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УЙОМОВСЬКІ  
ЧИТАННЯ  
(2022)

МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ  
ОДЕСЬКИЙ НАЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ  
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ОДЕСЬКА ГУМАНІТАРНА ТРАДИЦІЯ  
ЦЕНТР ГУМАНІТАРНОЇ ТРАДИЦІЇ НАН УКРАЇНИ

**Х**  
**УЙОМОВСЬКІ**  
**ЧИТАННЯ**  
**(2022)**

Матеріали  
Наукових читань пам'яті Авеніра Уймова

Одеса – 2022

УДК 1  
У 32

*Рекомендовано до друку Вченою радою факультету історії та філософії  
Одеського національного університету імені І. І. Мечникова.  
Протокол № 9 від 24 травня 2022 року*

Редакційна колегія:

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**У 32** **X Уйомовські читання (2022)** : матеріали Наукових читань пам'яті Авеніра Уйомова / упор. і ред. К. В. Райхерт. Одеса : Одеський національний університет імені І. І. Мечникова, 2022. 107 с.

Збірка містить тези доповідей, спогади та статті, представлені на десяту конференцію «Наукові читання пам'яті Авеніра Уйомова».

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**‘THE PROBLEM OF SEARLE’**

John Searle became interested in the mind-body problem when he was already an eminent philosopher from another field of thought – the analytic philosophy of language, known for its peculiar rigor. As Searle points out (somewhere in the course of lectures on the philosophy of mind<sup>1</sup>), he was for some time puzzled by the conceptual and terminological chaos in the new field.

Here is a simple example (not Searle’s). Is epiphenomenalism, as the solution to the mind-body problem, a monistic or dualistic theory? Well, it depends. According to the traditional classification (e.g., [1], [2], [3]), epiphenomenalism is a type of dualism where consciousness is caused by the brain but is causally impotent itself. It means that consciousness is insubstantial and has nothing to do with anything, it’s just there for some unknown reason. But then what is the difference between epiphenomenalism and physicalism of some kind? So-called qualia? From the point of view of the philosophy of language (e.g., Wittgensteinian) this is just a wrong use of grammar (cf., [4, p. 310]). Moreover, even the obsolete Soviet dialectic materialism would have solved this problem more elegantly and, as usual, dialectically and would have come to the conclusion that epiphenomenalism is a kind of monistic materialism (cf., [5, p. 20]). Anyway, some of the topics discussed in the field of philosophy of mind are rather interesting from a didactic standpoint. To one such problem, I’ve given the name ‘the problem of Searle’.

**The problem of Searle**

When Searle entered the field of philosophy of mind in the early 1980s, the question immediately arose, who is Mr. Searle? And the answer came – he is, of course, a property dualist. Later, Searle even wrote an article “Why I am not a property dualist”. But nevertheless... When, several years ago, I went to a conference on the mind-body problem<sup>2</sup>, the author of one report was trying to convince us that Searle was a property dualist. To my question what would have Searle replied to the argument had he been present at the conference, the reporter, after several rewordings of the question, just shrugged shoulders, bewildered by the plain silliness of my question.

Let us make some simple clarifications of Searle’s problem, using elements of the metaphysical conceptual apparatus developed in Uyemov’s philosophical school (see e.g., [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]). But first, a more basic clarification is needed.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cosmolearning.org/courses/philosophy-mind-with-john-searle/video-lectures/>

<sup>2</sup> [6].

### **The inconsistent tetrad**

The mind-body problem traditionally is traced back to the treatises and correspondence of Rene Descartes. I will use the more recent and convenient formulation of it in a form of the so-called inconsistent tetrad. There are four statements, of which at least one is inconsistent with the others.

1. The body is physical.
2. The mind is non-physical.
3. Body and mind interact with each other.
4. Physical and non-physical cannot interact with each other [3, pp. 1-3].

If we assume that the first statement is wrong, i.e. that it is true that ‘the body is non-physical (or more cautiously, that ‘some bodies are non-physical), then all other statements will be consistent with it, and we will get some sort of idealism. By denying one of the four statements we can get materialism (s), dualism (s), etc. In the case of Descartes, the problem was with the fourth statement. A loophole where, at least in some cases, physical (pineal gland) and non-physical (soul) could interact with each other was needed.

Today we face a similar inconsistency when we say things like: “We have good reasons to believe that consciousness arises from physical systems such as brains, but we have little idea how it arises, or why it exists at all.” [13, p. xi], and a little bit farther, “I argue that reductive explanation of consciousness is impossible [ibid, p. xiv]. Chalmers developed something like attribute-dualistic functionalism (compatible with Panpsychism) relying much on fashionable at that time concept of supervenience [ibid]. His senior colleague John Searle states causal reducibility and ontological irreducibility of consciousness to overcome such problems with inconsistency (e.g., [2, p. 79]. In order to do that, Searle assumes that there is a difference between causality and ontology. There is an interesting point here, which we concentrate on in what follows.

### **Three types of ontological queries**

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson [14] in their profound cognitive analysis of philosophy note that, at least in western metaphysics, ontology (as a study of essences) is based upon two sets of cognitive metaphors: 1) essence as substance, essence as form, and essence as a pattern of change; 2) a causal source [ibid, p. 346]. The essence as substance metaphor tells us about what of something (its nature, essence, material, or substrate). The essence as form metaphor tells us about the form (structure, relations, organization) of something. And the pattern of change metaphor tells us about the genesis or the structure of the development of something. The second set – causal source – is related to conditionality: if A has such and such essence (substance, form, and pattern of change), then it can cause or causes such and such things and events; and is more usage-oriented – we can use a tree to make a fire or a

house, because a tree has such substance, form, or pattern of change.

Thus, generally speaking, we have three types of ontological questions that can be asked about something. With regard to these types of ontological questioning, Arnold Tsofnas, independently from Lakoff and Johnson, distinguishes three types of ontology: natural ontology, structural ontology, and dynamic ontology (e.g., [11]).

‘Natural ontology’ deals with substances, essences, with the nature of things and events. For example, if I’m wondering whether consciousness is physical or non-physical, I’m dealing with a natural-ontological question (about natural ontology see [11, c. 61-106]).

‘Structural ontology’ generally deals with the form or structure (e.g., mathematical) of things and events. When we are not interested in the nature of things, but only in their structure, we are in the field of structural ontology. The categorical framework of the structural ontology involves such basic categories as things (or objects), properties, and relations [7]. E.g., when we state that some object A has some property B, or that  $A + B = C$ , we use a structural-ontological framework, because we are not interested, for the time being, in the nature of A, B, or C (for structural ontology see [11, c.109-143], [12, c. 77-105], [15]).

‘Dynamic ontology’ is generally concerned with the change of things. Time, change, and development are among the basic concepts of this type of ontology (see [11, 147-190], (cf., [16, c.78-79])).

Of course, these are just helpful models, which are not usually clearly distinguished. For example, the natural sciences are primarily concerned with the natural and dynamic types of ontology, whereas mathematics and logic are generally structurally-ontologically oriented, but this doesn’t mean that the natural sciences don’t use structural-ontological presuppositions or that mathematics is not related to natural ontology. The same goes for philosophy. We can study structurally-ontologically a subject matter, which is traditionally considered as natural-ontological (e.g. [17]), and vice versa.

### **‘The problem of Searle’ and types of ontology**

Let’s apply these ontological differentiations to Searle’s mind-body problem solution. Searle denies a natural-ontological distinction between consciousness and the brain (he denies the second statement in the inconsistent tetrad: ‘the mind is non-physical’), but insists on the causal reducibility of consciousness to the brain, at the same time claiming the irreducible status of consciousness (because of its own 1st person ontology). It may seem that Searle is talking about the natural-ontological distinction here, that consciousness is irreducible to the brain on natural-ontological grounds, which leads him to property-dualism (and here the whole world cheers). But this is a misconception of his views. Searle’s views are clearly monistic:

“Consciousness ...is a biological, and therefore physical, part of the real world.” [18, p. 48]. Nevertheless, Searle insists on an ‘ontological’ distinction and irreducibility of consciousness to the brain. What kind of ontology is he talking about? A possible answer can be given assuming three types of ontological questions. Thus, naturally-ontologically consciousness is not different from the brain. Dynamically-ontologically it is caused by the brain. And structurally-ontologically, well let’s see. Numerically we have two structural (not natural!) aspects of the same natural phenomenon – consciousness-caused-by the brain – the brain as a thing with a simple 3rd person location and consciousness as an emergent and irreducible 1st person property of the brain without a simple 3rd person location. “Conscious states are realized in the brain as features of the brain system, and thus exist at a higher level than that of neurons and synapses.” [2, p. 79]. Thus, I believe that Searle is dealing here with the structural-ontological distinctions between the brain and consciousness. Consciousness is understood as a specific higher-level or system’s property of the brain. The brain has the 3rd person ontology (a thing with a specific structure), but consciousness has the 1st person ontology (a high-level property or relation with a specific structure). Thus, structurally ontologically speaking, we have two structural aspects of the brain, not two natural attributes or properties of the one (that would be property dualism), and it follows that to say that Searle is a property dualist based on this evidence is almost the same as to claim that he is a dualist because he accepts the division of the brain onto two hemispheres, or that he is an eighty-six billionist because he admits that there are so many neurons in the brain, etc. Well, this is it. Searle is not a property dualist at least in a natural-ontological sense (and this is the only sense this problem is usually being discussed).

The problem of Searle is not fascinating. But still, if there is a question, then the answer can be found. Sometimes, to find an interesting answer to a not very interesting question, we are to use not very familiar (for the proponents of the query) means. In this sense, it would be interesting to use the still covered potential of Uyemov’s metaphysics for the development and study of some famous or not problems of current analytic philosophy.

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