

## *A Most Peculiar Paradox*

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THE “empirical identity” view of the denotata of neurophysiological and phenomenal terms has been challenged as follows: Assume complete determinism in the physical (brain-state) series, and a parallelism between it and the phenomenal (mind-state) series. Suppose the parallelism is interrupted so that the subject experiences a phenomenal state different from that which has been invariably correlated with the present brain-state. No “interaction” occurs, so that all the physical laws hold as usual; yet the subject “would surely know” that he was having the one experience rather than the other. Thus, if an external observer informed him as to the current state of his brain, he would be “aware” that the usual correspondence had broken down. Such a hypothetical failure of isomorphism, even if in fact it never occurs, does not involve a contradiction. This possibility renders any “identity” of the neural and phenomenal unacceptable.

I wish to show that this argument involves certain rather paradoxical consequences. For simplicity, suppose there are only two brain-states, G and R. The (hitherto exceptionless) phenomenal accompaniments of these states are mind-states *g* (“experiencing green”) and *r* (“experiencing red”). Causally dependent upon the brain-states G and R are subsequent brain-states G’ (“naming green”) and R’ (“naming red”), and dependent upon these are peripheral-motor events G’’ (“uttering word ‘green’”) and R’’ (“uttering word ‘red’”). The identity view asserts that if an exceptionless regularity holds coordinating *g* and *r* to G and R, the role of the former in the whole law system is indistinguishable from that of the latter, so that empirical identity can be asserted, on the usual grounds. The critic claims that even if the physical sequence continues to be wholly lawful a subject would “know” that he was seeing *r* rather than the usual *g*.

But just what, and how, would such a subject “know”? The physical sequence runs off as usual, Green light → Retinal state for green → G → G’ → G’’. But corresponding to G occurs phenomenal *r* instead of the usual *g*. If no physical laws are violated, what are the consequences? (1) The subject will utter “green” although he “knows” he is seeing red. (2) If asked, “You said ‘green,’ did you mean to say ‘red’?” he will answer “No, I mean ‘green,’” since replying is a physical event and the physical series continues as usual. (3) He will hear himself say “green” and will not contradict himself by a subsequent remark, since to do this would mean that the usual physical consequences of a state, say, H<sub>G</sub> (brain-state produced by stimulus of own utterance), have been affected by the

substitution of *r* for *g*, contrary to the hypothesis. (4) If asked in a subsequent epistemological discussion, “Do your utterances about color agree with your phenomenal field?” he will say “Yes, of course,” as otherwise the physical sequence etc. (5) If asked by a philosopher, “Is there something you have discovered about epistemology or the mind-body problem, which for some reason you are unable to communicate to us by words or gestures?” he would reply, “No, there is not.”

All this is not merely the familiar behaviorist thesis about the “other one,” for these points apply where *oneself* is the “knowing subject.” What do I “know,” having experienced *r* instead of *g*? If I read the same books, insist that I hold the identity view, argue the same views on epistemology, publish the same opinions, what kind of “knowledge” is this? Could I, for example, “remember” this miracle? I could not say or write anything to suggest it to myself; all obtainable records of my reports would lead me to wonder whether I had not “really seen” *g* as usual (although I could not wonder aloud, nor with sub-vocal speech!). This is certainly a peculiar sort of knowing.