Chapter 6

The Tree in the Lonely Quad

6.1 Phenomenalism

There was a young man who said “God
Must think it exceedingly odd
If He finds that the tree
Continues to be,
When there’s no one about in the Quad.”

Phenomenalism is the doctrine that the only things that exist are the direct objects of our senses. It was first put forward as a consistent doctrine by Bishop Berkeley, and has in our own age been espoused with great vigour by Professor A.J. Ayer. It used to be known as Idealism, but that name is confusing, as we also understand by Idealism a commitment to high standards of action and aspiration: and there is no connexion between having high standards and having doubts about the existence of trees in unoccupied quads.

Phenomenalism is metaphysical. It offers a minimal ontology, in which all surplus, unobserved, entities have been pared away, leaving only “sense data” as the ultimate constituents of reality, the indubitable starting point from which alone all empirical knowledge must be derived. We mislead ourselves if we suppose that the world contains material objects, tables, chairs, the tree in the quad, and
such-like, which exist even when we are not observing them. All we know, all we can know, are the direct objects of observation, and they alone can be properly said to exist. When we talk about the tree in the quad, we are really talking about the sights we should see, and the feelings we should experience, if we went into the quad, and looked in the appropriate direction, or walked in that direction and held out our hands. Material objects are collections of sense-data, actual or possible. Each sentient being can similarly be regarded as a different sort of collection of sense-data; not those that would, or could, be observed by a suitably placed observer, but those that a particular observer has, or might have, and will, or may, have as he experiences his life. It is a form of pluralism: there are many different fundamental entities, all of one type—ideas, impressions, sensations, sense data, or sensabilia—which are neither material objects nor minds, but out of which, by suitable grouping, material objects and minds can be constructed. Since the fundamental entities are neither material nor mental, we can describe phenomenalism as a metaphysics of neutral pluralism.\(^1\)

Because the phenomenalist offers a metaphysical view of the world, he can accommodate—or override—many of its awkward features: it may not accord with our ordinary ways of thinking—but so much the worse for untutored, every-day thinking; it may be cumbersome, but so is much of chemistry and physics. Although, like any other metaphysical system, it needs to save the appearances, it may, because it deals with fundamental truth, massage the truth fairly roughly, in order to fit it to the Procrustean bed that has been constructed. In consequence, it seems to be not so much a philosophical doctrine, as a metaphysical feeling.\(^2\) If a person does not have the metaphysical feeling he will find all the arguments in its favour unconvincing, while if he does have the metaphysical feeling, then he will continue to feel it to be true, however thoroughly the arguments for it are refuted, and as soon as one argument is demolished, he will construct another. Argument appears to have no purchase. We are reminded of Bradley's *dictum* that metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe on instinct.

1 Or, since there is *only one* type of fundamental entity, as neutral monism.

Nevertheless, arguments always deserve attention. Many of the arguments deployed are variations on the themes of critical reason discussed in Chapter Three. Some gain support from the superlative assumption that there must be ultimate entities that constitute the foundations of empirical knowledge, some items we can know with absolute certainty. Some obtain purchase through the inadequacy of traditional formulations of the common-sense view. Some are simply fallacious.

§6.2 How Do You Know?
Two lines of approach characteristic of critical reason can be used to argue for phenomenalism: the question “How do you know?” and the doubt “But you must admit that you might be wrong?”.

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The “How do you know?” argument for phenomenalism is put very clearly by Stace:

For the sake of clearness, let us take once again the concrete example of the piece of paper. I am at this moment experiencing it, and at this moment it exists, but how can I know that it existed last night in my desk when, so far as I know, no mind was experiencing it? How can I know that it will continue to exist to-night when there is no one in the room? The knowledge of these alleged facts is what the realists assert that they possess. And the question is, Whence could such knowledge have been obtained, and how can it be justified? What I assert is that it is absolutely impossible to have any such knowledge.

There are only two ways in which it could be asserted that the existence of any sense-object can be established. One is by sense-perception, the other by inference from sense-perception. I know of the existence of this paper now because I see it. I am supposed to know of the existence of the other side of the moon, which no one has ever seen, by inference from various actual astronomical observations, that is, by inference from things actually experienced. There are no other ways of proving the existence of a sense-object. Is either of them possible in the present case?

1. Sense-perception. I obviously cannot know by perception the existence of the paper when no one is experiencing it. For that would be self-contradictory. It would amount to asserting that I can experience the unexperienced.

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2. **Inference.** Nor is it possible to prove by inference the existence of
the paper when no mind is experiencing it. For how can I possibly
pass by inference from the particular fact of the existence of the
paper now, when I am experiencing it, to the quite different par-
ticular fact of the existence of the paper yesterday or to-morrow,
when neither I nor any other mind is experiencing it? Strictly
speaking, the onus of proving that such an inference is impossible
is not on me. The onus of proving that it is possible is upon anyone
who asserts it, and I am entitled to sit back and wait until someone
comes forward with such an alleged proof. Many realists who know
their business admit that no valid inference from an experienced
to an unexperienced existence is possible. Thus Mr. Russell says,
"Belief in the existence of things outside my own biography must,
from the standpoint of theoretical logic, be regarded as a prejudice,
not as a well-grounded theory."

I might therefore adopt the strategy of masterly inaction. But I prefer
to carry the war into the enemy's camp. I propose to prove that no
proof of the existence of unexperienced objects is possible.

It is clear in the first place that any supposed reasoning could not be
inductive. Inductive reasoning proceeds always upon the basis that
what has been found in certain observed cases to be true will also
be true in unobserved cases. But there is no single case in which it
has been observed to be true that an experienced object continues to
exist when it is not being experienced; for, by hypothesis, its existence
when it is not being experienced cannot be observed. Induction is
generalisation from observed facts, but there is not a single case of
an unexperienced existence having been observed on which could be
based the generalisation that entities continue to exist when no one is
experiencing them. And there is likewise not a single known instance
of the existence of an unexperienced entity which could lead me to have
even the slightest reason for supposing that this paper ever did exist,
or will exist, when no one is experiencing it.

Since inductive reasoning is ruled out, the required inference, if there is
to be an inference, must be of a formal nature. But deductive inference
of all kinds depends upon the principle of consistency. If \( P \rightarrow Q \), then
we can only prove \( Q \), if \( P \) is admitted. From \( P \rightarrow Q \), therefore all
that can be deduced is that \( P \) and \( \neg Q \) are inconsistent, and that we
cannot hold both \( P \) and \( \neg Q \) together, though we may hold either of
them separately.

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Hence, if it is alleged that a deductive inference can be drawn from the existence of the paper now, when I am experiencing it, to its existence when no one is experiencing it, this can only mean that to assert together the two propositions, (1) that it exists now, and (2) that it does not exist when no one is experiencing it, is an internally inconsistent position. But there is absolutely no inconsistency between these two propositions. If I believe that nothing whatever exists or ever did or will exist, except my own personal sense-data, this may be a view of the universe which no one would ever hold, but there is absolutely nothing internally inconsistent in it. Therefore, no deductive inference can prove the existence of an unexperienced entity. Therefore, by no reasoning at all, inductive or deductive, can the existence of such an entity be proved.

The nerve of the argument is that there are only two ways whereby the existence of a material object may be established, by sense-perception and by inductive inference according to the Humean canon. The claim that reason is restricted to the Humean canon can be countered, and once we allow that inference need not be so narrowly construed, the whole argument falls. Asked how I know that a piece of paper existed last night in my desk, I say first that I saw it there both yesterday evening and this morning, and if pressed argue that there are good reasons for believing it to have been there in the intervening period. A sceptic may go on to question whether they really are good reasons; but he cannot assume, as Stace does, that they are bound to be bad because they do not fit into a predetermined pattern.

But other arguments are available. The sceptic can fault arguments outside the Humean canon, not because they are outsiders, but because they are fallible, and may on any particular occasion turn out to be wrong and lead to a false conclusion. The “How Do you Know” argument is reinforced by the Argument from Illusion.

5 See above, §2.7.
§6.3 The Argument from Illusion

We sometimes make mistakes. We think there is an oasis beckoning to us across a few miles of sweltering desert, when really there is nothing but unending parched sands. The moon seems to be no larger than a sixpence, the distant hills look blue, the stick in the water broken, and when we have jaundice everything is yellow. Similarly with hearing, tasting and feeling. Our judgments, however confidently made, are fallible. We infer that the water is warm, when coming in after skating, we put our hands under the cold tap; but really it is quite cold, though warmer than our chilled fingers. There are no pink elephants in his bedroom, as our delirious friend avers, but we do not think he is telling lies and making the whole thing up. Illusions and delusions do not come marked, so that we know that they are not to be trusted. Dreams sometimes are recognised as such, but not always. Often we are deceived by illusions, and take delusions and dreams for real. In our illusions and delusions we may be misinterpreting our sense-experience, but we are having some sense experience. To avoid error, we should simply report what we actually experience, and leave the interpretation for another time, and perhaps another person.

A sense-datum then is that incorrigible minimum of which I can be absolutely sure, and which cannot be thrown in doubt by any further consideration. All our ordinary reports of experience can be thrown in doubt. We cannot believe that we are totally wrong. There must be something we could say which was indubitable. And that indubitable residuum is what we ought to talk about when arguing with a sceptical philosopher or conducting an exercise in critical reason.

But can we make a firm distinction between what we actually experience and the interpretation of what we actually experience? Phenomenalists assume that we can. Once we have drawn the distinction between Reason and Experience, it is natural to look for
pure cases of each extreme. And since it is easy to discover a pure
case of Reason unallocated by Experience in deductive, and especially
mathematical, argument, we assume that the contrary case must
exist and be equally easy to identify. Even if we do not assume it,
the phenomenalist can argue for it, on the ground that there must
be minimal sense reports, in which the element of interpretation
has been reduced to zero, since if it is not zero, it can be challenged,
and we shall have to separate the disputed interpretation from the
undisputed evidence on which it is based. But the argument is not
cogent. Any particular report of sense-experience can be thrown in
doubt—true: but it does not follow that this process can be iter-
ated until we have pared down the report to a bare minimum. For
throwing in doubt is not as easy as all that. Arm-chair philosophers
find it less difficult than real-life reporters, but always to make a
doubt plausible the doubter has to spin an alternative yarn. I see
an elephant in a distant field, but on closer approach I recognize
it as a haystack covered with a tarpaulin. Such a story throws
doubt on such a report. It would be markedly less plausible if the
elephant had been observed from close by in a circus. Then per-
haps I might be taken in by a couple of clowns in an elephant skin,
but surely not by a haystack. A child at a zoo might misidentify
a rhinoceros, but a professional zoologist could not be mistaken
in that way, though even he could perhaps be taken in by a very
clever dummy constructed by another zoologist. Although we are
all liable to errors, we are not liable to all errors, nor all to the
same error. The situations in which a haystack can be mistaken
for an elephant are different from those in which a dummy can, and
both are radically different from those in which sticks seem bent, or
daggers appear suspended in front of the guilty observer. In every
case we may be wrong, but wrong in a different way, depending
on the case and its context. We cannot, therefore, pare down our
reports to an irreducible minimum, that can be guaranteed to be
mistake-free, for the different mistakes do not form an ordered se-
ries tending towards a definite limit, but a heterogeneous collection
of mistakes, in different directions and possible only in different
and incompatible contexts. In epistemology, as in economics, ‘raw’ is a
relative term. We can contrast our data with our conclusions, as
an industrialist can contrast his inputs with his finished products:
but no material is absolutely raw, and neither is any information.\(^6\)

\(^6\) See further §6.5.
§6.4 The Argument from the Senses

Without the benefit of philosophy we are, nearly all of us, naive realists. We take it for granted that we inhabit a world of real objects, which continue whether we observe them or not, and that when we observe them, we simply perceive them as they are. But as we attempt to formulate our untutored beliefs, we run into difficulties, which the phenomenalist can use to force us into agreeing with him. Science weakens naive confidence. We know that light and sound travel with only a finite velocity. We hear the thunder, the explosion, the pile being hit by the pile-driver, only after the lapse of some temporal duration; and when we observe the stars, what we see is what was happening many years ago. But we cannot hear or see past events. It must be that what we actually hear or see are present events which were caused by past events, and that we infer what happened in the past from what we are experiencing in the present. Similarly, if we try to give a causal account of perception, we have to insert, between the perceiver and the ultimate object he is perceiving, an intermediary which is caused by the object and is what is immediately perceived. We are led to distinguish from the things we ordinarily say we perceive, their effects on us which are the real, immediate objects of perception. So Descartes is led to conclude:

In fact, we perceive colours only in the sense that we perceive in objects something that produces in us the sensation of colour.\(^7\)

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\(^7\) AT VIII; HR I 296; quoted by A.J.P. Kenny, *Descartes*, New York, 1968, p.209
ears, caused by the vibrations in the air caused by the vibrations of the bell. We do not really hear bells or the traffic outside, but only the sounds and the noise produced by them. The argument is particularly compelling with sounds. As Berkeley put it:

Sitting in my study I hear a coach drive along the street; I look through the casement and see it; I walk out and enter into it; thus, common speech would incline one to think, I heard, saw, and touched the same thing, to wit, the coach. It is nevertheless certain, the ideas transmitted by each sense are widely different, and distinct from each other; but having been observed constantly to go together, they are spoken of as one and the same thing. By the variation of the noise I perceive the different distances of the coach, and know that it approaches before I look out. Thus by the ear I perceive distance, just after the same manner as I do by the eye.

XLVII. I do not nevertheless say, I hear distance in like manner as I say that I see it, the ideas perceived by hearing not being so apt to be confounded with the ideas of touch, as those of sight are; so likewise a man is easily convinced that bodies and external things are not properly the object of hearing, but only sounds, by the mediation whereof the idea of this or that body or distance is suggested to his thoughts. But then one is with more difficulty brought to discern the difference there is between the ideas of sight and touch: though it be certain, a man no more sees or feels the same thing, than he hears and feels the same thing.

And, indeed, it seems similarly impossible to deny that what we really smell are smells, and what we really taste are tastes, and what we really feel are feels, and what we really see are sights. And, indeed, in a sense this is so. What we have done is to replace the ordinary objects of perception, by ones that we necessarily perceive. In grammatical terms, we have replaced the ordinary external accusatives—bells, fried bacon, honey, velvet, and stars—with internal accusatives—sounds, smells, tastes, feels, sights, thereby transforming fallible, informative statements into necessary, vacuous ones. As a young man I might have been intrigued—or alarmed—if a fortune-teller said she could foretell whom I should be married to in ten years’ time: but if, having paid her her fee, she vouchedfied that in ten years’ time I should be married to my wife, I should reckon I had not got value for money.

Arguments for Phenomenalism
4. Direct Object of Perception
5. Assimilation of Sense-experience to Pain

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It is tempting to resist these lines of argument by insisting on an absolute separation between our ordinary mode of discourse and the causal account of perception. But it would be an unreasonable insistence. It is rational to seek for causes, and if we find them, they are to be taken seriously, and may lead us to revise our previous notions. In any case, we sometimes have occasion to talk about our sense-experience rather than what our sense-experience is experience of. I need to tell the oculist how the letter on the screen looks to me, not what it really is. Although most of our discourse is about a common external world, sometimes I want to talk about me, and sometimes, even, you may want to hear about me and my sensations. But once we allow that the immediate objects of our senses are sounds, smells, tastes, sights and feels, we are hard put to it to escape from the realm of sense-experience to the external world beyond. Berkeley claimed that it was impossible. The only things that were like ideas were ideas, he said, in opposition to Locke’s claim that primary qualities were like the ideas we had of them, in contradistinction to secondary qualities, which were unlike the ideas they produced in us. Berkeley is unfair: ‘like’ is incompletely specified. In respect of being ideas, only ideas can, indeed, be like ideas. But if I can, as phenomenalists aver, describe a sense-datum as an orange triangle on a green background, then it is perfectly intelligible, and possibly correct, to say that the idea is like, in respect of shape, some other triangle, perhaps in a textbook on geometry or perhaps marked out by a surveyor on the surface of the earth.

We can talk about sense-experience without being obliged to talk only about it. And argument need not be so restricted that we are unable to argue from sense-experience to what sense-experience is experience of. But it is difficult to keep the discourse and the arguments under control, so as not to say things that give the phenomenalist purchase for his arguments. We are often careless and easily muddled, and then vulnerable to some argument which would persuade us that we could never have knowledge of anything beyond the immediate objects of sense.
Many of the arguments deployed are variations on a limited number of leading themes, which have been separately discussed in preceding sections, and shown to be fallacious. Nevertheless, cumulatively they can be effective. If Locke and the Empiricists were right to hold that our knowledge of the world is based on experience, then the honest and democratic thing to do is to share the reports of one’s experience with all who come to listen, but let them make what they like of it. It is unfair to purvey packaged information which has been processed by our fallible reasonings. We should export it raw, and let them process it themselves at home. Not only is this more equal, but it is safer. If some one else makes a mistake, not only shall we be not held to blame, but others, also operating on the raw information we had provided, may correct it; whereas, if all we had offered to the public was the finished article, nobody would be in a position to correct any errors that had crept in while we were processing it. In any case, by confining ourselves to reporting our own sense-experiences we are witnessing to our belief that all observers are on an equal footing, and that there are no mysteries of seeing or knowing that are the peculiar prerogative of an intellectual élite. We claim no privileged access to recherché forms of reasoning, but humbly confine ourselves to reporting as accurately as we can the sense-experience that has come our way. We provide our share of tricks, and let it be a common endeavour to build them up into the edifice of knowledge.

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It is difficult not to feel the force of this appeal; particularly in its attempt to get down to the fundamental elements of empirical knowledge. If Locke and the Empiricists were right, and the mind was a tabula rasa on which there were impressed by the senses impressions of the outside world, then the phenomenalists’ argument from perception would be strong. And contrariwise, if phenomenalism is false, we shall have to give an account of perception which is not only clearer, but different.
§6.5 The Argument from Facts

The argument from the senses is often strengthened by the assumption—unrecognised—that there are basic facts, a definite class of indubitable entities.\(^9\) Then a reductive argument begins. Any ordinary set of statements cannot state facts, since men, being fallible, sometimes make mistakes. Besides, merely if we think hard enough about any given statement, the original sense of the word ‘fact’ reappears. If I concentrate hard enough on why I believe there is a tree in the quad, I cease to assume that there is a tree in the quad, and treat that statement instead as a proposition to be proved rather than a premise that is given. In having the question of whether there is a tree in the quad or not brought to my notice I am being begged not to beg the question, and the courtesies of argument demand that I put in doubt what I normally know to be true. There is also what I might call the Yellow-Spot phenomenon in philosophy, namely, that if we focus our attention too hard on any matter for too long, we cease to see it straight. In the dark night of the intellect, which is the philosopher’s usual state of mind, it is wise for him occasionally to distract his thoughts and look away, that he may see what he is looking at the better; more especially when he is dealing with facts and certainty. For facts are essentially what is peripheral to the question under examination, what can be taken for granted on this occasion; and therefore by being asked sufficiently earnestly to consider any question sufficiently closely I can be cajoled into giving up fact-status on for this occasion for almost any statement: courtesy compels. Only if I am making the minimum possible statement can I be pushed no further: only if I say that there is in my visual field at this moment a red rectangular patch on a cream background, am I safe from possible error: hence, if there are basic facts, only the simplest facts of sense-experience can fill the bill. By attempting to make rigid and absolute the flexible standard, which depends on the circumstances, of what the honest man cannot reasonably refuse to concede, we have ensured ourselves in a reductive spiral, demanding an ever lower standard of reasonableness until we reach the phenomenalist’s goal, the lowest common denominator of what must be conceded by every reasonable man in any circumstances whatever, that is, what must be conceded by a barely sentient being.

\(^9\) See above, §1.6.
We start by assuming that a fact is what a true statement states; but this is to misunderstand the part played in argument by the word ‘fact’. When we argue, we try to narrow the area of dispute, so as to concentrate our efforts on what is in issue. We use the word ‘fact’ to flag not what is claimed to be true, but what is agreed to be true by both parties to the dispute. Having agreed on the facts, we can then go on to argue. Sometimes the argument will be about a further proposition of the same logical type as the facts we have agreed on: on the basis of dates not in contention, we argue about another date—say, the date of the battle of Marathon. Often, however, we argue about interpretations or theories or moral judgements, which are of a different logical type from the facts we agree on. It is then dangerously easy to infer that since interpretations, scientific theorising and the conclusions of ethical debate are not facts, they are not true either. By restricting our criterion of truth to that of agreed truth, we eliminate all doubt and dubiety within the province of philosophy; nor can the opponent of this view fault the examples given of what is to be allowed as really true, for only those truths that cannot reasonably be contested are put forward as examples. But since there are few facts, if any, that we cannot in our metaphysical moments be uncertain of, our concept of truth is regressive; our criterion grows progressively and indefinitely more stringent. The more we think, the more nice we become as to what are unquestionable truths; and so not only the propositions of morals, theology and metaphysics, but also natural science, of common sense and everyday life, join the procession to the guillotine.

There are no basic facts: only facts relative to a dispute. Since there is nothing that cannot on some occasion be reasonably doubted, there can be no truths established beyond doubt to all comers, no elemental facts which we just have to accept and on which all else is based. Nothing is never doubtful, though this is not to say that everything is always doubtful. In every dispute we have to start somewhere, but there is nowhere that is the starting point for every dispute. It naturally seems a good idea to build a theory of knowledge upon the facts; and then it is natural to identify the facts with the sense-data we might cite if we were disagreeing about a pattern in the clouds. But once we realise that facts are always with regard to this or that specifiable issue, and not neutral elemental atoms, with regard to any conceivable issue, we need no longer feel impelled to hypothesize them, and conclude that sense-data are hard, brute facts, existing independently of us and the real foundation of all empirical knowledge.
Rebuttals

Phenomenalism is very teasing. Often it seems absurd, and we cannot take it seriously. But sometimes we get the bug, and then cannot see how on earth it can be refuted. Phenomenalism seems more like a disease than a position reached through rational argument. But arguments have been put forward, and sometimes seem persuasive. Our first task is to consider them, and see whether they are as compelling as they seem.

Many of the arguments for phenomenalism are sceptical arguments. We need to be aware of the different positions maintained by sceptic. We can be asked to justify the belief in unobserved objects, but need to be told to whom the justification should be addressed (i.e. what the sceptic's own position is), and what sort of justification he is seeking (i.e. what sort of argument he would in principle be prepared to accept). Otherwise we shall be the target of Hume's guerillas, who themselves have no position to defend, but, whatever we say, profess themselves unsatisfied by it, and demand a further justification. But guerillas win no wars, having no position they can themselves defend. And demands for justification that are intended to be unsatisfiable can be brushed off with contempt.

Some arguments for phenomenalism are based on deductivism. Certainly, if the only valid arguments are deductive arguments, then we cannot argue validly from our having the experience of seeing a tree in the quad to there actually being one, for we could (logically could) have been deluded or mistaken: it is not inconsistent to say “I had an experience of seeing a tree in the quad but actually there was not one—it was a trompe d'oeil put up by the Ball committee”. But if the sceptic is a deductivist, and demands that ‘proof’ be taken as deductive proof, he is crying for the moon; he is demanding that the contrary position be unsayable. But it is no merit in a language that it should prevent us from characterizing alternative possibilities—on the contrary, language should be as flexible as possible, not as inflexible. Once we allow that the function of language is to enable us to describe things, we shall expect it to be able to describe what is not the case as well as what is, and so shall not demand that only what is the case shall be describable. It is a logical possibility that we should have an experience of seeing a tree in the quad without there actually being one, but it is not a normal possibility—as witnessed by our needing to explain it in some way: “it was a trompe d'oeil put up by the Ball committee”.
The deductivist equates normal and logical possibility, and wants it to be logically impossible—self-contradictory—to describe what it would be like if what was normally impossible actually occurred.

Not all phenomenalists are deductivists. Some allow inductive arguments; some are not sceptics with respect to causality. They may then be led to acknowledge the existence of unperceived objects by reason of their causal properties. I may not be able to see the magnet underneath the table, but can still aver its existence on account of the deflection of a compass needle, or the pattern of iron filings, on the top of the table. The tree itself may be unobserved by any human being, but its shadow visible from my window is adequate evidence of its existence none the less. Effects and perceptions merge into each other: the swish of traffic in the wet street may be an effect from which I infer a cause, but equally it may be the cue for my hearing the traffic. An electron microscope is a mechanism which causes patterns to occur in a cathode-ray tube, and perhaps we should not talk of viewing molecular structures with its aid: but should we similarly eschew talk of “seeing” things through an ordinary microscope, a telescope, or in a looking glass?

In modern times scepticism about how we could know of the existence of unobserved objects has been expressed in terms of the Verificationist Theory of Meaning. The meaning of a statement about some material object is simply the method of verifying it, and the way we verify statements about material objects is seeing, hearing, touching, smelling or tasting them. But Verificationism leads also to solipsism; and if, like Berkeley, we believe in the existence of other people and other minds, we cannot be thorough-going verificationists; nor can we be, if we are unwilling to deny knowledge of the future and the past; nor if we are scientists or mathematicians, and reluctant to give up our professional talk of theoretical entities. Some phenomenalists, more consistently, accept a radical reconstruction of their scientific discourse, or become mathematical intuitionists, thereby making their position tenable again, but at the cost of plausibility.

10 See above, §2.3, §3.1.
12 See more generally, §4.4.
The Argument from Illusion is open to a different type of rebuttal. We are sometimes misled by illusions. But we are not permanently and pervasively misled; for, if we were, we should not realise that we had been misled. Although in individual cases we may be deluded, hallucinating, misled, or otherwise mistaken, we can in general distinguish deviant from veridical sense-experience. And hence we have a way, fallible but generally reliable, of knowing when we should be cautious and report only our sense-experience as it seems to us, and when we can use it as a basis for making more ambitious claims about material objects.

The Argument from the Senses is effective against naive formulations of our untutored beliefs, but takes over many assumptions open to question. In metaphysics we seek the ultimate, but should not take for granted that such ultimates exist. There may be no minimum sense data not contaminated by any interpretation. Phenomenalists speak of sense data, something given by the senses, but this is an entirely wrong view of perception. Sense-experience is not just given, but elicited. We look, we listen, poke, sniff and savour, and sense-experience is the feedback on these activities.

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<td>4. Direct and indirect objects: I hear bells, I hear a sound; I married Jane, I married my wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Most sensations are not painful, but more subtle if less peremptory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Some Representative Theories of Perception are badly expressed, but we do not feel bound by Humean doubts when it comes to science. If we can believe in quarks without ever having seen them, then we might be allowed to believe in the Tree in the Quad which “causes” our tree-like sensations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
§6.7 Arguments against Phenomenalism

The arguments for phenomenalism are not conclusive; some are bad; some are incoherent, presuming the falsity of phenomenalism in arguing for its truth; some prove too much, leading us to deny not only the existence of material objects, but of other persons, and requiring us to abjure all knowledge of the future and the past. But we may be persuaded none the less: we may be convinced by sceptical arguments, accepting the further sceptical conclusions too; or we may simply feel phenomenalist, not driven to it by argument, but just finding ourselves occupying that position. In such cases we have to ask: Can phenomenalism be refuted? If, like Descartes, we adopt the method of doubt, and have been able to affirm our own existence as a solipsistic consciousness, have we good reason to go further, and affirm the existence of an external world? We have. Besides being unable to doubt our own existence, we encounter other inabilities. Although we can avoid seeing, hearing, or feeling things by shutting our eyes, blocking our ears, or not touching with our body, we cannot open our eyes and see things the way we would like to see them, or listen and hear what we would like to hear, or touch and feel as we would wish: we can, through our senses, put questions to nature, but the answers we get are not decided by us, but by nature. Berkeley maintained that the existence of the quires of heaven depended on their being perceived,\(^{13}\) which in turn depends on our choosing to observe them; but though ostrich-like I may be able to choose not to observe what I do not want to observe, I cannot, conversely, by choosing to observe, observe whatsoever I want, but only what is there for me to observe. The argument is the same as that for causality.\(^{14}\) Recalcitrance to my will argues for the existence of a reality other than myself with effective power.

But need it be comprised of material objects? Might it not be ideas in the mind of God—

Young man, your astonishment's odd,
I am always about in the Quad,
And that's why the tree
Continues to be,
Since observed by
Yours faithfully,
God.

\(^{13}\) Principles of Human Knowledge, §VI. [CHECKed]

\(^{14}\) See above, §4.6.
or possible sense-data waiting for us to actualise them by choosing to observe?

Descartes was concerned to explain. We, too, may wish not merely to acknowledge the existence of something recalcitrant to our will, but to make sense of our experiences of encountering observations not of our own choosing. Provided reason is not subjected to Humean constraints, and is not confined to deduction and inductive Inference to the Next Case, we can argue from our various sense-experiences to the existence of material objects, as being the best explanation of them. Leibniz gave as a decisive reason for believing in the existence of material objects la liaison des phénomènes.\(^\text{15}\) We do not merely experience sense-data, but find different sorts of sense-data constantly conjoined. We learn that metals which look like gold are malleable, that if we have a tree-like visual sense-datum and then the kinaesthetic sensations of walking towards it, we shall soon have tactile sense-data of scratchy twigs and impenetrable bark. If we do not believe that these linked sense-data are all due to the tree, we find it very difficult to account for their constant concomitance. Material objects explain why a whole lot of disparate sense-data go together. Phenomenalists cannot explain the invariances of our sense-experience; at best they can only re-state it: those who believe in the independent existence of material objects can explain; they posit the existence of unperceived objects, as scientists posit the existence of unperceived entities. Only a Humean sceptic can deny the cogency of an Inference to the Best Explanation, and such scepticism about the powers of reason is one for which it is impossible to argue for by means of reasons that it would recognise as cogent.

Once I am forced to recognise the existence of a reality other than myself with effective power, I am beginning to cut myself down to size. Reality is essentially non-ego-centric. So, too, is reason. The more reasonable I am, the less insistent am I on seeing everything exclusively from my own ego-centric point of view. Many sceptical arguments lose their charm, once I recognise that they depend on unduly emphasizing some aspect of egocentricity. If I would be a spectator of all time, the past and the future no longer seem entirely

Unlike the present, other times will not be radically unknowable, as being ontologically different from my time, nor will other minds be ontologically different from my own mind. Similarly, whether or not I happen to be observing something will become irrelevant to its actual existence. Reality having once abated my pride, reason assuages it further, and inclines me to take up a omni-personal, omni-temporal point of view in which I am no longer tempted to reconstruct reality as an emanation of my own will.

Some versions of phenomenalism lead naturally to solipsism, and, per contra, if a man believes in the existence of other people, he will believe also in the existence of material objects. For sense-experience is private. I experience what I experience, and you experience what you experience. Then believing, like Berkeley, in the existence of other minds, we can argue against me-phenomenalism because you see the tree when I am not looking, and against you-phenomenalism because I see the tree when you are not looking. It is reasonable then to infer that it should continue to exist when neither of us is looking. We can also use the argument of Locke that a common language presupposes a common external world. Communication would be impossible unless there were things in a common external world for our language to refer to and describe. Although our experiences are necessarily peculiar to us—although for all we know, you may see colours differently from me—there is something common to my experience, your experience, everybody else’s, since others use the same words as we do. These common factors can be picked out and talked about. Since they are inter-subjective, it is reasonable to characterize them as objective, as manifestations of, perhaps even as being caused by, some real thing, the same for us all.

Berkeley might acknowledge the force of the argument from inter-subjectivity, but deny that it proved the existence of material objects. He might allow that there are common ideas, and yet distinguish them from matter. After all, we see rainbows and hear thunder, but do not believe that rainbows or thunder are material objects. But once we acknowledge inter-subjectivity, we are no longer talking about particular sense-experiences, which must be had by some mind, but what is invariant as between many experience, and therefore not tied to any particular one. We no longer can say Esse est Percepi. What we are talking about is not something perceived by some person, but something common to what is perceived, or may be perceived, by anyone suitably situated. In
some cases it may not be a material object, but it is objective, and because accessible to all percepts, not tied essentially to any particular one. Matter, according to Mill, is a permanent possibility of sensation. That cannot be quite right, since the background radiation in the universe—the lingering echoes of the Big Bang—can always be detected, but is not itself matter. But neither is it a sense-datum. Although further conditions are necessary for the adequate characterization of material objects, the argument from inter-subjectivity establishes sufficient objectivity to rule out phenomenalism. Many of Berkeley’s arguments are directed against the concept of matter, which he considers too inert to be capable of explaining anything. May be. But his “notions” run counter to his subjectivist arguments, and we ask: “How different is an idea in the mind of God from an ordinary material thing?” In the end, Berkeley seems not to be establishing phenomenalism or idealism (in the Eighteenth Century sense), but to be replacing a somewhat confused causal theory of perception by one that construes perception as a communication—God telling us what the facts of our lives are. There may be advantages in taking this view—there are certainly disadvantages. But it is not phenomenalism.

Arguments Against Phenomenalism
1. Recalcitrance to Will
2. Invariance over own experience: Leibniz, *la liaison des phénomènes* (New Essays, IV:2:14)
3. Non-egocentricity
4. Invariance over experiences of others
5. Maximum Evidence
6.8 Reality Recovered

The arguments against phenomenalism are diverse, different arguments being appropriate for different thinkers, assailed by different species of doubt. In their different ways they help the doubter recover his ordinary sense of the reality of the external world. They do this very largely by being able to deploy a robust sense of reason, which both neutralises some of the arguments of the sceptic, and gives positive warrant for maintaining the reality of entities the phenomenalist is reluctant to recognise. Reason liberates us from neurotic egocentricity, and Inference to the Best Explanation is a powerful weapon for extending the realm of knowledge beyond any previous bounds.

Reason liberates us from neurotic egocentricity. Modern philosophy is much too preoccupied with ME. Whereas ancient and mediaeval philosophers were primarily concerned with Ontology, the question of what exists, the chief question addressed by philosophers since the time of Descartes has been Epistemology, what can be known, and more specifically, what can be known by me. We can criticize Descartes, as we can criticize Luther, for focusing too much on the personal at the expense of the communal. Reason tells me that I am not the only pebble on the beach. Just as I live in a community of other people, selves like me but different from me, so I think in thought-forms I share with others, and depend on others for much of what I know. Once I listen to reason, phenomenalism loses its grip on me, and doubts about the existence of an external, objective world disappear.

But even if I still feel impelled to visit Descartes in his solipsistic prison of isolated self-consciousness, I can reason my way out into a public world of things existing independently of my mind. I infer their existence because they explain both the limitations on my ability to choose what sensations to experience, and the constant correlations between the various sensations I do experience.

These different exercises of reason are illuminating, not least because they are being deployed in favour of one of our most firm beliefs—the existence of material objects—rather than against it, or on behalf of some less commonsensical belief, such as the existence of Platonist ideas, numbers, values, or God. Reality is shown to be under attack from many quarters, and reason shown to have many aspects. Most importantly, reality is intimately connected with reason, though not the same as it, and many of the arguments adduced in defence of the existence of the external world,
can be deployed to establish the existence of other entities too. Solipsism, which denies that other people really exist, that is, that other bodies are inhabited by other minds, resembles phenomenalism, and many of the arguments adduced in this chapter can be deployed also with regard to the so-called question of Other Minds. But there are differences too. Consciousness is involved, and is a difficult concept. The science of neuro-physics and the materialist bias of modern thinking makes us wonder whether in the last analysis consciousness, our own or that of other people, can have any real role in the scheme of things. Reason itself, in curing us of our neurotic egocentricity, is in danger of denying our existence as egos altogether. We shall need to go on a longer path, and plumb the nature of ultimate reality, before we can reach a reasoned judgement whether we really exist.

§6.9 The Analogy of Feeling

The solipsist, like the phenomenalist, often makes his case by attacking the not-very-well-articulated account of common sense.

The traditional arguments for the existence of minds start with the first person—cogito, ergo sum—and argue that there must be something other than oneself, and that one’s sense-experience must be a reliable guide to it; and then, having established the existence of the external world, argue that other men’s bodies, being visibly similar to one’s own, must be inhabited by minds, also similar to one’s own. The relations between minds and bodily behaviour has a certain broad similarity to that between material objects and sense-experience, and gives rise to similar objections on the part of the sceptic, and similar counters on the part of the realist.

It is tempting to formalise this as an argument, of a type the sceptic should admit. But unfortunately it then turns out to be an invalid specimen whose invalidity can then be triumphantly exposed. We are tempted, that is, to argue by induction. In one case, my own, I know that my behaviour is linked to states of mind. And so it seems reasonable to argue by analogy that behind other people’s behaviour lie corresponding states of other minds. But then the sceptic can counter-attack, and point out how unreasonable it is to argue inductively from a single case. Although, as a matter of fact scientists, especially in the mathematical sciences, do not make large numbers of observations, and can often determine either the value of a physical magnitude or the truth or falsity of a physical theory on the basis of only a few readings, yet their sample is only
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6.10 Criteria

Sceptics often argue for behaviourism by trading on the use of the word ‘criterion’. Most of our judgements are uncontested, and depend on a large number of factors, many of which we have barely noticed and may not be able to itemise. If a judgement is contested, we follow the procedure described by Pantin, and look for features about which there can be no doubt and which will enable us to tell in a fairly automatic fashion whether or not the judgement was correct. The criteria are a subclass of all the relevant factors, which have the virtues of being easily itemised themselves fairly indisputably, and together constituting, in practice, though not in logic, a necessary and sufficient condition for the truth of the judgement in question. We cannot count on his always being able to formulate complete sets of criteria in particular human affairs; partly because human beings are very complex and very deceitful; partly because we are so familiar with them that we find it difficult

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to step back from our immediate judgements and identify and formulate the factors on which they depend. We have criteria for valid wills in the law, but not for the Good Will in morals, because if we did our ever deceitful hearts would soon find it expedient to satisfy them for reason of *amour propre*. Consequently there are often no criteria for the application of personal predicates or for making correct judgements about states of minds. But philosophers often construe this as meaning that there are no grounds whatever for applying personal predicates, or making correct judgements about states of mind, for the word ‘criterion’ has been much abused, and often is taken to mean any factor whatever on which a judgement may be based. In the proper sense of the word my feeling a pain is not a *criterion* for it being correct for me to say that I am in pain. But this is all too easily taken as meaning that my being pain is not any ground whatever for my saying that I am. And then we are rapidly led to the conclusion that this, and all similar talk about states of mind, is altogether unwarranted and groundless.

The argument that all we see is bodily behaviour and the argument that all our words can refer to is bodily behaviour both rest on the mistake of supposing that what we see or say cannot be more than the cues or evidence which guide us to our conclusions. Our evidence for saying that a man is in pain is the fact that he says so, or is writhing in agony, or is white and drawn, or has an abscess on his tooth: but what we mean, and why we think it important to offer him sympathy, is that he is in pain, suffering something we know what it is like to suffer, which occupies all a man’s attention, which he would gladly avoid but cannot ignore. What we mean is not our evidence for saying it, any more than it is when on the basis of past experience we predict that there will be a meteor shower tomorrow night. Our evidence is indubitably past: but only an extreme dogmatist would construe a statement about the future as being really about the past. When we say that a man is in pain we are saying more than that he told us, or was white and drawn, or was writhing, although any of these constitutes a good reason for making our assertion. If I say that a man is in pain, and when asked “How do you know?” answer “He told me”, I have discharged the onus of justification which my having made an assertion naturally imposes on me. It does not of course follow that I could not be wrong. No matter how good my evidence is, I cannot be sure of not being wrong.

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17 See above §§1.2, 4.4.
§6.11 The Argument from Deception

Not only can inferences from overt behaviour to supposed inner mental states never be justified, but when we do make them, they often turn out to be wrong. We are often taken in by confidence-tricksters. Actors put on the appearance of emotions they do not really feel, and stoics conceal the feeling they really suffer from. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick. We should avoid all talk of mysterious minds, and concentrate on what we can know, and what does affect us—behaviour. True handsomeness is as handsomeness does. Deceits sufficiently multiplied become livable with. We may be living in a fool’s paradise: the apparently benign bods we everywhere encounter may really be malignant demons, who take pleasure in the manifold deceptions they perpetrate on us. But if the deception lasts for ever, if there is no moment of truth, when the real face of demoniacal hate is revealed to us, if the paradise experience was to last us all our life long, should we complain? Only a very foolish fool would carp at a paradise he was to inhabit for ever.

The argument is invalid, and reveals one important difference between behaviourism and phenomenalism. With material objects appearances are, ultimately, conclusive. If the mirage of an oasis beckoning to us across the sweltering desert is followed by an illusion of cool waters and shady palm trees, we do not feel disillusioned the next day, as we set off on our journey again, our waterbags filled, and still savouring the Arab hospitality of the night before. Life could be, for all we know, for all we could know, a singularly coherent dream, provided it is coherent enough, and there is to be no rude awakening into a contrasting reality. So far as things are concerned, we reject Aquinas’ doctrine of transubstantiation. The substance of a thing is different from its accidents, but not independent of them, and if all the accidents are unchanged, then so is the substance. But, pace the behaviourists, minds are different. This is illustrated by the rather grisly example thrown up by modern medical techniques, where it is desirable to use a drug, such as curare, which relaxes all the voluntary muscles of the body. In effect, it induces complete paralysis, so that all the manifestations of consciousness, even down to the movements of the eye are suppressed. It is also the case that some patients are not anaesthetized by normal doses of anaesthetics. We can envisage therefore the horror story of a patient who is not anaesthetized.
while an operation is still being performed, and is fully conscious although showing no signs of consciousness to the doctors. He might even survive to tell the story, but in any event it is a conceivable case, conceivable enough to frighten us: and could be so only if consciousness were something different from the clinical criteria, which although usually reliable are not absolutely conclusive. 18

There is a fact of the matter, about which we could be wrong in any particular instance. So there is a real question, but not one that supports the sceptic's case. Admittedly, we make mistakes about other men's states of mind, as we do also about material objects. But we could not be taken in by the confidence-trickster sometimes if we were not in the habit of generally regarding facial expression, bodily behaviour and the spoken word, as reliable indications of personal integrity. Actors could not simulate, nor stories dissemble, except against a background of overt behaviour being a reasonably reliable guide to their feelings. The argument from error proves the exact reverse of what the sceptic concludes from it.

§6.12 Myself and Others

The argument from analogy is not as broken-backed as modern philosophers suppose. As a simple inductive argument it does not work—but why should it have to be construed as a simple inductive argument? We often do agree from a single instance—what Aristotle called ἐκθέσις (ekthesis)—so long as we have some reason to believe that the single instance is typical. And we can argue against the contrary thesis—the thesis that I AM DIFFERENT—along the same lines as we argued against the thesis that the future is unlike the past, or that it makes a difference to material objects whether or not I am observing them. 19 The traditional formulation of the problem, as the Problem of Other Minds, makes this obvious. "Other than whose?" is the natural question, and the answer "Other than mine" betrays the inherent egocentricity of the issue. 20 6.7 We can go further. Not only does 'other' implicitly involve the first person singular, but the first person singular implies the legitimacy of the other grammatical persons. I could not have

18 See below, §14.2.
19 See above, §6.6.
20 See above §3.3 and §6.7.
learned even the use of the first person singular except concomitantly with that of the second and the third. I form my sense of my own identity by comparing and contrasting it with yours and his. The conceptual scheme we actually use is one in which the first, second and third persons are pari passu. 'I' in my mouth refers to the same person as is referred to by ‘you’ in your mouth when you are addressing me. If the sceptic accepts one part of the conceptual structure he must accept it all. He cannot pick and choose. He cannot use our existing conceptual scheme to put its validity in question unless he can state those doubts in a way which does not presuppose the truth of the position he is concerned to question.

The argument can be developed in different ways: it can be deployed ad hominem to make an effective debating point; “Who do you think you are talking to?” we ask; “unless other people have minds, it is pointless to argue with them”, thus showing that the solipsist, like other sceptics, does not really believe that other people are automata, his action is speaking bellying what his words are meant to say. Alternatively, we can deploy a direct argument, that it is implicit in language and a precondition of our being able to communicate at all that people exist. Cogito, ergo sum implies loquor ergo es. We can then, not exactly rehabilitate, but reconstruct, the argument from analogy to constitute a cogent cumulative argument for the thesis that people, like horses, really do have feelings.

§6.13 Understanding People

I am unique. Any inductive argument generalising from my own experience, is precarious, even if not totally vitiated by the narrowness of the base. Nevertheless, any philosopher who instanced himself as his reason for rejecting behaviourism, showed a right instinct. Although I cannot appeal to my own experience as a premise for a simple inductive argument to show that other men have minds, I can turn to myself as a source from which to derive the concepts I need if I am to be able to organize and understand the behaviour of others. We describe other people’s behaviour as if they were conscious agents, doing the same sort of thing as each one of us does himself and for the same sorts of reasons. Without these categories of conscious action, it would be impossible, to make sense of, and often even to describe, their behaviour. Even with animal behaviour the ethnologists have needed to borrow heavily
from the vocabulary of human affairs in order to make the patterns of observed response intelligible and to suggest to them what further features to look for. With human beings, we are so completely at home in these categories of description that we find it far easier to describe a man in terms of action and temperament than in terms of behaviour or appearance express without the aid of specifically personal concepts. I know for certain that a man’s behaviour was threatening and that he made as if to attack me, but am utterly at a loss to say which hand was there or how exactly the legs are placed. We all are constantly reading one another’s faces, and know whether the boss is in a good mood or not, and whether our remarks are being well received: but only those who are gifted artists can tell what was the exact configuration of lines on the face that betokened impatience and mounting irritation. When we meet a man for the first time, we notice peculiarities of appearance or voice, but with further acquaintance we discount them, and notice only his expression as an indication of his state of mind, his words as an expression of his thoughts. We not only pay no attention to peculiarities of face and speech, but do not and almost cannot, notice them. If a man has a tic which moves his face into a painful grimace, it obtrudes itself onto our notice at first, for it seems to indicate spasms of agony: but soon we hardly notice it at all, because we know that it does not mean anything, while still a flicker of the eyelids will not escape our attention in any way, because it may mean much. We do not see men’s behaviour first as behaviour characterized in non-human terms, and then conjecture by hazardous inference that behind it lies some specified state of mind: we ask straight away “Is this man in pain or not?” or “Is he in a good temper or not?”, and fit what we see either into the category “Yes, he is in pain”, “Yes, he is in a good temper” or into the category “No, he is not in pain”, “No, he is not in a good temper”. Our answers may, of course, be wrong, and another man may be able to point out features we had overlooked, which could have indicated to us that the other answer should be given. But that is the question we ask, and our whole perception of the situation is structured by that question. We understand people’s behaviour in terms of human action and feeling, and would not be able to construe it as we do if we did not have these categories available from the outset.

The sceptic’s claim that we cannot ever see men’s minds but only their behaviour is based on a faulty theory of perception, in
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the same way as the phenomenalists' claim that we cannot see material objects but only the corresponding sense-experiences. In each case there is an acceptable locution in which we see sense-experience of see behaviour, but this does not exclude these being another locution, equally acceptable and more fundamental, in which we see a material object or see a man's mood. In all our perceiving we tend to concentrate on the most important—often the most invariant—features, and to pick these out from amid the welter of irrelevances. The simile of reading is apt. We speak of reading a man's mind, and seeing what he is thinking. When we first learn to read words, we are highly conscious of the different shapes of the letters, and at that stage could be said to see the shapes immediately or directly, and to know what the message was only mediately and indirectly. But when we have been long familiar with reading, we see straight through to the words, and often do not notice and cannot tell what the shape of the letters is. Indeed, we can go further. We get the gist of the message without noticing or remembering the words—sometimes not even remembering what language the message was expressed in. Or we may gain an impression of the style—the personality and the mood of the author, from various nuances we often at a loss to itemise. We see through one level of phenomena to another; or see that other level in the original one. Our knowledge of material objects comes through our sense-experience, our knowledge of other minds through our observation of their bodies: but, normally without any effort, we construe our sense-experience as being perception of material objects, and see other men's faces, words and actions as expressing their motives. The argument from perception tends towards exactly the opposite conclusion the sceptic wants.

The sceptic may counter that we have to learn to read, and the primitive unreading state is logically prior to the habits of literacy: and that in cases of doubt, we are still forced back to close examination of the letters; and similarly in cases of doubt about how a man's action should be interpreted. All of these may be conceded. We learn to interpret behaviour, just as we learn to read—and just as we learn to see. All perception is learned, but is not any the less perception for that. A person might conceivably—at least for the sake of the present argument let us concede that a person might conceivably—not learn to use the language of persons: but this would not enable him to talk of behaviour in a less theory-laden and more aseptic way; he just would be unable to talk about, and
to a large extent even to notice, behaviour at all. Again, it is true
that in cases of doubt, we characterize the letters or the behaviour
in neutral terms, and argue which reading or which interpretation
is to be preferred. But this does not prove that we either should, or
even could, characterize letters or behaviour in terms that were ab-
olutely neutral as between all possible interpretations.\textsuperscript{21} Specific
doUBts about states of mind are common: but far from adding up
to a general doubt whether states of mind exist at all, they argue
the other way. Only against the background of general non-doubts
are particular doubts intelligible at all.

There remains the deep hostility felt by the sceptic at the ontol-
ogical extravagance of going beyond overt behaviour and positing
minds as well as material objects. It can be met in the same way
as the similar misgivings felt by the phenomenalist. The additional
range of concepts enable us to organize and understand overt be-
haviour far better than we otherwise could. Ryle gives a brilliant
account of the many different ways in which vanity is manifested.\textsuperscript{22}

on hearing that a man is vain we expect him, in the first instance, to
behave in certain ways, namely to talk a lot about himself, to cleave
to the society of the eminent, to reject criticisms, to seek the footlights
and to disengage himself from conversations about the merits of oth-
ers. We expect him also to indulge in roseate daydreams about his
own successes, to avoid recalling past failures and to plan for his own
advancement. To be vain is to tend to act in these and innumerable
other kindred ways.

The ways are, not only innumerable, but very different. Having
at our disposal the concept of vanity, we can see all these different
patterns of behaviour as expressions of the same state of mind.
Mental concepts enable us to achieve une liaison des phénomènes
otherwise unattainable; and that is sufficient justification for using
them, and believing minds to exist.

\textsuperscript{21} See, more fully, “On Not Worshipping Facts”, \textit{Philosophical Quarterly}, 8,
1958, pp.144-156.

\textsuperscript{22} Gilbert Ryle, \textit{The Concept of the Mind}, London, 1949. pp. 85-87. Com-
§6.14 Conclusion

The argument of the previous three chapters has been largely negative. Attacks on particular forms of reasoning have been parried. In Plantinga’s terminology, we have defeated the defeaters. Some very typical forms of reasoning have been vindicated as generally worthy of credence, though admittedly fallible on occasion. In so far as sceptical metaphysical systems have been based on some critique of reason, they are, in general, mistaken. We can go wrong in our speculations about the nature of reality, but are not bound to. It may be possible to reason aright.

Two further points have emerged which are of importance for metaphysics: we can legitimately reason across categories; from particular instances to general laws; from concomitances to causal connexions; from sounds and sights to events and material objects; from overt behaviour to mental states: and we can legitimately posit entities in order to integrate and explain; the existence of material objects makes sense of the coherence of our visual, auditory and other sense-experience; the existence of minds explains why organisms manifest apparently very diverse patterns of behaviour; Ockham’s razor bids us not to multiply entities unnecessarily, but reason can sometimes establish the need for some further kind of being.