

Reply to Liang

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I will begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to Dr. Liang for his close reading of my paper and thoughtful commentary. He has provided me with new directions, especially by introducing Sellars, whose work in the philosophy of mind I had not initially considered. In fact, the richness of the commentary would benefit from a discussion that is longer than I am able to provide here. In lieu of that discussion, I will focus on two items from Liang's Response.

First, to answer Liang's opening question that plays an important role throughout his response, I find the distinction between mental and physical properties to be an ontological distinction as opposed to a methodological distinction.¹ For mental realism to be a viable position, mental properties need to be, as Kim writes, "[...] real properties of objects and events; they are not merely useful aids in making predictions or fictitious manners of speech" (1993: 198). What is *ontologically real* can be a discourse of its own, but at minimum, I maintain that they need to surpass being, as Kim suggests, predictive aids and fictitious speech. I would add that they cannot be *mere* concepts, which is a more controversial claim and something that Kim

¹ In reference to the question posed by Liang (2022: 302-303).

himself debates in the context of functionally reducing mental properties.² Ideally, if mental properties were causally efficacious, then their inherent causal power would be clear indicators of their ontological realness.³ Determining if and how mental properties are causally efficacious is, in my opinion, the primary objective of the study of property dualism.⁴ Though causal efficacy is the ideal form of ontological realness, I concur with Liang that it might not be the only way of establishing mental realism.⁵

Second, because of the above reasons, I am not convinced by my initial reading of Sellar's "Myth of Jones" and his point about theoretical entities being real despite being hidden. Though I agree that some unobservable entities can be real because of the role they play in scientifically robust theories, I do not find that mental properties rise to the same level as other real unobservables. For instance, quarks are unobservable, but they are widely held to be ontologically real due to how well they cohere with physical theory. Whereas human and non-human behavior can be both intentionally and unintentionally deceptive and because of that, there is considerable variability from subject to subject. It is because of variability that I believe the science of human (and

² Kim struggles between a disjunctive model and a conceptual model when he describes mental properties in his preferred method of functional reductions for property dualism. Kim writes, "moreover, I have been torn between the conceptual approach recommended in my book and the disjunction approach also discussed in the book" (2002: 678).

³ Alexander's Dictum states that "to exist is to have causal powers." See Cargile (2003: 143) for an overview of Alexander's Dictum.

⁴ Moore and Campbell seem to concur with me; they write, "the point of adopting non-reductive physicalism is to preserve the significance and autonomy of the mental [...]." They go on to ask "if mental properties lack causal efficacy exactly how much autonomy and significance could they really have" (2010: 425)?

⁵ Liang writes, "This seems to assume that the only kind of explanation that can establish mental realism in the case of other mind is causal explanation" (2022: 305-306).

animal) behavior to be unequivocal to theories that can successfully justify the existence of unobservables.

An additional point regarding the Myth of Jones, is that Sellars also relies heavily on the logical structure of language as a justifying framework for potentially ending the problem of other minds. Though I agree some aspects of mental properties are linguistic, there also appear to be mental properties that are non-linguistic. For instance, those mental properties which are marked by their intrinsic qualitative nature. The oft-cited quale being pain, of course. Even if I could state that “I’m experiencing an excruciatingly sharp pain in my abdomen,” I do not believe that the utterance accurately describes and captures the qualitative experience of pain. Furthermore, I doubt that there are additional descriptors that would get me to the point of believing I’ve linguistically captured the pain quale I’m experiencing.⁶

In closing, I wish to re-express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Liang for his response to my paper. He’s given me much to consider and has helped me to expand my thought processes about these questions and more.

⁶ Interestingly, there are also anecdotal reports of people that do not think in language at all. Though I know there to be at least one person with a monologue in their head (myself), the following newspaper article suggests that there are those with no language in their minds. See, for example, Nunn (2020). I find this fascinating but have not done or explored any scholarly work in this area as of this writing.

References

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