

# Marsilio's Reading Group

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Led by	Marsilio Gagliano
Title	Thomas Nagel – What is it like to be a bat?
Date	28 June 2009

## INTRODUCTION

Today I'd like to begin a discussion of an article by Thomas Nagel, What is it like to be a bat?

This is the first time I've lead such a reading group in SL. My hope is to facilitate a group reflection on this interesting piece of philosophy.

<http://www.clarku.edu/students/philosophyclub/docs/nagel.pdf>

Let's take a look at the first sentence: "*Consciousness is what makes the mind-body problem really intractable.*"

This sentence says a lot about what it is to be a human being, I think. As far as I know, we are the only animals who experience a mind-body problem. The real question is: what kind of problem is it.

Sometimes it's a very personal one - for example, my mind doesn't think much of my body :)

That's why I have hair here in SL, or at least more of it than one might otherwise think.

As a philosophical problem, there are two dimensions to the issue. First, a metaphysical one.

By 'metaphysical' I refer to claims to the way things are: Does the mind exist? Does the body exist? Is one the function of the other? If distinct, how do they relate? These are the metaphysical issues.

Second, there are epistemological issues. By 'epistemological' issue, I refer to questions about the way we know things. How do I know you have a mind? How do I know I have one? I don't sense my mind in the way I sense your face or words, but somehow I am aware of my own mind in a way that I am not aware of yours.

Nagel's article addresses both dimensions of the mind-body problem - the metaphysical and the epistemological; but he approached the metaphysical issue through the epistemological ones.

What implications are there for the mind body-problem, given that

- a) there is something that we can refer to as 'what it is like to be a bat' and
- b) given that I cannot know quite what that is like.

So that's my intro to this text. Reactions? Questions?

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## DISCUSSION:

- [12:16] Simulat Almendros: Is the mind a thing Marsilio?
- [12:16] Marsilio Gagliano: ah a metaphysical question
- [12:16] Nikolas Lefavre: Marsilio, why should we assume as "given" what you state in [12:15]?
- [12:17] herman Bergson: To add to that equation: is the human being a plain material object like all other objects in the universe?
- [12:17] Marsilio Gagliano: to say that something is given, is simply to say that's where we start - one can always question givens
- [12:17] DaSein Noyes: give that we have no way to ascertain what its like to be a bat aside from speculation we really have no clue whether their mind/body perception is different or not
- [12:18] Marsilio Gagliano: I don't think that any object is a plain material object.
- [12:18] Mitch Zemenis: Nagel seems to assume we can speak meaningfully of that which cannot be known, not even in principle. Is that right?
- [12:18] herman Bergson: Plz elaborate on that statement
- [12:18] Skeezi Westland: My quick scanning suggests that Nagel reifies "mind." Personally I'm less likely to say I have a mind than to say I "do" mind-stuff.
- [12:18] Marsilio Gagliano: Let's start there then, can we talk about what it is like to be a bat?
- [12:19] Simulat Almendros: Kate Aikens responded to Nagel's question with a really interesting essay about bats called – 'What is it like to be boring and myopic'
- [12:19] Sinclair Bracken: well, what does it mean to be "like" something
- [12:19] Skeezi Westland: lol
- [12:19] Marsilio Gagliano: consider, "what it's like to be drunk"
- [12:19] Simulat Almendros: and she actually said a lot about what its like to be a bat
- [12:19] DaSein Noyes: boring and myopic can be done with a lot more scientific certainty
- [12:20] Macov Finkler: If you seriously are trying to visualise a bat's perspective, you'd at least have to be specific to the type of bat... paranoid, extroverted, religious?
- [12:20] Marsilio Gagliano: does anyone not know "what it is like to be drunk"?
- [12:20] Oswy Gothly: Well I am all sonar Sim what is it like to be a bat?
- [12:20] Mitch Zemenis: Yeah, what is it like to be drunk? That is a neat example for me--I've never been drunk...
- [12:20] Sinclair Bracken: well, I was slightly drunk once, but I'm not clear I know what it's like to be more drunk than that
- [12:21] Simulat Almendros: But it seems to me that the mind/body problem is only a problem if the mind is thought to be some sort of thing
- [12:21] Skeezi Westland: I have experienced being drunk, but what I have now is the memory of that experience.
- [12:21] Zen Arado: doesn't mean you remember what it's like being drunk
- [12:21] herman Bergson: I agree Simulat
- [12:21] Marsilio Gagliano: but even if you've never been drunk, you imagine what it would be like
- [12:21] Mitch Zemenis: But I feel I could imagine what it is like...
- [12:21] Benevolent String: But isn't Nagel's main point to offer a critique of those who wish to reduce the world to knowable facts?
- [12:21] Macov Finkler: in my experience being drunk is like being underwater and nauseous
- [12:21] Skeezi Westland: Mind is not a thing, but something we do, I assert.
- [12:22] Oswy Gothly: But drunkenness is a human experience not like batness.
- [12:22] Marsilio Gagliano: could someone more practiced at being drunk describe it for us?
- [12:22] Mitch Zemenis: I am just never sure I've got it quite right...
- [12:22] Sinclair Bracken: I imagine it's rather pleasant to be drunk
- [12:22] Simulat Almendros: I agree Skeezi
- [12:22] Zen Arado: degrees of drunkenness too

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- [12:22] Nikolas Lefavre: To know what it's like to be drunk is to assume a certain level of self-awareness that we might not reasonably assume possible for a bat (knowing what it's like to be one). (Well, depending on how drunk we are, I suppose. LOL)
- [12:23] Marsilio Gagliano: I don't care about the bat now
- [12:23] herman Bergson: That is what causes the mind/body problem. We DO talk to much about it ^\_^
- [12:23] Marsilio Gagliano: or the mind
- [12:23] Marsilio Gagliano: or the body
- [12:23] Lokifluff Clarity: but aren't we really asking about details of the experience when we ask 'what is it like?' and the experience will likely be different for each of us
- [12:23] Simulat Almendros: Oswy - they have legal poppy farms in Tasmania and they are having problems with wallabies getting high and wandering in circles making crop circles :-)
- [12:23] Marsilio Gagliano: I just wonder 'what it is like to be mildly drunk'
- [12:23] Sinclair Bracken: well we have stereotypical ideas about drunkenness to refer to
- [12:23] Zen Arado: some blind people could appreciate the sonar facility of bats I think
- [12:24] Marsilio Gagliano: being drunk and having an idea of being drunk are not the same
- [12:24] Missionary SecretSpy: Nagel's point appears to be that we could never conceive of what it is to be like a bat because we are laden by our subjective experiences.
- [12:24] Zen Arado: they use clicks to echo off objects sometimes
- [12:24] Skeezi Westland: Marsilio, perhaps you could make your point
- [12:24] herman Bergson: I think the question is irrelevant..
- [12:24] Benevolent String: Marsilio, could you put the text into its philosophical setting? What is it arguing against and why?
- [12:24] herman Bergson: we first have to answer the question: is the human being matter only
- [12:24] Macov Finkler: to be mildly drunk is to have slightly less consciousness of everything except what you're concentrating on, to be easily distracted, have a sense of good-will and slightly unbalanced
- [12:24] Marsilio Gagliano: my point is, before we get deep into the metaphysical issues and implications about mind
- [12:24] Sunfire Langer: Is it that the experience of consciousness is different in each species, or that the differences between species' experience of consciousness a matter of complexity? I assume you agree with the latter, Marsilio
- [12:24] Marsilio Gagliano: we have to isolate the phenomenon we start with
- [12:24] Edwound Wisent: best type of questions as far as I can tell, are irreverent
- [12:25] DaSein Noyes: not really
- [12:25] Marsilio Gagliano: pause for a moment and figure out the meaning of "what it is like " talk
- [12:25] Oswy Gothly: Marsilio. There is a huge body of literature accounts etc on the feeling of being drunk. You could refer to that as to what it is like. There is still the issue of whether your experience of drunkenness is like mine. It's a whole further step away to the bat the level of scepticism would increase.
- [12:25] DaSein Noyes: they're just the easiest to answer
- [12:26] Macov Finkler: generally, an explanation of what something is like is an attempt to steer the listener's mind to the same state as in the description, imho
- [12:26] Marsilio Gagliano: does the literature assume that there is some state of affairs that exists and can be described as "what it is like to be drunk"
- [12:26] Mitch Zemenis: So, I have never been drunk. But like most kids, I used to be able to pretend to be drunk--slurring my words & tripping over things. If you are good at it, no one knows you aren't drunk. And you might even feel a little funny yourself...
- [12:26] Edwound Wisent: well. I'm off to the zoo so I guess I'll do some research into what it's like to be a bat trapped in a safe environment
- [12:26] herman Bergson: aren't we a bit of focus here?
- [12:27] Marsilio Gagliano: we are all over the place

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- [12:27] Oswy Gothly: Marsilio In behavioural terms that seems to be the case.
- [12:27] herman Bergson: What is Nagel's point
- [12:27] Marsilio Gagliano: I think there are facts, call them psychological facts
- [12:27] Macov Finkler: Nagel is, I think, outlining the problem of creating a language for a universal phenomenology, unless I've missed something, Herman
- [12:27] Marsilio Gagliano: that we can refer to as "what it is like to be x"
- [12:27] Sunfire Langer: oh dear, facts on the issue of mind....
- [12:28] herman Bergson: ok, is Nagel a dualist in an ontological sense then?
- [12:28] Marsilio Gagliano: call them states of affairs
- [12:28] Marsilio Gagliano: you rush to a rash conclusion Mr. Bergson
- [12:28] herman Bergson: It was a question :-)
- [12:29] Zen Arado: I thought he was saying there are some things we can't ever know because we cant reduce them to scientific knowledge
- [12:29] Shak Maroon accepted your inventory offer.
- [12:29] Marsilio Gagliano: I doubt Nagel is a dualist
- [12:29] Skeezi Westland: Marsilio, perhaps the problem is in the language of "be". Consider using "do" when describing mental states and it will make more sense
- [12:29] Simulat Almendros: I think Nagel's point is that it is impossible to know about a first person experience other than our own
- [12:29] Macov Finkler: I think he's trying to solve the problems with not being a dualist.
- [12:29] Mitch Zemenis: Herman, Marsilio: Isn't Nagel a Dual aspect theorist?
- [12:29] Marsilio Gagliano: So let's take Skeezi's suggestion seriously
- [12:29] herman Bergson: Clear statement Zen. And Mitch. Good point
- [12:30] Marsilio Gagliano: let's try to replace "to be" talk with "to do" talk - can we try that?
- [12:30] Sinclair Bracken: so the question would be, what is it like to "do" like a bat?
- [12:30] Marsilio Gagliano: yes
- [12:30] Skeezi Westland: For example, drunkenness is a process.
- [12:31] Simulat Almendros: sure - what happens in a bats brain is something we can learn about
- [12:31] Skeezi Westland: Bats do certain things we can do, an other things we cannot do.
- [12:31] Marsilio Gagliano: and we will translate all talk about the "thing" mind into talk about "behaving or doing" in some way
- [12:31] herman Bergson: But isn't this all about qualia and first person privileged knowledge of inner states>?
- [12:31] Simulat Almendros: its not just a matter of the bat's behaviour - but of the internal processes that govern that behaviour
- [12:31] herman Bergson: Wasn't that Nagel's point?
- [12:31] Marsilio Gagliano: the position that says that about mind is called logical behaviourism
- [12:32] DaSein Noyes: then why worry about bats when i cannot even know what it is like to be you
- [12:32] Sinclair Bracken: or the internal processes that arise from and evoke that behavior
- [12:32] Marsilio Gagliano: Right Herman, Nagel is not a logical behaviourist; but he is concerned about it
- [12:32] Marsilio Gagliano: So Skee's point is quite top the point
- [12:32] herman Bergson: oh no...
- [12:32] Missionary SecretSpy: Nagel's point is that something can "be" without us ever being able to comprehend that being - like trying to explain NFL rules to an ant
- [12:32] Skeezi Westland: Consider that inner states also are processes, not things.
- [12:32] Marsilio Gagliano: and will also calm Simulat's fears about reifying the mind
- [12:32] Macov Finkler: Dasein, do we even know what it's like to be us?
- [12:33] Skeezi Westland: Actually Simulat & I are "of similar minds" on this topic.
- [12:33] Marsilio Gagliano: logical behaviourism solves a lot of problems when talking about mind
- [12:33] herman Bergson: that I am not so sure about yet

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- [12:33] Mitch Zemenis: Sim: I'm not sure we can put it that way...the internal processes that govern behavior are not different in kind from the behaviors themselves...Nagel is referring to something else altogether...
- [12:33] Sinclair Bracken: what's a logical behaviorist?
- [12:34] Simulat Almendros: Mitch - seems to me that Nagel is assuming that there is something else altogether
- [12:34] Marsilio Gagliano: logical behaviorism: don't speak of the mind as if it were a thing, rather speak of certain dispositions to behave in certain ways
- [12:34] herman Bergson: logical behaviorist: all mental statements can be logically reduced to statements about behavior
- [12:34] Mitch Zemenis: Yeah, Sim, assuming...That why I wonder if he can justify his attempt to actually, meaningfully, refer to such things...
- [12:34] Marsilio Gagliano: Nagel is not a logical behaviorist, but Skee may be
- [12:35] Simulat Almendros: I wonder too Mitch - and have my doubts
- [12:35] Shak Maroon: I think the context is, how do we explain or understand consciousness, or, if why can't explain or understand it, why not?
- [12:35] Skeezix Westland: But also process philosophy doesn't take snapshots and call them reality. Everything is fluid and in motion.
- [12:35] Vladimir Apparatchik: I don't think Nagel is a dualist , he says "It would be a mistake to conclude that physicalism is false....physicalism is a position we cannot understand because we don't have any conception of how it might be true"
- [12:35] Oswy Gothly: This is beginning to sound as if you are eliminating the very thing you want to explain. ie its all behaviour may say something but it does not say a very great deal.
- [12:35] Marsilio Gagliano: good point Vlad
- [12:35] Simulat Almendros: and there is way more to know about how we work than just statements about mental events it seems to me Marsilio
- [12:35] Mitch Zemenis: Here is another example, of the sort that Marsilio was looking for earlier...& it comes from Nagel as well...what is it like to be dead?
- [12:35] DaSein Noyes: he's definitely a redundist though
- [12:36] Mitch Zemenis: ...Can we imagine that?
- [12:36] DaSein Noyes: he goes on and on explaining why we cant know something that everyone is already fairly clear on not being able to know
- [12:36] Simulat Almendros: Mitch - what is it like to be a steak ? :-)
- [12:36] Mitch Zemenis: We can't, because (on some views anyway) there is nothing it is like to be dead...
- [12:36] Marsilio Gagliano: why does Nagel think logical behaviorism won't work?
- [12:37] Marsilio Gagliano: we have to answer that question to be fair to Nagel
- [12:37] Oswy Gothly: It wont work for the bat because he says the best we can achieve is to describe what it woudl be like for me to behave like a bat. not how a bat experiences things at all.
- [12:38] Sinclair Bracken: that sounds fair to me
- [12:38] Marsilio Gagliano: no, it is not our ignorance about the bat that's the problem
- [12:38] Zen Arado: but don't many scientists think that if we keep developing knowledge about the physical processes of the brain we will eventually be able to understand consciousness?
- [12:38] Marsilio Gagliano: he says this: We may call this the subjective character of experience. It is not captured by any of the familiar. Recently devised reductive analyses of the mental, for all of them are logically compatible with its absence. It's a matter of logic
- [12:38] Simulat Almendros: Oswy - I recommend Aiken's essay about bat experience - I was amazed
- [12:39] Macov Finkler: Zen, what do you mean by understand? Reduce to its constituents, and label them> Throw it up on a screen, like a film?
- [12:39] Vladimir Apparatchik: Zed - it's exactly that view that Nagel is challenging
- [12:39] Alaya Kumaki: ah , I like when it comes to the subjective part

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- [12:39] Shak Maroon: That's right Zen, many do say that. I reckon Nagel is arguing they're wrong. There is nothing that it is like to be conscious. Ergo, no explanation. Consciousness is a given.
- [12:40] Marsilio Gagliano: Nagel's point is that logical behaviorism could be true even if there were no such thing as consciousness
- [12:40] Skeezi Westland: It is a part of organic experience that our sense organs are tied inextricably to our biological organism. We thus cannot know others experience except as metaphor.
- [12:40] Zen Arado: or knowing more about how it works
- [12:40] Sinclair Bracken: so maybe his redundantism is justified
- [12:40] Marsilio Gagliano: is it true that logical behaviorism could be true even if there were no such thing as consciousness?
- [12:40] herman Bergson: In a way he may be right...we also never succeeded in creating life...even with all proper ingredients
- [12:41] Marsilio Gagliano: I say yes; it is true as a matter of logic
- [12:41] herman Bergson: we are the anomaly - not nature ^\_^
- [12:42] Simulat Almendros: but Marsilio - why in the world would Nagel doubt that we are conscious?
- [12:42] Marsilio Gagliano: logical behaviorism could be true even if there were no such thing as consciousness
- [12:42] Vladimir Apparatchik: Nagel also says that we can have evidence for the truth of something we cannot really understand. (Top of 329)
- [12:42] Marsilio Gagliano: he doesn't - his point is that we are conscious - but logical behaviorism doesn't capture this
- [12:43] herman Bergson: physicalism might capture it
- [12:43] Simulat Almendros: and note the distinction between the verb to be conscious - which describes a thing we do, and consciousness which stands for a thing we have
- [12:43] Marsilio Gagliano: That what he means when he says: We may call this the subjective character of experience. It is not captured by any of the familiar. Recently devised reductive analyses of the mental, for all of them are logically compatible with its absence
- [12:43] Marsilio Gagliano: logical behaviourism is one of those recent analyses
- [12:44] Oswy Gothly: Fine I think we all already agreed on the limits of behaviourism its description of things as machines its eliminative aspects. Reductionism tends to eliminate the very thing you want to analyse?
- [12:44] Marsilio Gagliano: that what he thinks
- [12:44] Kaimana Miles: Marsilio, does the rise of Logical behaviorism have anything to do with the rise of logical positivism or its subsequent decline?
- [12:45] Marsilio Gagliano: but maybe physicalism doesn't have the same problem, as Mr. Bergson just pointed out
- [12:45] Marsilio Gagliano: it does Kaimana
- [12:45] Simulat Almendros: Oswy - it seems to me that to talk of consciousness is to be extremely reductive - it reduces an important element to something we cannot know about - and that's pretty unsatisfactory
- [12:45] Macov Finkler: Really, consciousness is the only thing we can claim to know about
- [12:46] Marsilio Gagliano: Sim and Macov seem to be in a fundamental disagreement here
- [12:46] herman Bergson: We only can express a claim
- [12:46] Simulat Almendros: I disagree Macov - we are conscious and know many things
- [12:46] Skeezi Westland: Macov, you're reifying a process again.
- [12:46] herman Bergson: to call it consciousness is a next claim
- [12:46] Sinclair Bracken: so physicalism, though?
- [12:46] Macov Finkler: reifying... making a thing?
- [12:46] herman Bergson: for instance

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- [12:46] Kaimana Miles: it seems to me that logical behaviorism is a subset of empirical schools in the tradition of Hume. Where does Kant figure into this?
- [12:46] Marsilio Gagliano: to re-ify; to thing-ify
- [12:47] Shak Maroon: There's a very important point here, I think. Most folk who are into the study of consciousness take a scientific reductionist approach, and talk of neurons etc. Nagel says they're barking up the wrong tree because there can be no reductionist explanation of inner experience. I agree with Nagel, but it's a big step to say all these other guys are wrong!
- [12:47] Skeezi Westland: consciousness is something done, not something that exists.
- [12:47] Marsilio Gagliano: he doesn't say they are wrong, as Vlad pointed out
- [12:47] herman Bergson: Let's stick to Nagel today :-)
- [12:47] Alaya Kumaki: Sim really, you think that consciousness stand for the thing we have? I rather link it to the think we sense
- [12:47] Marya Blaisdale: Agreed Skeezi :]
- [12:47] Sinclair Bracken: okay-- but physicalism captures that how?
- [12:48] Macov Finkler: Skeezi, it seems like it's a thing that is done very fast, that gives the impression of being a thing
- [12:48] Marsilio Gagliano: let's talk about physicalism - we might not all have the same idea about what it is
- [12:48] DaSein Noyes: maybe what they are trying to know isn't "what its like to be a bat" but only "what its like to be a bat to us"
- [12:48] Marsilio Gagliano: somebody define physicalism for us
- [12:48] Simulat Almendros: Alaya - we are aware of ourselves and the world we are in - that is - we are conscious
- [12:48] Skeezi Westland: One can talk of eating, as if it's a thing, but it is made up of myriad elements
- [12:48] DaSein Noyes: putting Nagel square into the Don Quixote camp
- [12:49] Skeezi Westland: So too is consciousness.
- [12:49] Alaya Kumaki: Sim, objectal world is only a tiny percent, of the sensory consciousness
- [12:49] Zen Arado: everything is process - so we cant understand anything?
- [12:49] Birric Forcella: In order for this to make sense, we would need to know what it is to be a bat to the bat
- [12:49] Skeezi Westland: lol re. Don Quixote
- [12:49] Macov Finkler: Skeezi, every 'thing' is made up of myriad elements
- [12:49] Marsilio Gagliano: we are kinda off topic
- [12:49] Mitch Zemenis: Physicalism: All information is physical information (following Jackson?)
- [12:49] Skeezi Westland: Exactly, Macov
- [12:49] herman Bergson: Physicalism is a philosophical position holding that everything which exists is no more extensive than its physical properties; that is, that there are no kinds of things other than physical things.
- [12:50] DaSein Noyes: he's obviously going on and on about an obviosity that even the people he's apparently against wouldn't disagree with
- [12:50] Marsilio Gagliano: do we agree with Herman's def?
- [12:50] Skeezi Westland: Rein us back in, Marsilio
- [12:50] Starling Ansar: we do
- [12:50] Mitch Zemenis: I grant it..
- [12:50] Marsilio Gagliano: good
- [12:50] herman Bergson: amen :-)
- [12:50] Alaya Kumaki: Birric, what it is for the other one, as well as what it is for oneself, is still showing the subjectivity matter there. What does create the subject "effect" as subjectivism?
- [12:50] Mitch Zemenis: :)
- [12:50] Marsilio Gagliano: a logical behaviorist can be a physicalist as well
- [12:50] Simulat Almendros: I don't agree with physicalism Herman

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- [12:51] Marsilio Gagliano: the question is, does physicalism capture the subjective element that logical behaviorism missed
- [12:51] herman Bergson: I only gave a definition Simulat :-)
- [12:51] Skeezi Westland: I can agree with the physicalism definition.
- [12:51] Sinclair Bracken: so consciousness would be the electrochemical processes between or among neurons?
- [12:51] Oswy Gothly: No
- [12:51] herman Bergson: But I can agree with it too :-)
- [12:51] Marsilio Gagliano: yes - conscious activity is electro-chemical activity would be something that a physicalist might say
- [12:52] Marsilio Gagliano: depending on her theory of matter
- [12:52] Vladimir Apparatchik: I think what Nagel is doing is pointing out the conceptual problems with physicalism are as profound as those for dualism
- [12:52] DaSein Noyes: physicalism holds that there is no non physical aspect to "things"?
- [12:52] DaSein Noyes: hehe
- [12:52] Simulat Almendros: nods at Herman :-)
- [12:52] DaSein Noyes: and people believe that?
- [12:52] Marsilio Gagliano: yep that's it in a nutshell Vlad
- [12:52] Marsilio Gagliano: believe what, Dasein?
- [12:52] Sinclair Bracken: so consciousness doesn't exist above and beyond physical processes and is not "like" anything, really
- [12:52] Skeezi Westland: As I see it, the only thing that Nagel has found is a problem with the limitations of language.
- [12:52] Alaya Kumaki: subject, have been reduced to something that we ponder about. Like a topic, or a science object to study, which is far similar to objectivism actually, the slipping in this direction, was made gradually from what I saw
- [12:53] DaSein Noyes: that physical objects/organism have no non-physical component
- [12:53] Marsilio Gagliano: yes many people believe that
- [12:53] herman Bergson: we are limited in our knowledge of what matter is
- [12:53] DaSein Noyes: that's amazing
- [12:53] Oswy Gothly: Surely the issue is how physicalism cashes itself out in analytic and descriptive terms?
- [12:53] herman Bergson: so ...we may come up with a new paradigm anytime
- [12:54] Skeezi Westland: Welcome to the world, DaSein
- [12:54] Kaimana Miles: would another definition for physicalism be Metaphysical Naturalism, such as in the Marxist tradition?
- [12:54] Simulat Almendros: physicalism doesn't take emergence into consideration
- [12:54] DaSein Noyes: not my world
- [12:54] Alaya Kumaki: but nobody really find out about what creates subjective consciousness so far
- [12:54] Macov Finkler: Is the idea that things are only things because we call them things compatible with physicalism?
- [12:54] Birric Forcella: That is simply an empty statement - we don't know everything that is physical and there may be large surprises yet in store. All we may claim is that there is nothing supernatural -
- [12:54] Marsilio Gagliano: naturalism, materialism, physicalism
- [12:54] herman Bergson: That is what I mean with the new paradigm Simulat
- [12:55] Skeezi Westland: Well, Simulat, emergent qualities and talents are not ruled out by physicalism
- [12:55] Simulat Almendros: Nods in Herman's direction again
- [12:55] Marsilio Gagliano: the new paradigm is new only in relation to the old -- shall we talk about paradigm of matter?

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[12:55] Marsilio Gagliano: before we go there; let me lay out the metaphysical possibilities on the mind issue

[12:55] Sinclair Bracken: matter would seem to be inert in some sense

[12:55] Macov Finkler: by metaphysical you mean ontological...

[12:56] Vladimir Apparatchik: Yes Herman, that's why we use the term "physicalism" rather than "materialism" - it's wider, and a new paradigm may widen our view of the physical

[12:56] Marsilio Gagliano: materialism: mind reducible to matter (whatever that is) .. yes ontological

[12:56] Skeezix Westland: Birric, I think that people equate non-physical with supernatural.

[12:56] Marsilio Gagliano: idealism: matter reducible to mind (whatever that is)

[12:56] herman Bergson: Working on it, Vladimir :-)

[12:56] Vladimir Apparatchik: lol

[12:56] Marsilio Gagliano: dualism; mind and matter related but independent

[12:57] Marsilio Gagliano: dual aspect theory: mind and matter two aspects of a deeper reality (whatever that is)

[12:57] Macov Finkler: Can we agree, all components of an ontological 'thing' are ontological, and all components of an epistemological 'thing' are epistemological

[12:57] herman Bergson: And it even wasn't a joke, Vladimir ^\_^

[12:57] Skeezix Westland: Did you notice that you had no definition for "mind"??

[12:57] Marsilio Gagliano: personally, I tend to be a dual aspect theorist

[12:58] Marsilio Gagliano: but many people are materialists

[12:58] Vladimir Apparatchik: I look forward to your breakthrough Herman :)

[12:58] Marsilio Gagliano: what are you Dasein?

[12:58] DaSein Noyes: I'm just me

[12:58] Oswy Gothly: To be dual aspect means a new paradigm.

[12:58] herman Bergson: Ok! :-)

[12:58] Marsilio Gagliano: you were shocked at the thought of someone's being a materialist

[12:58] SG Rae: I'm me too

[12:58] Skeezix Westland: Defining something with a term for which you have no definition means you haven't defined anything.

[12:58] Sinclair Bracken: so if you believe that consciousness is emergent, are you a dualist?

[12:59] Sinclair Bracken: or a physicalist?

[12:59] Marsilio Gagliano: no Sinclair, you need not be

[12:59] DaSein Noyes: I think it's pretty full of ourselves to think that all aspects of a "thing" are immediately and fully perceivable

[12:59] Skeezix Westland: Sinclair, You had better define Emergent

[12:59] Alaya Kumaki: it emerge from something, than its dual Sinclair, the "what " its emerging from " and the consciousness. So far I'm a non dualist; the separativity doesn't exist for me

[13:00] Sinclair Bracken: I'll leave that to the philosophers here

[13:00] Skeezix Westland: My favorite emergent quality is piano playing.

[13:00] Marsilio Gagliano: well, these distinctions were just a context for the question at hand

[13:00] Simulat Almendros: I don't think emergence implies dualism at all

[13:00] Skeezix Westland: It takes a variety of human capacities and creates something that we did not evolve to do.

[13:00] herman Bergson: I agree...it never should imply that

[13:00] Marsilio Gagliano: Does materialism/physicalism capture the subjective element of experience or does it fall prey to the same problem as logical behaviourism?

[13:01] Skeezix Westland: Materialism allows for subjective experience.

[13:01] Marsilio Gagliano: We may call this the subjective character of experience. It is not captured by any of the familiar. recently devised reductive analyses of the mental, for all of them are logically compatible with its absence

# Marsilio's Reading Group

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[13:01] Simulat Almendros: Marsilio - I like Max Velman's idea that we have two perspectives on our own brain

[13:01] Macov Finkler: See, is there any element of experience that isn't subjective? Or experience as in the experience of others?

[13:02] Marsilio Gagliano: any experience...like eating ice-cream - so taken apart from the experienter

[13:02] Simulat Almendros: our personal perspective of experiencing the world, and an external perspective that shows what is happening in our brains as we experience and interact with the world

[13:03] Marsilio Gagliano: Nagel thinks that physicalism could be true even if there were no such thing as being conscious

[13:03] Sinclair Bracken: the brain could be a type of sense organ; and what it senses is consciousness

[13:03] Marsilio Gagliano: I think he's right in this

[13:03] Oswy Gothly: Marsilio It doesn't have to. But it depends on how you delineate the paradigm. It might for instance involve ideas of supervenience a sort of mapping of material and mental. New ways of describing things at different levels of complexity.

[13:03] Alaya Kumaki: it fail , in my sense, and i already talk about this subjective absence so far, when it come to something as a universal conclusion of something , objectivity is always becoming a dominant , and the diversity from the subjectivity is to many times forgot

[13:03] Missionary SecretSpy: do you taste what I taste?

[13:03] Macov Finkler: eating ice-cream is good... there must be a specific set of characteristics that define eating ice-cream from some other type of experience, but every 'eating ice-cream' experience is different

[13:03] herman Bergson: Yes Simulat and recent neurobiological research could infer from its observations the personal perspective statements

[13:03] Macov Finkler: so what are the common characteristics

[13:04] Skeezix Westland: The brain has multiple capacities. It seems that a brain that can see can also perceive itself seeing.

[13:04] Mitch Zemenis: So, Marsilio, you're saying that Nagel's view is that physicalism (its truth) is also logically independent of the existence of "what its like to be X"

[13:04] herman Bergson: that leads to an infinite regress Skeezix

[13:04] Skeezix Westland: You're reifying again, Macov

[13:05] Marsilio Gagliano: yes Mitch, that's his claim - physicalism could be true even if there were no such thing as being conscious

[13:05] Macov Finkler: I don't think I am, Skeezix... you can have common characteristics of an action - that's what adverbs are for

[13:05] Simulat Almendros: but Nagel has no reason for proposing that we aren't conscious Marsilio

[13:05] Skeezix Westland: No, it by no means doesn't infinitely regress

[13:05] Marsilio Gagliano: he thinks we are conscious - he never doubts that

[13:06] Alaya Kumaki: as far , is becoming incarnated in our materialistic way of life, and diversity is disappearing, in our biosphere , and i interpret it as a false objective tendencies but a subjective denial

[13:06] Marsilio Gagliano: his point is not whether or not we are conscious, his point is a logical one: physicalism could be true even if there were no such thing as being conscious - is he right?

[13:07] Oswy Gothly: Yes

[13:07] Marsilio Gagliano: I think he's right

[13:07] Mitch Zemenis: Why, though, Marsilio...?

[13:08] Oswy Gothly: Yes he is obviously right but the hard thing is to cash out that conception in a new paradigm. For instance that satisfies a first and third person perspective and so on.

# Marsilio's Reading Group

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[13:08] Vladimir Apparatchik: What I don't know is whether Nagel is a "mysterian" ie we'll never crack it, or perhaps we may

[13:08] Marsilio Gagliano: I have a vague grasp of what neuro-physiological explanations do

[13:08] DaSein Noyes: so umm a bat feels like a bat even if we didn't care one way or another

[13:08] DaSein Noyes: does he get paid for writing this?

[13:08] Mitch Zemenis: This implies, doesn't it, that there might be a world just like this one in every physical respect, but different in that there are no subjective qualitative states of consciousness...

[13:08] Marsilio Gagliano: and they do abstract from the subjective elements of experience

[13:09] Mitch Zemenis: Is that REALLY possible?

[13:09] Marsilio Gagliano: we are at the point where we could begin to look at Nagel's larger argument -- which looks not to this or that reductive theory, but to the nature of reductive theories in general

[13:09] Skeezi Westland: Sorry, I got distracted. By looking for characteristics to describe what makes eating ice-cream unique, you're trying to take a snapshot rather than describe what's being done.

[13:09] herman Bergson: Some things may be logically necessary but that doesn't mean they are factually true also

[13:10] herman Bergson: Possible worlds are nice, but no matter of fact :-)

[13:10] Macov Finkler: Skeezi, I'm just trying to come up with a definition for what's being done

[13:10] Marsilio Gagliano: what does it mean for an explanation to be reductive and what does a successful reductive explanation look like?

[13:10] Alaya Kumaki: reductionist was a tendencies to create a spectral simplicity, as smaller spectre of the field to be observe I suppose

[13:10] Marsilio Gagliano: that's the next question

[13:11] Oswy Gothly: Are we going to follow this up in two weeks?

[13:11] Marsilio Gagliano: we could pick it up right there: what does it mean for an explanation to be reductive and what does a successful reductive explanation look like?

[13:11] Skeezi Westland: Each process is unique. The only thing you can describe are the shared elements.

[13:11] Vladimir Apparatchik: Nagel doesn't seem to be against reductionism - only using reductionism to look at subjective experiences

[13:12] Macov Finkler: Skeezi, exactly what I was getting at. I'm glad we agree. =)

[13:12] Marsilio Gagliano: He is very careful not to take an ontological position on the mind-body problem, Vlad

[13:12] Shak Maroon: From Wiki, if it helps: Nagel's point is that there is a constraint on what it is to possess the concept of a mental state, namely, that one be directly acquainted with it.

Concepts of mental states are only made available to a thinker who can be acquainted with her own states; clearly, the possession and use of physical concepts has no corresponding constraint.

[13:12] Oswy Gothly: Are we going to make up this reductionist point in a couple of weeks? I think it would be good to reflect and go on then?

[13:12] DaSein Noyes: you two agreed on something?

[13:12] Mitch Zemenis: But Herman, what distinguishes THIS world from the other one? Nothing, as far as I can tell...

[13:12] Marsilio Gagliano: in 2 weeks, I will begin by asking: what does it mean for an explanation to be reductive and what does a successful reductive explanation look like?

[13:13] Oswy Gothly: What do you think Marsilio?

[13:13] Shak Maroon: I think the reductionist question would be a good starting for next time.

[13:13] Macov Finkler: Dasein, through a long and tortuous route... at least I think we did... my phenomenological experience cannot begin to describe the ontological reality of the agreement

[13:13] Marsilio Gagliano: as Nagel sees it, and then as each of us does