Ontology in the Holographic Cave[1]

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This paper will endeavor to show that all materialist philosophies of mind are necessarily untenable, as they make an unnecessary assumption, namely, that matter is something more than just extension coupled with equations of constraint. Furthermore, this paper will approach the philosophy of mind with the multitudinous convictions of Kant's Transcendental Idealism (TI), save the transcendental ego, which has no real place in TI. This last point is not new. Andrew Brook tells us, "…most of what [Kant] said about mind and consciousness can be detached from his idealism. (Brook)" Instead, we will remain devout to idealism by taking on Heidegger's understanding of the self, but, in doing so, we will shift emphasis from phenomenology to the world (and self) as a collection of ideas. Once the above project has been sufficiently explicated, we will compare it with extended mind functionalism, and explore this very specific form of TI to see what it suggests for neuroscience and psychology.

We begin with materialism, in general. Consider the following three scenarios:

1) There is a hand that is moving toward a tabletop. When the hand comes in contact with the tabletop, the hand stops and cannot pass through the table.
2) There is a hand that is moving toward a tabletop. When the hand comes in contact with the tabletop, the hand stops and cannot pass through the table.
3) There is a hand that is moving toward a tabletop. When the hand comes in contact with the tabletop, the hand stops and cannot pass through the table.

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The reader may, at this point, feel that the author has left something out of these scenarios, but that is not so. The first scenario occurs in the "material world," the second in computer simulated world, and the third occurs entirely in the author's imagination. All three scenarios accounted for the extension of the table and the hand, and they accounted for what physicists call the "equations of constraint," that is, the constraint on the system that prohibits the hand from passing through the table. One might object, "Where is the substance, in the first scenario?" The problem with this objection, when considering the other two scenarios, is explaining why the extensions in the first scenario necessitate that they be given some sort of privileged ontological status? As George Berkeley pointed out, there is no reason to assert that perceived objects possess an underlying substantial quality, when events occurring in the "material" world are isomorphic and commensurate to those same events that occur in the mind. This is almost completely true, but one must amend Berkeley's contention with one minor proviso, namely, Hume's assertion that said events differ in vivacity.[3]

The reader may have one concern, regarding the previous paragraph. The use of the word "prohibit" may generate the concern that the difference between the extensions within the mind and those in the seemingly external world is that the mind can be sufficiently constrained, but it is not necessarily the case, while the external world is so necessarily constrained. In other words, one may suggest that it is upon the idealist to demonstrate that the third scenario 'could not have been otherwise.' There is a philosophical problem with this concern, one that Hume had long ago dispatched. Hume pointed out that we are unable to pinpoint and expose the necessary causal connection between events. With regard to the physical world, Hume is saying that, in asserting that a necessary causal connection is present, we are saying that we can prove

[3] See Hume's "Copy Principle."

that things could not have occurred other than they did. "Such a connexion wou'd amount to a demonstration, and wou'd imply the absolute impossibility for the one object not to follow, or to be conceiv'd not to follow upon the other" (Hume 109). Therefore, the idealist should not be expected to meet a standard that has not been attained by the materialists.

In returning to the only apparent distinction between the three scenarios, the vivacity, the reader is presented with a pivotal question: "Does vivacity equate to some privileged ontological status, endowing the most vivacious representations with a chimerical and elusive quality called "substance," or does vivacity act as a predicate characterization of the ideas, as availed to the subject?" In order to give one scenario's extensions preferential ontological treatment over the others, a qualitative difference (or otherwise) must be put forward, so as to show they are endowed with substance. The challenge to the materialist is to explain what it is, in addition to extension and equations of constraint, that makes material something more than those two things, which are abstract *ideas* that are indistinguishable (save for vivacity) in various representational forms. To put it another way, the idealists are saying that 1+9=10, while materialists are claiming that 1+9+X=10, so the way for the materialist to meet the challenge of idealism is to posit what this "X" is.[4] That is, if (material)=(equations of constraint)+(extension)+(X), then what is this "X?" Since no "X" can be given, and none has been given, one is compelled to conclude, as Bertrand Russell did, that "Hume banished the conception of substance from psychology, as Berkeley had banished it from physics" (Russell 662), because there is no good reason to predicate the words "material" or "substance" unto any extension. This is clear when one tries to define what "substance" is, other than a place holder for "an extension that adheres to equations of constraint." On this basis, all philosophies of mind that proceed from the

[4] See Appendix A

assumption that the world is a "material" world begin their philosophy in error. What can be said is that the world's nature is phenomenal, and the whole of Being is an entity comprised of ideas that possesses no underlying substance.[5]

Kant's metaphysics can give us some initial insight into how we should approach neuroscience and philosophy of mind. In the Antinomies of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as well as the explanation given in the *Prolegomena* for why there can be no science of metaphysics, two things follow: 1) There is a noumenal world that underlies the phenomenal and 2) it is necessarily the case that we can have no knowledge of the noumenal world, other than it is there and, somehow, loosely corresponds to the phenomenal world. Kant tells us, "Natural science will never reveal to us the internal constitution of things, which though not appearance, yet can serve as the ultimate ground of explaining appearance" (*Prolegomena* 79). What this means for neuroscience is that its neuroscientists should proceed with an anti-realist's mindset. For philosophers of mind, the starting point must be to throw out all philosophies of mind that contain the idea that the mind arises purely by way of goings-on in the material world. Despite this last statement, we will discuss why extended mind functionalism is probably correct, but for a different (though related) set of reasons than are typically given.[6]

[5] It is important not to get hung up on what would seem to be a relevant disambiguation, namely, whether we mean to say "…necessarily possesses no underlying substance…" or "…possesses no necessary underlying substance…" Under the framework we are presenting, supposing that materialism is correct, it is still an epistemological crime to posit the existence of a functionally impotent underlying *essence* that even lacks so much as a constitutive role. This is what the first "scientists" —Thales, Anaximander, and Heraclitus, for example— were guilty of, when asserting their various, arbitrarily chosen *Urstoff*s. Therefore, the abovementioned disambiguation is irrelevant, because, if it is there, even though we have no way of telling, then this concept of "substance" should be dealt with in the same fashion as Descartes' "other substance."

[6] Though not sufficiently motivated to be included in the body of this paper, a refutation to G.E. Moore's "The Refutation of Idealism" can be found in Appendix B.

Having banished materialist philosophies, we have to ask: "What about the substrate-neutral functionalism? Is functionalism still a contender?" Certainly, it is, but in what sense? The way that functionalism is typically described is that material components of a system produce a function. Keeping in mind that the phenomenal world is an allegorical *anschauung*,[7] one must wonder whether the functionalists have gotten the causal chain backwards. That is, as far as the subject can intuit, the world perceived to be "physical" is a representation of a noumenal world. Instead of the functional system producing a function, it seems to be the case that the function, or mind, is producing the allegorical functioning system. Moreover, this allegorical functioning system, the brain, is not in exact correlation between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds.

The immediate thought should be this: "Does this not imply that the whole phenomenal field is a part of cognition?" If the fundamental operation of understanding is interpretation, as Kant has it, then it naturally follows that all contents of the subject's phenomenal field are, whether actively or passively, a part of cognition. In other words, given that the contents of consciousness have been formatted and organized into the sensuous intuitions, both internal and external, would it not be the case that the subject's phenomenal world is a part of the cognitive process? Extended mind functionalism posits that we are wrong to say that the cognitive process ends at the skin. Clark and Chalmers say:

> If, as we confront some task, a part of the world functions as a process which, were it done in the head, we could have no hesitation in recognizing as part of the

[7] Rather than use the standard translation of Kant's *anshauung*, "intuition," using "visualization" seems a better choice, as it avoids the possible confusion of being associated with the sensuous intuitions, time and space. We see this as justified, given that Hans Reichenbach has done the same. See his *The Direction of Time*.

> cognitive process, then that part of the world is (so we claim) part of the cognitive process. Cognitive processed ain't (all) in the head (Clark 29).

A number of philosophers find something very appealing about this idea, because, after all, the employment of a notebook for the sake remembering "X" is functionally equivalent to "X" being retrieved from within the head. However, problems arise very quickly, when one enters into this way of thinking. First, compare the previous quote with the following, taken from Howard Robinson's entry on "Idealism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*: "…what is required for idealism is that the physical world be, in some sense, itself mental" (Robinson 190). Second, also from *The Extended Mind* paper, Clark and Chalmers explicitly state what would arise as a major concern for other functionalists:

> If this thesis is accepted, how far should we go? … What about socially extended cognition? Could my mental state be partly constituted by the states of other thinkers? We see no reason why not, in principle (Clark 37-38).

Should Durkheim's philosophy of conscious social networks be elevated from metaphor to actuality? In essence, this is the hard question for functionalists to answer, because any answer seems to make functionalism either liberal or chauvinist. This is where TI can answer the rock-and-a-hard-place problem of liberalism and chauvinism. That the functional relationship between parts manifests itself does not ipso facto instantiate minds. TI avoids this by asserting that it is not the allegorical functional system that constitutes a mind; it is the mind that causes the projection and representation of the functional system. Therefore, it should not be assumed that building a highly functional system will constitute a mind.

Before moving on, it would be efficacious to point out that when we say, "If the fundamental operation of understanding is interpretation," we are not saying something that is purely hypothetical. Kant tells us,

> But even if we could frame any synthetical proposition concerning things in themselves by means of pure understanding (which is impossible), it could not apply to phenomena, which do not represent things in themselves. In such a case I should be obliged in transcendental reflection to compare my conceptions only under the conditions of sensibility and so space and time would not be determinations of things in themselves, but phenomena. What things may be in themselves, I know not, and need not know, because a thing is never presented to me otherwise than a phenomenon (*Critique* 184).

Kant's understanding of perception was that there must be a process of formatting and organizing of the contents of consciousness, to make consciousness possible. Kant's opponents will often contest this claim by saying: "If there is a noumenal world, of which we can have no knowledge, then how is that we know there is a subject-dependent interpretive process that occurs in perception?" This question demonstrates a clear misunderstanding of why Kant was not a transcendental realist, and, rather than rehash Kant's original arguments from the first *Critique*, we will turn to cognitive science. The way that cognitive science can help is by demonstrating that perception contains a subject-to-subject variation in the process of perception. There are a number of definitive examples, but the best seems to be synesthesia. For our example, let us consider a hypothetical color-graphemic synesthete. Let us suppose that she sees the number five as being red and the number two as being white. Given a sheet of all twos and one five, she will, at a glance, be able to point out the five. This is important for two reasons.

The first is that this demonstrates that perception certainly does vary, subject-to-subject. Therefore, transcendental realism is untenable, because the subject is not simply receiving the world-in-itself through the senses; it can only be perceived as different, when there is something in the subjects that causes the difference. Otherwise would be to suggest that the laws of logic have failed us, as any *ding an sich* is both itself and not itself, making varying perceptions possible. Indeed, Cytowic reaffirms this, saying, "What we see when we look at our surroundings is largely our own invention" (Cytowic 18). The second item of importance is that the mind does not need to project any category onto the subject's phenomenal field in order to recognize the five. What this means is that there is a fundamental dichotomy between the sensuous intuitions of the subject and the subject's capacities for judgments, the application of abstraction to the content of consciousness. Cytowic reaffirms this, too, saying,

> Take, for example, the detachment of shape. We have no difficulty recognizing a real tree from an artist's sketch of the same shape or a photograph of a tree, despite the enormously different images… (Cytowic 18).

Given these considerations, it seems only reasonable to maintain that the fundamental operation of understanding is interpretation, which rules out the possibility of a transcendentally realism.

Paul M. Churchland has some additional criticism for idealism. He says:

> Suppose we could provide detailed explanations of the behavior and constitution of matter, explanations grounded in theoretical assumptions about the constitution of the mind (…). Idealism would then start to look genuine. In fact, no genuinely

> useful explanations of this sort have ever been provided, and so idealism remains comparatively implausible (Churchland 84).

This is preposterous, because idealism asserts the necessities of the world's ontology. Given that Leibniz saw *res extensa* as reducible to *res cogitans*, and that he was quite a physicist, the implied mutual exclusivity that Churchland sets up between idealism and physics is nonsense. Therefore, it makes no sense for him to demand a working knowledge of the allegorical world from idealism, especially when materialism's physics is so deeply entrenched in abstractions that do not entail this mystery substance, called "matter." He is guilty of performing the following *petitio principii*: "Supposing that the physical world is the basis for the mind, idealism is wrong because it does not tell us how the mind arises from the physical world." When stated in this manner, his error is obvious. Even though the same physics, for example, can arise from idealism, the problem for Churchland is that the promise of understanding the mind through neuroscience is dubious, because physical sciences would be anti-realist in nature. This is particularly detrimental to the identity theorist, who holds that the mind is processes in the brain.

Based on the preceding, what does this suggest about the sciences of mind? For this, we will need to examine what it means to rip the out Kant's transcendental ego, and replace it with a Heideggerian idealism, which requires correcting Heidegger's perspective. Heidegger's problem was that he distinguished between *Dasein*, the modes of Being of *Dasein*, and the phenomenal world. This dissociation is what we wish to reject, and this rejection will permit us to remain true to idealism, because the phenomenal world is just a collection of ideas. Heidegger has quite a bit of difficulty maintaining that these aspects must be distinguished. For example, one can hardly tell how Being-in-the-World is different from There-Being (*Dasein*). The suggestion that we put forward is that the distinctions Heidegger puts forward are artificial. The one thing that

can be said is that *Dasein* is a collection of ideas, and *Dasein* has the capacity to refer to this collection of ideas, giving us the pronoun "I."[8] We may think of the subject as a being analogous to a sort of socket, where ideas can be inserted. In this collection of ideas is the set's ability to refer to ideas within itself. However, the set does not have the ability to reference all ideas in the set, which gives us the conscious and subconscious psychological aspects of the subject. The boundary between the two is probably a fuzzy one. From this, it appears that there is a strong line of reasoning to support psychology as the superior science of mind, when compared to neuroscience or neuropharmacology, which rely on some inconstant, anti-real allegory. Psychology uses the self-referential capacity of the subject to both understand the mind and make alterations. We may consider the psychotherapy provided by Sartrean psychology, when dealing with a hoarder, someone who perpetually collects objects. The success of this psychotherapy is largely due to the fact that the therapist acts as a midwife, as the subject acts upon the constitutive set of ideas. At the heart of this particular matter is the fact that, when the subject is stripped of all ideas, the subject is reduced to nothing,[9] and the acknowledgement of this —on whatever level of consciousness that might be— can result in psychological illness. Psychology, then, has the capacity to alter a subject's constitutive idea set, by (medicinally) manipulating the subject to perform a metaphorical idealist surgery of mind upon their self. Though we say this surgery of the mind is metaphorical, there is a sense in which it is not metaphorical at all, and it explains the great success of psychotherapy.

[8] The idea that a set of ideas can reference itself is similar to Hofstadter's idea that computational systems can have the capacity to be self referential and self altering. This leads the author to think that there could be some merit in using the computational theory of mind to study the mind in TI, at least from a schematic standpoint.

[9] See Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*

In this paper, we have argued that materialism is a failed idea, which has erroneously forgotten the advancements made in philosophy during the Enlightenment. To a degree, Kant may have been guilty of this, as well, in that he inserted the transcendental ego into his theoretical framework of cognition. Instead, we argue, he should have maintained coherence by keeping with idealism, when structuring his notion of self, and, had he done so, he would likely have constructed a Heideggerian-like *Dasein*, where *Dasein* is a partially self-referential set of ideas, but without Heidegger's phenomenological terminology. Consequently, the reasonable thing to do is to accept a TI framework with a Heideggerian notion of self and consciousness implemented into it. Of course, one needs to shift Heidegger's emphasis from phenomenology to idealism, which means dropping the terminology of phenomenology and adding an idealist terminology, but this is a small matter. We also assessed the strength some of the sciences of mind, the result being that psychology seems to hold the most promise. The uncertain connection between the noumenal and phenomenal worlds seems to be problematic for the physical sciences of mind, as anti-realism seems to be a repercussion of the lack of a science of metaphysics. Finally, we took a look at extended mind functionalism, and we saw why extended mind seems to be a good idea, though it has mistaken the causal direction between the mind and the functional system.

Appendix A

There are a number of routes one could take, in contesting the materialist's assumption that the world is physical. One problem, which was dealt with during the Enlightenment, was the problem of epistemology. In a sense, this was a continuation of the Aristotelian-Platonic, or empiricist-rationalist, debate. It is noteworthy that Kant's Transcendental Idealism is sometimes view as the culmination of this debate. Though it is debatable, what seems to be missing from the empiricist and rationalist pictures is the mind's ability to unify metaphysical contingency with a priori logical necessity. That is, the synthetic a posteriori distinction seems necessary, which is helpful in explaining mathematics. Another route of opposition is the ontological status of space, given that we assume that the world is material in its nature. That is, what is does it mean to have extension without material in it? Parmenides presented the idea that, if space contains objects, then what contains space? Furthermore, what contains that, and so on ad infinitum? This is probably why Aristotle wanted to define space as something that was simply an aspect of an object, 'the extension between extremities.' This eliminates the idea that space exists external to the material object.

Another issue that needs resolving, and seems to be one of the primary reason that the Pythagorean and Platonic ideas that another realm exists has arisen, is the origin of mathematics. If the materialist will contend that the world is all that is the case, and that all supervenes upon the physical, then the materialist must present a framework for how the mind has created mathematics, The problem seems, really, to be: "How does a biological system create ideas?" In addition to that, we must ask what are ideas, as considered from the standpoint of physicalism, which posits that they, somehow, supervene upon material considerations. The way Kant answered this is, unfortunately, not a mode available to materialists. Kant said that we cannot have an idea that was not already in us, because the interpretive process ensures that we cannot know things-in-themselves. The trick, then, that materialists must perform is to demonstrate how it might be possible for a subject to receive objective, unadulterated knowledge, which contains no element of the mind in it.

Appendix B

Here, we take time to address a challenge to idealism that was issued by G.E. Moore, a challenge which seems to have gone without a satisfactory response for more than one hundred years. Moore's contention was that idealism is self-contradictory, because, when we consider what *esse est percipi aut percipere* means, we arrive at two conflicting conclusions about ontology. The essence of his argument is that, in Berkeley's famous dictum, the verb "to be" produces different senses of "being," which are damaging to the idealist's contention. In particular, Moore creates some confusion about what is meant by the copula. Moore says,

> "If this were the meaning of '*esse* is *percipi*,' then to say that a thing was real would not be the same thing as to say that is was experienced. That it was *real* would mean that it was experienced and s*omething else besides*: 'being experienced' would be analytically essential to reality, but would not be the whole meaning of the term. (Moore 439)"

The correction to Moore's thinking, which he takes to be the fundamental flaw to an idealist philosophy of mind, is that he breaks down the dictum in a fashion that intends to produce a contradiction. This is evinced by the fact that Moore presents no sensible way of handling the copula. We will break *esse est percipi* into "to be," "is (to be)," and "to be perceived." If we use the words of U.T. Place from his *Is Consciousness a Brain Process?*, then Moore's failure becomes clear, namely, the copula: "[there is] a failure to distinguish between what we may call the "is" of definition and the "is" of composition. (Place 56)" Therefore, we can conclude that Moore's failure was in making the copula out to be an "is" of composition, a conclusion which is contrary to Berkeley's contention. The copula equates *esse* and *percipi*, and *esse* is common language. Therefore, *esse est percipi* may be viewed as an answer to the common language question, "What does it mean 'to be'?" To be (in common language) "is" (equation/definitional) to perceive or act as part of a perceiver's phenomenal field. In a way, Moore's "refutation"

hinges on making the audience believe that the copula, *est*, is a predication, whereby he can engineer a sort of fallacy by composition. The reality is that the "*something else besides*" that Moore is grasping for is not there, and his argument is gone.

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