

“Quanta” and “Qualia” – Alan Bailey

1. Chalmers' statement of the Hard Problem: 2 assumptions.

- a) The problem is to explain the relationship between two kinds of *thing*.
- b) The reality of these two kinds of thing is generally accepted, and how we know is irrelevant (ontology not epistemology).

2. 'Reification' is rejected by current fundamental physics.

Ladyman and Ross: 'Reality' consists of patterns of observable relations among data-points, which can be reliably projected forward to unobserved cases. Then 'things' are merely convenient 'book-keeping devices' (pp.227-8).

Rovelli: 'It isn't things that enter into relations, but relations that ground the notion of 'thing'....Things are built by the happening of elementary events' (pp.115-6).

3. Our view of 'what there is' depends on our view of 'how we know'.

We learn to identify 'things', and learn the names for things, by experiencings which can be recognised as related to other experiencings – 'what it is like'.

Language expresses this in terms of subject-predicate grammar, which makes it easier to think and talk in terms of things than happenings – hence the view of reality as 'the totality of things'.

4. Physicalism either questions the reality of subjective experiencing, or treats it as negligible – of no scientific importance and therefore irrelevant (scientism).

The 'knowledge argument' [Jackson (p.291)/Robinson (pp16-17): aims to establish the reality of subjective experiencing as a source of knowledge by a thought-experiment: Mary is brought up in a black-and-white room, but has learnt all the physical facts about colour, then is let out into the coloured world, and learns something new – what it is like to experience colour. Arguably this is not so much a 'proof' as an imaginary ostensive definition – we intuitively imagine 'what it would be like' to experience colour for the first time. Ultimately the reality of experiencing can only be a matter of individual conviction; as Galen Strawson said, anyone who doubts its reality cannot have suffered from insomnia.

5. 'Epistemic dualism': there are two kinds of happening – first-person experiencing, and publicly observable physical events. L&R do not deny this, but treat it as unimportant:

'People who wish to explore the ways in which the habitual or intuitive anthropological conceptual space is structured are invited to explore social anthropology....We, however, are interested in *objective* truth rather than philosophical anthropology. Our quarrel will be with philosophers who claim to share this interest, but then fail properly to pay attention to our basic source of information about *objective* reality'.

6. The hard problem takes the wider, dualistic view. So how do the two ways of knowing relate?

- a) Perceivings/observings are experiencings which directly relate to physical happenings.
- b) Experiencings can be matched as simultaneous with physical (neurological) happenings.
- c) Because experiencings are subjective and imprecise, correlations with physical happenings yield probabilities not 100% 'law-like regularities'.

“Quanta” and “Qualia” – Alan Bailey

7. The general question, of how the two ways of knowing are related, is still puzzling:
- a) One standard explanatory move is to relate a puzzling phenomenon to something more familiar – but nothing is or could be more familiar than the everyday relationship between experiencing and physical happenings.
 - d) Another standard move, faced with two sets of data, is to treat one set as basic and ‘explain’ the other in terms of the first. But this leads back to physicalism giving priority to public physical knowledge and down-playing experiencing as ‘emergent’, or ‘epiphenomenal’, or ‘unscientific’. Or alternatively it leads to panpsychism, which is even more counter-intuitive. ‘Epistemic dualism’ gives both ways of knowing an equal status, as both useful in complementary ways.
 - e) For two sets of data with equal status, it is natural to look for an ‘underlying’ set to explain the relationship. Hence ‘anomalous monism’, postulating that the two ways of knowing are ‘aspects’ of an underlying reality under different descriptions. But this remains an empty metaphor, because any possible observation bearing on it must itself be one way of knowing or the other - or in fact both (6.a above).
8. This ‘epistemic dualism’ reflects a long tradition of radical empiricism, stretching back to William of Ockham – ‘Entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity’ – beyond what we actually know.

References:

James Ladyman and Don Ross: ‘Every Thing Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized’ (O.U.P. 2007).

Howard Robinson: ‘From the Knowledge Argument to Mental Substance: Resurrecting the Mind’ (C.U.P. 2016).

Carlo Rovelli: ‘Reality Is Not What It Seems: The Journey to Quantum Gravity’ (Penguin 2017).

Frank Jackson: ‘What Mary Didn’t Know’ (Journal of Philosophy 1986).