

## Chapter 7: Epilogue

How do you convince a bird, living in a dying tree, to leave its accustomed perch, its familiar nest, and go to inhabit another. You may praise the new view, and describe fantastic horizons invisible to the old. You may catalogue the prospects of juicy worms, temperate climes, and soaring flights through inestimable thermals. But the bird, clutching stubbornly to its worn branch, may only envision the loss of its well-defined routines. The path to an easy patch of straw for its nest or a worm-rich meadow might become convoluted or even impossible because of distance or predators! It cannot even envision the possibilities of the new place unless it is willing to chance an exploratory flight. Its world is simple and uncomplicated -or at least the complications are well known. This has been my problem here. I believe the mind-body problem is the most difficult in the history of the human intellect. It hinges on the problem of cognition -and *that* is the problem of everything! Its solution, I feel, involves a brand new "roost" -a new intellectual perspective with horizons different but incomparably broader than before.

Admittedly however, though it proffers "sunsets of unmatched vividness", and "new and fertile meadows", it involves a definite risk as well. It may turn out, after all, that the "nest" I propose lies over *fallow* fields and iron-hard soil where no "worms" might survive! You are right, therefore, to be conservative and cautious in the selection of your ultimate habitat, but you are *wrong* if you are timid in your *survey* -your future may depend on it. I invite you to conquer your fear of vertigo and try your wings in an exploratory flight to this very different tree of knowledge.

"Safe (that is, probable) hypotheses are a dime a dozen, and the safest are logical truths. If what science is seeking is primarily a body of certain truths, it should stick to spinning out logical theorems. The trouble with such safety, however, is that it doesn't get us anywhere."<sup>1</sup>

There are really just two schools of thought on the mind-body problem. One holds that the relationship between the mind and the brain is inherently unsolvable. It holds that the natures of mind and brain are (1) either absolutely incommensurate, (are of different kinds), or (2) the problem is beyond intrinsic limitations on human understanding. The other school holds that the relationship is perfectly direct and

---

<sup>1</sup> P.S. Churchland, 1988, P.260

unproblematic, albeit totally one-sided and exceedingly complex. The first offers no practical hope whatsoever for the dysfunctions of the human mind, but the latter destroys the reason for caring in the first place. Its solution is that we are all automatons, "zombies"! Mind, in its ordinary sense, is a fantasy, a "figment" of the imagination! What, then, does it matter whether *another* automaton makes "pain" noises rather than "happy" noises? Less delicately, what possible objection could there be to the Dachau "fetus series" or to the atrocities in Bosnia? The solutions offered by both schools, moreover, are counterintuitive, limit the scope of empirical investigation and involve significant logical difficulties. I have offered a new alternative capable of resolving the whole of the problem and commensurate with the whole of the human spirit.

My thesis opens the further and distinct possibility of an actual "physics", i.e. a mathematical and scientific mechanics of mind and brain, as it defines, for the first time, an appropriate context in which it could be formulated. Just as the SUPERB<sup>1 2</sup> theories of Newton, Maxwell, and Einstein were literally *unthinkable* in the cosmological context of Ptolemy or in the physical (and gravitational) context of Aristotle, neither can the SUPERB theories which must eventually encompass the mind and the brain arise without the context -and the continuum -which will make them possible.

I believe the mind-body problem is the most important problem in the history of our (human) species. Subsuming both science and ethics, it will ultimately determine our future as a civilization. Though this sounds overly dramatic and even downright pompous, reflection shows that it is not. Answers to what we are, and *why* we are will determine what we can do and what we *will* do.<sup>3</sup> Profound belief determines actual practice! The bounds of future civilization will be set by our ultimate understanding of our own being. This problem demands, therefore, the greatest latitude and the greatest tolerance to radical ideas. It is too important to be treated otherwise.

It has been said of scientists, (and it certainly applies to philosophers of mind as well), that they live, alternately, in two disjoint worlds. They do not take their reality home with them. The reality they believe as professionals is not the reality they believe when they dodge cars on the freeway or make love. *None* will put out a saucer of milk for Schroedinger's cat.

---

<sup>1</sup> cf Appendix D

<sup>2</sup> cf Appendix D, Penrose

<sup>3</sup> Consider Nazism, as just one recent example.

Is Dennett prepared during his self-stimulating monologue, (whilst sitting in his rocker and listening to Vivaldi), to accept himself solely as a "center of narrative gravity", solely as the cumulative product of temporally and spatially separate and discrete processes, (the "Final Edition" published on his "Demonic Press"), lacking "figment" or "qualia"? I, personally, am perhaps willing to accept *him* as such, but I am certainly not willing to accept *me* as such.

Like Dennett, I have been wrestling with this problem for over 35 years. I came to it not from philosophical curiosity or "epistemic hunger", but as a result of personal tragedy -the loss of a loved one, (my mother), to the maw of mental illness. Frustration -and anger- at the inability of science to help her and a survey of the dismal "mythological",<sup>1</sup> (Freudian and quasi-Freudian), state of then-current thinking on the subject<sup>2</sup> caused me to begin a personal and private search, of necessity based in logical and abstract theoretical criteria -but aimed at an empiric goal.<sup>3</sup>

Emerging from my "cave", (of contemplation), just a few years ago, I was surprised and fascinated by the illuminating and brilliant bonfires which had been lit on the plains of biology and philosophy. Since then, with more than a little trepidation, I have been scouting each of the major encampments so lit. I have concluded that I have something still new and novel to say. I think that my torch, crafted as much by art as by science, carries a unique Promethean flame. I think I have solved the essence of the problem of mind-brain. Now I, like Benjamin Franklin, Rousseau's "backwoods philosopher", stand before the sophisticates of Paris in my bearskin cap.<sup>4</sup>

Though my thesis admittedly opens new and fundamental problems -more, perhaps, even than it solves, that very fact unlocks whole new worlds of possibility for scientific advance and in itself constitutes an argument for serious consideration. If, in fact, we have already "arrived", if you are satisfied that we do, in fact, already possess in rough form a valid picture of the whole of our reality, then the very

---

<sup>1</sup> echoing Einstein's characterization of Freudianism

<sup>2</sup> and their damnable and blatant *arrogance* about it!

<sup>3</sup> Since then, my perspectives have widened. I have come to believe that the tragedies of mental illness are echoed in the tragedies of the human social condition -the wars, the hatred, the arrogance, the exploitation of man by his fellow man, these are other aspects of the same basic problem. Under the perspective of dogmatic Naturalism, these are normal, and therefore necessary. I do not believe they are.

<sup>4</sup> Van Doren, 1938

*poverty* of that reality as regards the human condition must make you very sad -and  
kindle the hope that something more is possible. I think it is!