properties as transcending the physical, but also to the necessity of the mental substance, or soul, as the carrier of personal identity. Joshua Rasmussen leans in the direction of dualism thereby rejecting the scientific image when opening up the question at the center of the particularity of persons and personal origins – a question that, it seems, defies an explanation from the conditioned mode.

De-Conditioning and Signs of the Unconditioned

Even more recent in analytic philosophy of mind is a continuation of the deconditioning of the mind to what Priest defines as the unconditioned in metaphysics and theology. What I lay out below are examples of deconditioning of the mind that *suggestively* point to the unconditioned. In what remains, then, I will simply advance some recent examples, albeit somewhat selectively.

Joshua Rasmussen provides an example of de-conditioning that opens the philosopher up to a whole new realm or side of being – potentially, what Priest calls the "unconditioned." He states:

25) Swinburne, "Mental/Physical Identity to Dualism."

26) Lowe, "Simplicity of Personal Identity," 149.

> This chapter completes my theory of the emergence of consciousness by showing how any conscious beings ultimately exist – thus answering the guiding question of the second part of the book. A key idea in this chapter involves flipping the mindlessness frame. Instead of positing mindless units beyond all experience, I propose that a first-person, personal reality is fundamental to all other realities. This mind-first picture is simpler and has greater explanatory power than the mindlessness-first picture, or so I argue. The mind-first picture also provides resources for solving the many construction problems, explaining nature and formations of matter, and explaining how there can be any being like us. For these reasons, I arrived at this theory of your ultimate origin: your origin is not based in impersonal, mindless stuff but in the "stuff" of a personal foundation.[27]

In other words, Rasmussen argues against the sort of scientific image discussed earlier in favor of the dualist image that readily yields an ultimate explanation beyond that of materialistic science. If we are to understand persons, then it will require that we find the explanation in mentalist and personal foundations not in the mindless and impersonal. This leads quite naturally to a question about the origins of persons as mental substances.

Rasmussen develops the implications of his personal and mental theory of humans in the final chapter of his book, *Who Are You Really?* Herein, he defends a theory of reality that is ultimately founded upon a personal, even theistic foundation. He advocates for a view that is both theistic and emergentist regarding persons as mental beings. Something like this view had been advocated, already, in Farris's theology of human origins discussions where he argues for a view that ultimately grounds personal origins in an immediate and direct Divine creation of souls.[28] At the center of this deconditioning is a question about the "particularity" of these mental substances, which opens up discussion to a deeper issue in the relation of the self to ultimate explanations (what Priest deems as the "unconditioned"). I do not intend to answer this question here only to gesture by way of offering two further examples of de-conditioning that undermine the scientific image in favor of a dualistic image.

Geoffrey Madell explores the nature of the mental substance as an "I" that is the carrier of personal identity and defies explanation in physicalism or some characteristically third-person account of subjects. Madell highlights the particularity of persons as seen in E.J. Lowe, which undermines physicalism and seems to yield a dualism of mind and body. Lowe contends that this part-mind that is the carrier of personal identity is somewhat elusive, but nonetheless, non-material. Madell similarly concludes in favor of a mental substance as somewhat elusive, and his fundamental concern is summarized in the following passage:

> There is, however, no denying that many people will see grounds for rejecting outright the account of the self which seems to be emerging from what I have said, and that for a fundamental reason. To suggest, as I appear to have done, that there are no criteria for identity of the self over time, and no criteria which have to be satisfied for a state of consciousness to be mine at any one time, leaves one with a sort of free floating "I." On one hand, every attempt to establish criteria for the identity of the self, to tie it logically to some such condition as the continuity of the body or of psychological continuity, or its identity to the notion of origin, seems to break down. But to accept this is to give credence to the idea of the self as an entity which, purely as a matter of chance, alights on

27) Rasmussen, *Who Are You, Really?*

28) See Farris, "Emergent-Creationism," 321–39. Also see his developments and distillations of this in, *The Creation of Self*. Also see Farris and Leidenhag, *The Origin of the Soul*.

> a certain set of properties in history but might equally have alighted on any other set. This presents a dilemma of awesome proportions, and we must eventually confront it.[29]

Madell quotes the words of Michael Bitbol that further highlights the uniqueness of mental or immaterial properties and the subjectivity that is indiscernible on a "conditioned" mode of reasoning:

> Why do I live now, in this special period of history? Why am I me, born in this family, in this place of the world? I was taught that there were many other possibilities: being any person, at any time, or even just not being at all. And yet here I am, in front of you. Me, not you, here, not there, now, not then. … What is the reason, if any, of this inescapable singularity? Does the fact that we all live through this mystery alleviate it in any way?[30]

Madell highlights the unique character in historical discussions on the fundamental difference between the subjective nature of things compared to the objective nature of things. While not in disagreement on the fundamental distinction between subjects and objects, Joshua Farris argues for the fundamental particularity of substances of consciousness that, ultimately, requires a theistic explanation.

Joshua Farris describes the recent, albeit all too common, attempts to redress the person in the scientific image along the lines proposed by Francis Bacon. Bacon stated some time ago that there exist in scientific discussions "'idols of the mind' which are 'empty and idle fancies,' which describe ideas that confuse or distract the mind away from things that do exist by disguising them."[31] He argues that what these naturalistic and pseudo-naturalistic approaches end up doing when they adopt a purely materialistic image of the person is effectively to eliminate the person. The damage is severe in that it undercuts what it is that we ultimately care about – the person. He states:

> This rather obvious truth is so plain that you might think there's no need to say it. What we long for is the person. Persons are valuable to us. In fact, persons are most cherished above all other things that we regard as valuable. Sure, there are pets that we love and hold as valuable. We value food, our jobs, our homes, and our cars. We like having things, but if we are honest, its persons that we prize more highly than anything else in the world.[32]

This, in other words, according to Farris is happening in the scientific discussions about selves, consciousness, and minds. The scientific image, when in its varying ways and permutations, takes over our lives there is a danger to our thinking about persons.

> While no one would actually claim that technology or science could get in the way of that which is most highly cherished, we are seeing and hearing of developments that promise the possibility to accommodate all of our needs and wants through artificial means. The prospect of constructing individuals that we can interact with that appear to be flesh and blood persons is certainly something that is not outside the imaginative social consciousness of contemporary society. While

29) Madell, *The Essence of the Self,* 10–11.

30) Bitbol quoted in Humphrey, *Soul Dust*, 151–52.

31) Farris, *The Creation of Self*, 7.

32) Ibid., 7.

> this might seem a bit far-fetched to some it hits at the heart of what we care about most and what is at stake in the science-engaged theological conversations today.[33]

Farris goes on to argue that the sacrifice of our basic intuitions about consciousness, selves, and minds is a sacrifice of that which we value and cherish most. But, on the other side, these basic common-sense views about selves lead to a striking place – namely theism, and some are simply not willing to accept that conclusion. But that is where Farris agrees with Priest that when exploring the nature of minds, consciousness, and persons we are talking about something that is ultimately, and deeply, theological in nature. Such a route for arriving at the soul as a descriptive term or image for persons highlights for us features of the world that point us beyond the conditioned pattern in the scientific image to something that transcends what it is that science has the ability to discuss in itself.

Stephen Priest in "The Unconditioned Soul" offers an insightful set of reflections that helps situate the problematic philosophies of mind all too characteristic of contemporary meditations. What I hoped to have accomplished here is further development of his categories of the "conditioned" frame and the process of "deconditioning." If I were to end on one question, it would be the following: what are other ways in which we might arrive at an understanding of the "Unconditioned Soul"?

33) Ibid., 8.

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