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"Are There Any *F*s?": How We Should Understand This Question

1. THE OPTIONS

In this paper I will present an approach to ontology which combines realism and conceptualism in what, I hope, is an intuitively acceptable way. In order to illustrate the advantages of this approach, I shall have to deal somewhat swiftly with a number of hot topics, but my objective is not so much to force conclusions about those topics as to illustrate the virtues of my fundamental approach to the 'are there any *F*s?' question.

I think the question 'are there *F*s?' can properly be interpreted in either of two ways, depending on the *F* in question. One I call the conceptualist interpretation (CI), and it can be read roughly as follows:

(CI) We have the concept *F*. Is the world so organized that it satisfies this concept in the way that is necessary for the utility of that concept?

If the answer to this is affirmative, then there are *F*s, in the conceptualist sense.

The other interpretation is realist (RI), and goes roughly as follows.

(RI) Forget about us and our concepts. If there were no conceptualizers around (putting God or Divine minds aside) would there be *F*s?

If the answer to this is affirmative, then there are *F*s in the realist sense. Common sense does not make this distinction, but I do not think that it finds it rebarbative. Why I think this will, I hope, become clear in what follows. Nominalists will find RI objectionable because they will not find the realist view of properties and universals entailed by it acceptable. I will not be concerned here to engage with nominalism of this sort, for I think that, if there is a world, it must be thus and so, and, therefore, it must be characterized by some properties independently of our conceptual practices. The nearest I can come to nominalism is (iv) below.

There are the following positions one might take on adopting the conceptualist and realist positions. .

(i) Realism for all standard concepts, including those for natural objects and those for artifacts.

(ii) Realism applying to natural objects, but not to artifacts, which are treated conceptually.

(iii) Realism for objects at the fundamental level but conceptualism for the rest.

(iv) Conceptualism for everything we know and possibly for everything we are ever likely to know, or even are capable of knowing. How the world is in itself will always evade our grasp: we can only approximate its actual properties.

Most discussion of these issues in modern analytic metaphysics is in what one might describe as a 'mad dog realist' spirit, as in (i), and is only interested in RI. To say with Peter van Inwagen (1990, 109), for example, that there are no tables, but only table-shaped arrangements of simples is to ignore CI as a candidate for answering the 'are there any *F*s?' question. Van Inwagen's position assumes that the only interpretation of this question is the strict realist one. If one took CI seriously, then it is clear that, in that sense, there are tables, for the world is clearly so constructed as to make the application of this concept fruitful.

2. THE USEFULNESS OF CI FOR ANALYTIC METAPHYSICS

There is a lot to be said for taking CI seriously, for if it were applicable, one might solve a whole series of problems that worry modern metaphysicians. These problems arise from applying RI across the board. I have already tried to show (Robinson 2008-9) that CI can be used to deal with vagueness and associated sorites problems. Many, if not most, concepts outside the most exact sciences (which means, I think, outside physics and, possibly, chemistry) are subject to such vagueness. In brief, I argued the following. Vagueness (at least of the sorites-generating kind) is a property of concepts, not of reality. The response to the paradoxes and conflicts with classical logic that vagueness generates should not be to try to develop a logic for those concepts that produces a formally valid natural language, incorporating all its idiosyncrasies, as in a three-valued logic, nor to impute to vague concepts a hidden precision, as does epistemicism, but to use or refrain from using those concepts according to their usefulness, consistent with classical logic. So, for example, when a raised piece of earth is neither clearly a hill nor a mountain, one drops these terms and speaks in terms of particular heights. I argued that one should think of such concepts as belonging to *representational ontologies* use of which can be dropped when cases do not fit their paradigms. The relationship of different ontologies to each other

is not random—there is what I called a *harmonization requirement* between the various ontologies we apply that is weaker than a formal logical compatibility. For example, Newtonian theory and quantum theory are strictly incompatible, but one can show how an essentially quantum world can sustain the application of Newtonian principles at most normal magnitudes. Similarly, one can see how strictly continuous heights can make useful the categories of *hill* and *mountain* for many straightforward cases, without needing to define the terms 'hill' and 'mountain' strictly in terms of exact heights. Where these categories do not fit, the practice of using them is suspended. This can only be done if one treats the relevant concepts in a conceptualist way, for the conceptualist holds that the 'are there *F*s?' question depends, in part, on whether the world will cooperate in the practice of using these concepts, and, where vagueness comes into play, it won't. If one believed these concepts to pick out fundamental constituents of the world, then one would not be free simply to drop them out of convenience and the full rigours of logical consistency would be brought to bear. Some kinds of discourse—such as that of bald-not bald, or hill and mountain—were never intended as basic, but the Newtonian ontology was. To apply it now, it must be downgraded to CI.

Vagueness is not the only problem which CI is helpful in handling. Here are two further examples.

The 'many Fs' problem

The 'many *F*s' problem has two versions, one essentially involving vagueness, one not. The vagueness version—in which the *F* in question is typically 'cloud'—concerns objects with indeterminate borders. Peter Unger (1980) argues that, in these cases, one can draw the border in many different places, thus individuating many overlapping objects. The non-vagueness- involving case goes as follows. Suppose that a complex physical object—a table, an oak tree or a cat - is made of a million atomic parts. There are almost indefinitely many sub-groups of those atoms which would be—or are—sufficient to constitute an object of the relevant kind. So, in the case of the table, imagine all its atoms minus two which are presently integral to the table—these atoms still constitute a table. If pursued, this line of thought leads to the idea that there are a vast number of actual tables contained within this one table, though they massively overlap. Or imagine the tree minus a branch. That would still be an oak tree. But that tree-minus-the-branch is present within the actual tree. Similarly for the cat without one of its paws—or simply without a few hairs or the odd atom. There are a tremendous number of proper part combinations sufficient to be an *F* within the actual *F*, and, as each of these is sufficient to be an *F*, all those *F*s are there and real.

The realist has to struggle with the fact that there are many well qualified candidates for being an *F* of the kind in question. Now I am not entirely convinced that a realist cannot cope with the non-vague cases, but the conceptualist has an easy route. He can simply say that this is not the way we deploy this concept: we deem there to be only one *F* whenever there is an *F* present and the only practical way of treating it is as a single object. This 'deeming' is not a conscious choice. Given our perceptual system, the table presents itself as unitary and we interact with it as one thing. For example, even if there are indefinite number of tables present, you cannot do an indefinite number of different things with them. So our conceptualization is practical as well as—or, perhaps, rather than—intellectual. It is a matter of how we interact with the object.

The 'clay and the statue' problem

A lump of clay is moulded into a statue of a man. The lump of clay and the statue seem to be, in an obvious intuitive sense, the same thing. They occupy exactly the same place and two different physical objects cannot occupy the same place; they each weigh, say, ten pounds, but their combined weight is only ten pounds. Nevertheless, they have different identity conditions. The clay can be remoulded into something else, and, if this happens, it continues to exist but the statue is destroyed.

The realist has a problem with all such relations of constitution, whether or not he treats constitution as a form of identity. If only the base is treated in a fully realist way, then one can treat the composite object as *a convenient way of conceptualizing* some of what is out there, rather than a further entity.

A natural response to this strategy is to say that, in the case of artifacts, perhaps we manufacture and control the concept as well as the object, but this is not so for natural objects. Maybe there is only one table there *because that is how our concept of 'table' works*, and statues only exist, perhaps, because we make them and interpret certain lumps of stone as statues, but the situation is different for natural objects. There is not only one oak tree or one cat there (if there is only one) because of our concepts: we control the reality of tables and statues on all levels, but not the reality of trees and cats.

3. ONTOLOGY AND THE SPECIAL SCIENCES

Coping with this challenge obliges us to face the question of the ontological status of entities dealt with in the special sciences. These seem to be real because they seem to cut nature at its joints, even if not at its most microscopic ones. On the other hand, if we treat them in a strictly realist way, many of the problems

which I have claimed CI solves will appear in their case, for vagueness, constitution and 'many *F*s' problems arise for many natural objects.

Considering the ontological status of the "levels" represented by the different special sciences, the following seem to be the options.

(1a) All levels are equally real.
(2a) All levels are real, but only the lowest one is fundamental: this does not impune the reality of the others. (If you construct something out of real elements, it is real itself, even though derivatively.)
(3a) Only the fundamental level is strictly real, the others are to be understood conceptually.

These options concern the existence of entities, but similar distinctions might be made concerning the genuineness of the causal powers of the different levels. Then it would run

(1b) All levels are equally causally efficacious.
(2b) All levels are causally efficacious, but they all draw their efficacy from the laws operating at the fundamental level.
(3b) Only the fundamental level has any real efficacy; the rest are a mere by-product or appearance of effectiveness.

It is natural to pair these two series off together, especially if one thinks that causal efficacy is a criterion for being physically real. But if one does not hold the latter it is at least possible to claim that all levels are real but that the energies are all micro-physical. My reason for distinguishing them is that Kim states his Causal Exclusion Principle in terms of causal efficacy; but, as we shall see, it is salient for the further question of ontological status. For present purposes, I shall be assuming that reality and efficacy stand or fall together.

For present purposes, I shall not distinguish between (1) and (2). Jonathan Schaffer (2003) has argued that there need not be a basic level and, in that case, all are equally real. I shall not pursue that issue here.

Two influential figures whose positions naturally favour (3) are Armstrong and Kim. David Armstrong (1978) believes that the only real universals are those needed for basic science, the rest are downgraded to the status of "predicates". This means that anything except the scientifically fundamental properties are the creatures of human thought and language. (It does not seem to be generally realized that this has serious consequences for Armstrong's theory of mind; for psychological properties will not be basic, and hence will themselves have the status of predicates, thus relying for their reification on activities of the human mind. This looks like a vicious regress.)

Kim (1998, 2005), too, propounds a principle which can be deployed to suggest that the ontologies of the special sciences have no independent efficacy, and this at least prepares the way for denying that they have an independent real existence. This principle is the *causal exclusion principle*, which goes as follows.

If an event *e* has a sufficient cause *c* at *t*, no event at *t* distinct from *c* can be a cause of *e* (unless this is a case of genuine causal overdetermination). (Kim, 2005, 17)

Kim initially uses this to argue that a weak definition of physicalism in terms of supervenience cannot avoid epiphenomenalism, but he then considers the *generalization argument*, which extends it, given closure under physics, to the special sciences. Kim rejects this argument, in effect because he does not think that different ontological levels are in competition with each other. This is a major theme to which we shall return.

4. NON-REDUCTIVE PHYSICALISM *METAPHYSICAL* AND *LIGHT*

The ontological status of the special sciences can be approached *via* Barry Loewer's discussion of Jerry Fodor's seemingly extreme realism about the special sciences.

In controversy with Jerry Fodor, Barry Loewer distinguishes between what he calls *Non-Reductive Physicalism, Metaphysical (NRPM)* and *Non-Reductive Physicalism, Light (NRPL).* The latter corresponds to position (3) and the former to the stronger realism expressed in (1) and in (2).

NRPM and *NRPL* agree that the special sciences are conceptually, epistemologically, and methodologically autonomous/irreducible to physics but disagree about what autonomy/irreducibility consists in and how it is to be explained. *NRPM* says that the autonomy/irreducibility is metaphysical and seeks to explain the conceptual and epistemological autonomy in terms of the existence of metaphysically basic special science kinds and laws. On the other hand, *NRPL* attempts to account for the conceptual/methodological irreducibility of the special sciences in terms of facts and laws of microphysics and our conceptual endowment and epistemological situation in the world...

Loewer then raises the question of what the difference would be between a world, w_1, in which *NRPL* held and another, w_2, in which *NRPM* obtained. Given closure under physics, everything would behave in exactly the same way, so the addition of the further entities and their concomitant laws appears to be vacuous.

Fodor appears to leave himself open to this argument by seeming to concede that the existence of two such distinct worlds is possible. Taking psychology as a case of a special science, he says:

> Only God gets to decide whether there is anything, and likewise only God gets to decide whether there are laws about pains; or whether, if there are, the pains that the laws are about are MR ['Metaphysically Real'].

Fodor here seems to be denying the standard physicalist maxim that once God had created all the facts of physics, he had nothing more to do, and this does place him in the bizarre situation that Loewer points out. It is more natural for the realist about the special sciences to deny that w_1 is possible, on the grounds that, once it has been created, the higher order entities and concomitant laws are, *eo ipso* present too. It is a case of what has been called an 'ontological free lunch'.

This last phrase might still leave one puzzled over what the difference between the "light" and the "metaphysical" consists in. Asserting that it means that a further set of entities exist, without any consequences, makes the assertion look suspiciously empty. The expression 'ontological free lunch' itself suggests something very dubious, namely that there both is, and is not, something more.

The idea that there is something more might be summed up by the idea that *F*s are *wholly constituted by* atoms, but that they are *not nothing but* atoms. What then, is the "more" of their nature, over and above how they are constituted?

5. ATTEMPTS TO DEFEND THE REALITY OF ORGANISMS.

I can think of two answers to the question with which the last section ended. One is that the *identity conditions* of the higher order entities are missing from facts about constitution. But the ontological status of identity conditions, considered as real entities "out there" seems very dubious. Such conditions are most naturally seen as *conditions for the application of a concept*, and, as such, play into the hands of the conceptualist and position (3).

Another, more *prima facie* realist option, is what has been called a modern version of *hylomorphism*. The core of this idea is to take *structure* or *organization* as ontologically basic. The term *hylomorphism* of course originates with Aristotle, but the modern theory is simply about taking macro organization at face value and so treating it as being real and efficacious as the microscopic features. Nothing exclusively Aristotelian or scholastic need be invoked.

This idea is very clearly articulated in Jaworski (2010):

> Hylomorphism claims …[t]hat structure is a basic ontological and explanatory principle. (269)
>
> Structure is also a basic explanatory principle in the sense that it explains why members of this or that kind are able to engage in the behaviors they do. It is because humans are organized as they are, for instance, that they are able to speak, to learn, and to engage in the range of activities that distinguish them from other living things and from non-living ones. (272)
>
> Hylomorphism implies…that there are two distinct kinds of properties: properties due to something's structure and properties things possess independently of a broader structure.

The properties of these structures are not idle, according to Jaworski:

> Emergent properties are not epiphenomenal…but make a distinctive causal or explanatory contribution to a system's behavior…

He emphasizes this point:

> Emergent [hylomorphic] properties are not logical constructions out of lower-level properties; they do not represent abstract ways of describing lower-level occurrences or processes. (274)

According to Jaworski, from this follows what might seem to be a direct denial of the causal exclusion principle:

> Hylomorphists endorse **causal pluralism**. They claim that there are causal properties and relations that do not fit the mold set by physics…[this] view is compatible with all forces operating at a fundamental physical level [i.e., none at other levels] and is therefore immune to the empirical objections raised against emergentism. (290-1)

This last quotation is particularly important. In ascribing to causal pluralism, the hylomorphist appears to be denying Kim's causal exclusion principle. But notice that the avowal of causal pluralism is immediately followed by the assertion that "all *forces* are operating at a fundamental physical level"(italics added). What one has, in fact, is an *explanatory* pluralism, with causation adopted into the domain of explanation; the wholly external, mind-free element is *force* and this is exclusively at the micro level. Causal exclusion has been replaced by force exclusion, and explanatory pluralism is now characterized as, or as including, plural causal explanation. But no-one thought that explanations, of all levels, excluded an appeal to causation. Jaworski is really only claiming that, once one realizes that most explanations are causal explanations, explanatory pluralism is

pluralism enough to constitute or ground a full realism about all levels. This sits well with Kim's belief that different ontological levels are not in competition with each other.

Nevertheless, this position might be defended. The truth makers for higher-level explanations are just as real as those for physics. If bricks are real, then so is a house made of bricks. And if bricks have causal powers, so does the house, in virtue of the bricks' powers. So if atoms have real force, combinations of atoms can constitute a real object which has real causal efficacy compounded from the real forces of the atoms of which it is made. This seems to be common sense. Kim states the commonsensical nature of this position emphatically:

> The errant baseball didn't after all break the window, and the earthquake did not cause the buildings to collapse! This strikes us as intolerable. (1998, 81)

This much is true, but the impression that it assists the realist is an illusion, for these truths are neutral between conceptualist and realist interpretations. The same argument could be brought for realism about vague concepts—*house* and *heap* are probably both examples—and vagueness is certainly best handled by treating the concepts in a conceptualist manner. The baseball broke the window, but both 'baseball' and 'window' are to be understood in the conceptualist sense. So if one adopts CI as appropriate for such concepts, there are baseballs etc., but in the conceptualist sense. Similarly for the earthquake and the buildings. Only an extreme realist would feel that common sense was threatened by this reading. Kim's earthquake and van Inwagen's table both exist, but on the conceptualist interpretation of what it is to exist. What is at stake is whether the human perspective has a certain role in reifying what is in fact the micro world in the way we do. There is a sense in which any mereological combination of atoms could be treated as an entity and so could the combined sum of their forces. Which are chosen are a matter of human interest and perspective—not arbitrary, of course, but well-groundedness of conceptual practice does not entail a strict realism. Talk of "human interests" might make it seem too intellectual. One of the most important things is the grain of human perception—what is salient to us and how it manifests itself in our senses. If we can see the independent constituents of an entity, we are less likely to think of that entity as basic. We can see the elements in a crowd, in a swarm of bees or in a weather system, and so are less likely to think of these things as fundamental, even if they seem to have a dynamic of their own. We are generally happy to make a conceptualist interpretation of them. But for most organisms, we see them only whole, for such parts as we do see are essentially parts of the thing—branches, leaves, limbs, teeth etc.—not independent parts. If we saw a plant as a swirling mass of particles passing in and out of an organizational vortex, like a rioting crowd, then, once we came to believe that the organization was a product of the interaction

of the particles following only the laws of physics and not an extraneous imposition, we would probably find it natural to make a conceptualist interpretation of plants. As it is, the nature of our perception seems to endow them with a greater degree of natural integrity than they would seem to possess from a more microscopic viewpoint.

Both as entities and as causal agents, macroscopic objects seem to be by-products of their micro constituents. What does it mean to call the higher order processes 'by-products'? It rests on the premise that everything that happens, happens because of the micro-dynamics. Apparent higher laws, though useful generalizations from our standpoint, do not give the real reason why anything happened. It is like the case of the plant "turning towards the light". Common experience leads us to say that it does so in order to gain more light, because it needs light to survive and replicate. But science tells us that this turning happens because of the chemical reactions involved, without any fundamental teleology. But were not these chemical processes "selected" because they allowed the plant to get the light and thus teleology is restored at the level of biology? Yes, in a sense, but only in the sense that certain micro-processes, from their own dynamics, repeat themselves in a certain way. The micro- processes do not get repeated *because* they lead to the replication of the organism, their repeating themselves *is* the replication. Dawkins' expression "the blind watchmaker" as a label for nature is illuminating. The "blindness" in question is not primarily cognitive, it is volitional. Nature does not intend to produce watches—or eyes or organisms in general—the developing of the quantum field, which is "blind to" its by-products, merely produces things which can be usefully so classified from the perspective of a macroscopic rational animal.

Davidson (2003) rejects Kim's exclusion principle, but, rather ironically, we can draw on a legitimate point of Davidson's in its support. Davidson claims, very plausibly, that it is only at the fundamental level that there are what he calls *strict laws*. Laws at other levels involve *ceteris paribus* clauses and a certain degree of approximation. This strongly suggests that, though they are useful explanatory tools, formulated on the basis of more exact processes that underlie them, the laws of the special sciences are not entities in their own right. It would be natural to argue the same way for the entities to which those laws attach. Davidson's reason for rejecting the exclusion principle rests on some very controversial features of his position. He claims that causal relations are entirely extensional and so events are not efficacious *in virtue of* any of the properties involved in them, so you cannot claim that some of them are active and others idle. The motive behind this is some kind of nominalism that wishes to treat properties as simply "descriptions" under which events fall, and, as such, not agents in the world. At the same time, he wants to treat the mental as "purely conceptual", and the basic physical as, in some sense, more real. For further discussion of Davidson's confusions, see Robinson (2003).

6. CONCEPTUALISM AND RELATIVE IDENTITY

David Wiggins has demonstrated, in a masterfully developed series of monographs (Wiggins 1967, 1980, 2001) that the logic of identity, with Leibniz's Law, rules out the possibility of relative identity. The doctrine of conceptualism for all ordinary entities that I have defended seems likely to leave open the possibility of relative identity, because the same piece of the material world might be conceptualized in different ways for different purposes. But what Wiggins actually shows is that the relativity of identity is impossible within any given representational ontology, but if the concepts in question are ones the use of which one can suspend, they need not be made formally consistent with other representational ontologies that one might choose to employ. One always has the option to withdraw the conceptualization that is leading to trouble and adopt one that is more appropriate or basic. On the other hand, *if the entities in question are taken in a strictly realist sense* then one is bound by Wiggins's argument. So what Wiggins says must be applied if you think that the entities under discussion are fundamental and interpreted according to RI. Wiggins, as a good Aristotelian, thinks that ordinary macroscopic objects—especially biological organisms—are paradigms of fundamental substances and so his logical constraints must apply to them. I have been arguing that they are not, in the appropriate sense, fundamental and that that is why Wiggins's logical discipline does not apply.[1] (I shall suggest at the end that there may not be in the physical world anything of the kind on which Wiggins's arguments can get a substantial grip. As (iv) above suggests, perhaps it is the case that everything on which we can get a grip must be understood according to CI.)

7. CONCEPTUALISM AND THE MIND.

Does this solve the problem of organisms—oak trees, cats, and, worse, other human beings?

Maybe what I have said so far is satisfactory for vegetable organisms, but what about animals, like cats, that are normally thought of as conscious, and what about human beings?

The answer to this will depend to a great extent on whether one is a physicalist. Considered as a nonconscious organism, an animal would be in the same category as a plant, namely a vortex of changing atoms formed entirely in ac-

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[1] I say 'in the appropriate sense', because, as I argue in Robinson 2004/9, I think that there are two essential components to the traditional conception of substance, one that I call 'descriptive' and the other 'teleological'. Wiggins wishes Aristotle had ignored the latter, whereas what he tried to do was to give it dominance. It is to the descriptive conception, when taken realistically, that Wiggins's arguments most certainly apply.

cord with the laws of microphysics. Seeing this as an entity which is more than
a highly organized cloud of particles would depend on our finding ourselves
conceptualizing it as such, as with the oak tree. But isn't the cat's conscious-
ness real in a way that is independent of our conceptualization? The correct
answer is, I think, 'yes', but it is difficult to see how this could be the case if
the cat's subjectivity were not something over and above the organization of
elementary particles in its brain. It is not my purpose here to engage deeply
with the philosophy of mind, but I shall briefly give reasons for this claim. If it is
right that, in general, organic life is to be interpreted conceptually, as our way of
making sense of certain patterns which are a by-product of development at the
micro level—say in the quantum field—as presented through our senses, then
the same will apply to subsystems within organic life. Thus it applies to neural
processes, especially as functionally understood. This leads us to the self-under-
mining position to which (as I said earlier) Armstrong is committed. The very
engine that is responsible for conceptualization—the human mind—is itself a
unit only within the light of conceptual activity. This is the same problem as the
one that faces Dennett's interpretationalist stance, and I have argued against it
elsewhere (Robinson 1993: 6 and, in more detail, 2010), as have others (Hornsby
1997, 181-2). So here I shall simply assume that conscious states are fundamen-
tal in at least a property dualist sense. These mental states will be "out there"
in a fully realist sense, in the same way as whatever constitutes the fundamental
level of matter. But will the cat's mind, considered as a complex entity, also
be real or will it depend on our reifying it by one of our concepts? Is there, for
example, a 'many minds' problem corresponding to the 'many bodies' problem,
if one tries to be a realist about minds? Remember that the 'many Fs' problem
has two forms. One of them depends on the vagueness of the boundaries of
most bodies. It is plausible to deny that minds are vague in this sense. If M is a
mental state, then there must be some mind to which it belongs. This will not
be true for a pure Humean, for on that theory, an impression can exist independ-
ently, detached from any mind and, therefore, presumably, in an indeterminate
relation to a given mind—half attached, like a hair that is falling out or a water
droplet at the margins of a cloud. I shall simply assume that this cannot be true
of mental states. One may be only vaguely aware of some states, but, insofar
as it counts as mental, it belongs to some particular mind. This still leaves the
non-vague version of the 'many Fs' problem. After all, if you take all the cat's
mental states and think away one sensation, you still have a feline mind, so are
there not many cat-minds present? I had said when introducing this problem in
Section 2 that I was not certain that there might not be a realist solution to it. In
the case of minds, I think there certainly is. Insofar as it is determinate whether
a certain mental state belongs to a given mind, then one can insist on a maximal
criterion for the identity of a mind: it consists of all the mental states that are co-
conscious. That very mind *could have* contained one mental state less, but it *does*

contain all the actually co-conscious ones. (See Kovacs 2010 for an argument that this is inconsistent with the supervenience of the mental on the physical.)

So the answer is that the mind as a whole will be real and unitary provided that the co-consciousness relation and its scope are real independently of our conceptualization. The cat will then have only one body *not*—or *not primarily*—because of the way we conceptualize it, but because the one consciousness of the cat acts upon it as a single object. The cat does not have to manoeuvre a set of bodies, as if it were herding sheep. So the cat's agency does for it something parallel to what our intelligent interaction with the world does for us. The same line of argument as the one applied to cats, applies to humans. And the individuality or uniqueness of one's body is the result of the fact that one thinks of it and acts upon it as a unity.

8. CONCLUSION - AND BEYOND.

We have seen that taking a conceptualist stand to most if not all non-basic ontologies makes intuitive sense and contributes towards solving several of the problems that worry contemporary analytic metaphysicians. But it comes at a cost, namely that the mind or mental states must be counted amongst the things that are basic and so this approach is not open to a standard physicalist. The thinking, conceptualizing subject must be amongst those things that are real in the strongest sense.

As a final thought I want to return to the final option that I offered above concerning degrees of realism, which was:

> (iv) Conceptualism for everything we know and possibly for everything we are ever likely to know, or even are capable of knowing. How the world is in itself will always evade our grasp: we can only approximate its actual properties.

The discussion so far has been conducted within the scope of the assumption that we can be realists about the basic physical level. This idea is encouraged by our anachronistic but almost automatic assumption that classical atomism of some sort provides the model for the basic level. But we know that this is not realistic and our failure to be able to model intuitively quantum reality—the best we can manage is as a blur of wave and particle—means that our strictly realistic *representational ontology* of the basic level is purely formal and mathematical. All the conceptual categories of our normal ontology, such as that of objects and even of discrete events, may be conceptual impositions on a reality that does not quite fit any of them in itself. The logical discipline of a strict realism may be attenuated for all the categories that we can apply to the external world.

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