

Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 29 | Issue 1

Article 4

1-1-2012

Oppy on the Argument from Consciousness

J.P. Moreland

Follow this and additional works at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy>

Recommended Citation

Moreland, J.P. (2012) "Oppy on the Argument from Consciousness," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 29 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.

DOI: 10.5840/faithphil20122914

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol29/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers by an authorized editor of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange.

OPPY ON THE ARGUMENT FROM CONSCIOUSNESS

J. P. Moreland

Graham Oppy has launched the most effective criticism to date of an argument for God's existence from the existence of irreducible mental states or their regular correlation with physical states (AC). I seek to undercut Oppy's central defeaters of AC. In particular, I argue, first, that Oppy has not provided successful defeaters against the use of a distinctive form of explanation—personal explanation—employed in premise (3) of AC; second, I expose a confusion on Oppy's part with respect to AC's premise (5), and show that this confusion results in a failure to grasp adequately the dialectical force of (5). As a result, Oppy fails to offer adequate rejoinders to (5), or so I shall argue.

I sometimes hear laypeople express, quite commonsensically, an argument to the effect that since we have minds and mind can't come from matter, there must be a Grand Mind that best explains the existence of our minds. In the last thirty years or so, a small handful of philosophers have advanced this sort of argument in a more rigorous, careful way.¹ And while the argument has been endorsed by some well-known natural theologians,² it has not garnered much attention from critics or those sympathetic to it. A notable exception to this rule is Graham Oppy, who has launched the most effective criticism of the argument to date in conjunction with Swinburne's formulation of it.³ Oppy tends to pepper an argument in his cross hairs with numerous, bullet-like criticisms, and his treatment of the argument from consciousness (hereafter, AC) is no exception to this rule. Fortunately for

¹See Robert Adams, "Flavors, Colors, and God," reprinted in *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology*, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 225–240; Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), chapter 9; *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 183–196; *Is There a God?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 69–94; "The Origin of Consciousness," in *Cosmic Beginnings and Human Ends*, ed. Clifford N. Matthews and Roy Abraham Varghese (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1995), 355–378; J. P. Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God* (New York: Routledge, 2008); "The Argument from Consciousness," in *A Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009), 282–343; *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei: Human Persons and the Failure of Naturalism* (London: S. C. M. Press, 2009), chapter 2.

²See William Lane Craig, "Natural Theology: Introduction," in *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William Lane Craig (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 76–77; Charles Taliaferro, *Evidence and Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 407–409, 437.

³Graham Oppy, *Arguing about Gods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).



my purposes, some of his criticisms target idiosyncrasies in Swinburne's particular formulation of AC,⁴ others I have addressed elsewhere,⁵ and others are generic difficulties with arguments for God and not problems with AC in particular.⁶ Thus, I shall limit my response to Oppy accordingly. In particular, I shall, first, argue that Oppy has not provided successful defeaters against the use of a distinctive form of explanation—personal explanation—employed in premise (3) of AC (see below); second, expose a confusion on Oppy's part with respect to AC's premise (5) (see below); and third, show that this confusion results in a failure to grasp adequately the dialectical force of (5). As a result, Oppy fails to offer adequate rejoinders to (5), or so I shall argue.

The General Structure of AC

AC may be expressed in inductive or deductive form. As an inductive argument, AC may be construed as claiming that given theism and naturalism as the live options fixed by our background beliefs, theism provides a better explanation of consciousness than naturalism and, thus, receives some confirmation from the existence of consciousness.⁷ The inductive form of AC may be expressed along Bayesian lines or construed as an inference to the best explanation.

AC may also be expressed in deductive form, and its advocates will (or should) argue that it is sound and contains premises that are more plausible than their contradictories.⁸ Here is one deductive version of AC:

- (1) Genuinely non-physical mental states exist.
- (2) If genuinely non-physical mental states exist, then there is an explanation for the existence of mental states.
- (3) If there is an explanation for the existence of mental states, then the explanation for the existence of mental states is either a personal explanation or a natural scientific explanation.
- (4) The explanation for the existence of mental states is either a personal or a natural scientific explanation.

⁴I have in mind things such as Swinburne's distinctions among partial, full, complete, ultimate and absolute explanations, and Swinburne's employment of theoretical simplicity.

⁵For example, I have defended property/event dualism as it figures into premise (1) of AC in "The Knowledge Argument Revisited," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 43 (June 2003), 219–228.

⁶For example, Oppy argues against premise (7) below on the grounds that alternatives to orthodox theism—polytheism, a committee of gods, etc.—are plausible. See Oppy, *Arguing about Gods*, 401.

⁷I explain why panpsychism should not be considered a live option alongside naturalism and theism in *Consciousness and the Existence of God*, chapter 6.

⁸Oppy would not accept this characterization of a successful argument. For an analysis and response to Oppy on this point, see William Lane Craig, "Arguing Successfully about God: A Review Essay of Graham Oppy's *Arguing about Gods*," *Philosophia Christi* 10:2 (2008), 435–442.

- (5) The explanation for the existence of mental states is not a natural scientific one.
- (6) Therefore, the explanation is a personal one.
- (7) If the explanation for the existence of mental states is personal, then it is theistic.
- (8) Therefore, the explanation for the existence of mental states is theistic.

Before I address Oppy's arguments, I should say a word about (4). (4) turns on the fact that personal explanation differs from event-causal covering law explanations employed in natural science. Associated with *event* causation is a covering law model of explanation according to which some event (the *explanandum*) is explained by giving a correct deductive or inductive argument for that event. Such an argument contains two features in its *explanans*: a (universal or statistical) law of nature *and* initial causal conditions. Sometimes a covering law explanation is underwritten by some sort of realist model of the entities involved in the causal processes in view.

By contrast, a *personal* explanation (divine or otherwise) of some state of affairs brought about intentionally by a person will employ notions such as the intention of the agent and the relevant power of the agent that was exercised in causing the state of affairs. In general, a personal explanation of some basic result R brought about intentionally by person P where this bringing about of R is a basic action A will cite the intention I of P that R occur and the basic power B that P exercised to bring about R. P, I, and B provide a personal explanation of R: agent P brought about R by exercising power B in order to realize intention I as an irreducibly teleological goal.

Personal Explanation and Premise (3)

Oppy's first argument against personal explanation as a unique explanatory form is that if eliminative materialism is true, personal explanations are not real explanations: "[T]he 'eliminative' view [implies] that, in a properly basic sense, personal explanations are not genuinely explanations at all. . . . [I]f personal explanation is merely apparent—that is, not genuine—explanation, then, on Swinburne's own account, theism will not be a genuinely explanatory theory."⁹

Now eliminative materialism is a highly contentious theory that has not garnered much acceptance, even among physicalist philosophers of mind. Moreover, I have argued elsewhere that our knowledge of the existence and nature of mental states is in accordance with their self-presenting nature and due to direct awareness.¹⁰ Thus, that knowledge is not primarily based on mental states serving as explanatorily useful

⁹Oppy, *Arguing about Gods*, 386.

¹⁰Moreland, "The Knowledge Argument Revisited," 219–228.

posits in, say, folk psychology, that could be undercut by eliminating mental states in favor of the postulates of a more acceptable theory.

However, waiving these points, we can still ask whether Oppy's argument is a successful defeater of personal explanation as employed in (3). I don't think it is. The main justification for premise (3) is the difference between libertarian agency and lawlike event causality. Now, even if we grant for the sake of argument that eliminative materialism is true for finite, conscious beings, a defense of (3) requires only a *concept* of libertarian agency and personal explanation, even if we grant a physical, event-causal theory of action for, say, human acts. Indeed, most theists take God to be a libertarian agent who exemplifies the mental properties relevant to agency, so whether or not humans are such agents or have such mental states is irrelevant. If we have such a clear conception of personal explanation, then even if human acts do not fall under it, under the right circumstances, it could be argued that a form of explanation clearly available to us is now to be employed. What those circumstances are and whether they obtain are more centrally related to premises (2) and (5) of AC and not (3), so I need not go into them in detail here. For example, someone may be squeamish about a vicious infinite regress here and believe that the notion of first-moving active power entailed by Swinburnian personal explanation is the only fitting stopping place for such a regress. Or one may think that personal explanation is an essential component of a successful *kalam* cosmological argument, and go on to employ it here regarding consciousness. What those circumstances are need not concern us further because enough has been said to refute Oppy's argument against (3).

It could be responded that if we grant eliminative materialism for the sake of argument, then there just are no conscious properties/events that need to be explained. But, again, this would be a problem with the explanandum in (1), not with the personal explanans in (3). Obviously, if mental events do not exist, AC is a non-starter and its advocate will need to defend property/event dualism. Our task here is to defend personal explanation as employed in (3).

Oppy's second argument is raised against Swinburne's attempt to defend the irreducibility of personal to scientific event-event causation by presenting a case of causal deviancy in which a person in an audience intends to get the speaker's attention, and this intent causes him to fidget which, in turn, does get the speaker's attention.¹¹ By contrast, Oppy argues that such reducibility is quite plausible. In this context, note that what Oppy claims is reducible is not mental states to physical states, though he may, indeed, believe such is possible. Rather, Oppy has in view the reduction of personal explanation and intentional action to event-causal explanation and a causal theory of action. Swinburne's point is that in such cases, an event causal theory of action is satisfied, but the act is not an intentional one; thus, intentional action cannot be reduced to event-event

¹¹Oppy, *Arguing about Gods*, 387.

causation nor can personal explanation be reduced to scientific explanation. Oppy's response is that Swinburne is correct to see the fidgeter as failing to exhibit intentional action, but Swinburne cites the wrong reason for the failure. Oppy's argument here is abridged and opaque, but I think he has something like this in mind. A causal theory of action will say that the fidgeter's act was not an intentional one because it will employ a total and not partial explanation of the mental cause of action, and in this case, there are mental causes of his fidgeting besides the desire to be noticed that are irrelevant to the intentional action to be noticed (e.g., the fidgeter's lack of self-worth) and there is an absence of mental states relevant to making the act an intentional one (e.g., the belief that by fidgeting, the person will be noticed by the speaker). Thus, Swinburne's example does not undercut the idea that personal explanation can be reduced to scientific explanation.

I have two responses to Oppy's counterargument. First, he is confused about the nature of type reduction and, as a result, draws the wrong conclusion from his argument. In type reduction (e.g., painfulness is C-fiber firing) there are two non-synonymous, co-referring terms/concepts. In such reductions, the intentional object of the reductively targeted term or concept is identified with the intentional object of the favored term. In such cases, the intentional "objects" are reduced, but not the referring terms/concepts. Regarding the latter, there is actually a replacement. For example, after reduction it is believed that there is nothing that accurately corresponds to the dualist pre-reductive concept of pain, and the nature of pain turns out to be accurately captured by "being a C-fiber firing." Thus, reduction occurs with respect to the intentional object, and a type of replacement occurs with respect to the co-referring concepts.

This point is grasped by sophisticated attempts to reduce libertarian agency to an event-causal sequence. For example, John Bishop argues that there are no such things as libertarian types of acts and, accordingly, reduces all such types of acts along event-causal lines.¹² But when it comes to the concept of libertarian action, he does not reduce it to the concept of event-causal action. Instead, he offers a concept of the latter that is close to the former, and recommends that we eliminate the concept of libertarian action in favor of his alternative.

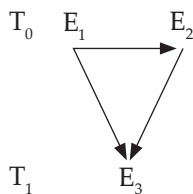
Now, explanations are conceptual entities. Thus, even if human intentional actions are identified with relevant event-causal chains, it does not follow that the concept of personal explanation has been analyzed into the concept of an event-causal scientific explanation. We simply have two different concepts that co-refer in the case of human action, along with the replacement of the former, less preferable concept with the latter, more accurate concept. But, then, we are back to eliminativism regarding the concept of personal explanation, and my criticisms above would be relevant for defeating this move.

¹²John Bishop, *Natural Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Second, it is far from clear that Oppy's reason for the failure of the fidgeter's act to be an intentional one is preferable to Swinburne's. In general, it seems that a causal chain from event e_1 to e_2 could always be deviant. Thus, even if we take into account the "complete" set of prior mental states including all and only those relevant to the fidgeter's act, these could still produce the act in the wrong way and, thus, fail to satisfy the necessary conditions for being an intentional act. For a libertarian like Swinburne, the issue here is not the "completeness" or lack thereof of the relevant prior mental state, but the way it figures into the act. For Swinburne, an intentional act is caused by the agent, not his prior mental states which are, instead, the reason for acting.

Suppose one were to respond that in certain basic actions between a basic intent and a basic result, there just is no intermediate event and, so, no possibility of causal deviancy. In this case, a reduction of intentional to event-causal action is possible. Perhaps, it could be argued, success here could fund the hope that with more work, a similar reduction will be forthcoming with respect to non-basic actions constituted by action plans.

Granting for the sake of argument that there are such basic actions with no intermediate events, I still do not think the reduction works because it is still possible to employ simultaneous causation to generate a relevant deviant causal factor. Modifying a recent discussion of simultaneous causation by E. J. Lowe,¹³ consider the following diagram:



In this case E_1 at time T_0 partially and directly causes E_3 at T_1 and partially and indirectly causes E_3 though simultaneously causing E_2 at T_0 . Here, the occurrence of E_3 is counterfactually dependent on each causal route. Let E_1 and E_2 be the mental states relevant to the basic action result E_3 and let the chain from E_1 to E_3 via E_2 be deviant. The occurrence of E_3 seems to be unintentional because it is partially brought about by a deviant chain and not solely by the direct action of the relevant mental state. Such a scenario seems coherent and possible, and unless it can be shown to be otherwise, it seems to provide a counterexample to the reduction of basic actions to (scientific) event-causal sequences.

¹³See E. J. Lowe, *Personal Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 48–51. Lowe's discussion involved three causal chains, not just two, because he is interested in addressing a version of physical causal closure. He also has it that the relevant simultaneous cause is a mental one, but I see no reason to limit simultaneous causation in this way. If the reader disagrees, then just use an evil demon for the simultaneous cause.

I conclude that Oppy has not provided sufficient defeaters to warrant the rejection of personal explanation as employed in premise (3).¹⁴

Confusion about the Concept of "Natural" in Premise (5)

There are two different meanings to "natural" relevant to (5). Oppy seems to employ the wrong sense. Not only is it wrong, but of the two, it is relatively anemic. As a result, Oppy fails to appreciate the strength of AC's employment of the existence of mental states as a defeater for naturalism and confirmation of theism. Thus, his own counterarguments to (5) do not have the dialectical force Oppy takes them to have.

What are the two different meanings to "natural"? The first one is relatively easy to characterize: "natural" means "regular or normal (usual)." In this sense, to say that mental states are natural is to say simply that they are regularly correlated with physical states or that they occur normally, perhaps in lawlike ways. According to the second definition, "natural" means "not surprising or puzzling, at home and not odd." In this sense, to say that mental states are natural is to say their appearance is not surprising or odd, but rather quite at home, given the rest of a naturalist creation story (the Grand Story) and ontology.¹⁵

Relatively speaking, the former sense is anemic and it is the one employed by Oppy. However, advocates of AC utilize the more robust, latter sense.¹⁶ Before I demonstrate my claim about Oppy, however, the second sense needs a bit more clarification, and given present concerns, let us limit our discussion to naturalism as a rival to theism. Note that the second sense has an epistemic/explanatory component and an ontological component, viz., "surprising, not puzzling" and "at home, not odd," respectively.

Regarding the naturalist Grand Story, scientific theories that are paradigm cases of epistemic/explanatory success (e.g., the atomic theory of matter, evolutionary biology) employ combinatorial modes of explanation. Thus any process that constitutes the Grand Story and any entity in the naturalist ontology should exhibit an ontological structure analyzable in terms that are isomorphic with such modes of explanation. Perhaps more than anyone, Colin McGinn has defended this idea along with what

¹⁴Oppy does, however, raise an effective objection to a passage on page 46 of Swinburne's 1979 edition of *The Existence of God* (New York: Oxford University Press 1979; rev. 2004). Swinburne argues that two full explanations of some explanandum E imply overdetermination because each is necessary and sufficient to explain E. Oppy correctly shows that in fact, and even on Swinburne's own account, overdetermination requires only that the two competing causal factors are each sufficient, not necessary and sufficient. Interestingly, in the 2004, second (revised) edition of *The Existence of God*, the offending passage has been removed (see p. 46).

¹⁵The Grand Story amounts to an etiological account of how all entities whatsoever have come to be, told in terms of an event causal story and combinatorial processes described in natural scientific terms with a central role given to the atomic theory of matter and evolutionary biology. The Grand Story eschews agent causation and irreducible teleology.

¹⁶This is the sense I use in my defenses of AC. For Swinburne, see *The Existence of God*, 1979 edition, 52, 170–174; in the revised 2004 edition, see 204–209.

he takes it to entail, viz., the inability of naturalism to explain genuinely unique, simple emergent properties:

Can we gain any deeper insight into what makes the problem of consciousness run against the grain of our thinking? Are our modes of theorizing about the world of the wrong shape to extend to the nature of mind? I think we can discern a characteristic structure possessed by successful scientific theories, a structure that is unsuitable for explaining consciousness. . . . Is there a "grammar" to science that fits the physical world but becomes shaky when applied to the mental world? Perhaps the most basic aspect of thought is the operation of *combination*. This is the way in which we think of complex entities as resulting from the arrangement of simpler parts. There are three aspects to this basic idea: the atoms we start with, the laws we use to combine them, and the resulting complexes. . . . I think it is clear that this mode of understanding is central to what we think of as scientific theory; our scientific faculty involves representing the world in this combinatorial style.¹⁷

Thus, given the Grand Story, the explanatory aspect of "natural" implies that structural properties (being water, methane) are not surprising or puzzling, whereas genuinely emergent ones (secondary qualities, mental properties) are.

The second component of "natural" is straightforwardly ontological: "at home, not odd." In this sense, the naturalness of a postulated entity is a function of its relationship to the ontology of the overall theory of which it is a part. The types of entities postulated, along with the sorts of properties they possess and the relations into which they enter, should be at home with other entities in the theory, and, in this sense, be natural for the theory. Some entity (particular thing, process, property, or relation) *e* is natural for a theory *T* just in case either *e* is a central, core entity of *T* or *e* bears a relevant similarity to central, core entities in *e*'s category within *T*. If *e* is in a category such as substance, force, property, event, relation, or cause, *e* should bear a relevant similarity to other entities of *T* in that category. This is a formal definition and the material content given to it will depend on the theory in question. The basic entities constitutive of the Grand Story provide the material content for naturalism, viz., the particulars, properties, relations and laws that characterize the entities of microphysics, their combinatorial processes, and the structural entities that result. From the time of Boyle to the present, these entities have been construed as bereft of secondary qualities or mental properties.

It is worth pointing out that, given rivals *R* and *S*, the postulation of *e* in *R* is *ad hoc* and question-begging against advocates of *S* if *e* bears a relevant similarity to the appropriate entities in *S*, and in this sense is "at home" in *S*, but fails to bear this relevant similarity to the appropriate entities in *R*.¹⁸

¹⁷Collin McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 55–56. Cf. 54–62, 90, 95.

¹⁸For example, suppose theory *S* explains phenomena in terms of discrete corpuscles and actions by contact, while *R* uses continuous waves to explain phenomena. If some phenomenon *x* were best explained in corpuscularian categories, it would be *ad hoc* and

The notion of “being *ad hoc*” is notoriously difficult to specify precisely. It is usually characterized as an intellectually inappropriate adjustment of a theory whose sole epistemic justification is to save the theory from falsification. Such an adjustment involves adding a new supposition to a theory not already implied by its other features. In the context of evaluating rivals *R* and *S*, the principle just mentioned provides a sufficient condition for the postulation of *e* to be *ad hoc* and question-begging.

The issue of naturalness is relevant to theory assessment between rivals in that it provides a criterion for advocates of a theory to claim that their rivals have begged the question against them or adjusted their theory in an inappropriate, *ad hoc* way. And though this need not be the case, naturalness can be related to the claim that some entity is basic and need only be correlated with other entities: Naturalness can provide a means of deciding the relative merits of accepting theory *R*, which depicts phenomenon *e* as basic, vs. embracing *S*, which takes *e* to be explainable in more basic terms. If *e* is natural in *S* but not in *R*, it will be difficult for advocates of *R* to justify the bald assertion that *e* is basic in *R* and that all proponents of *R* need to do is describe *e* and correlate it with other phenomena in *R* as opposed to explaining *e*. Such a claim by advocates of *R* will be even more problematic if *S* provides an explanation for *e*.¹⁹

As noted above, Oppy employs “regular or normal” for “natural.” I say this for three reasons: First, in rebutting Swinburne’s argument that natural scientific laws cannot explain the regular connections between enormously qualitatively different kinds of events, Oppy claims that we regularly find adequate scientific accounts of such different kinds of events in the macro and micro worlds that are quite natural, indeed. And he offers, as an example, explanations of the macro-phenomenon of heat conductivity in an iron bar in terms of the motion and kinetic energy of the bar’s microscopic parts.²⁰ Oppy’s analogy is a bad one if “natural” means “not surprising or puzzling, at home and not odd,” because, given the reductive analysis of heat conductivity to the micro-phenomenon of molecular vibration (in solids) and translational motion and collisions (in liquids and gases), irreducible mental states are clearly surprising and odd with respect to brain states in a way that heat conductivity is not with respect to molecular vibration.

question-begging for advocates of *R* simply to adjust their entities to take on particle properties in the case of *x*. Such properties would not bear a relevant similarity to other entities in *R* and would be more natural and at home in *S*.

¹⁹For example, suppose that *R* is Neo-Darwinism and *S* is a version of punctuated equilibrium theory. Simply for the sake of illustration, suppose further that *R* depicts evolutionary transitions from one species to another to involve running through a series of incrementally different transitional forms except for some specific transition *e* which is taken as a basic phenomenon, say, the discrete jump from amphibians to reptiles. *S* pictures evolutionary transitions in general, including *e*, as evolutionary jumps to be explained in certain ways that constitute *S*. In this case, given the presence of *S*, it would be hard for advocates of *R* to claim that their treatment of *e* is adequate against *S*. Phenomenon *e* clearly counts in favor of *S* over against *R*.

²⁰Oppy, *Arguing about Gods*, 399.

However, if “natural” means “regular,” then both types of correlations are natural in that they occur regularly, and his analogy goes through. Given that in a number of places, Oppy recommends reductive analyses of mental states, the analogy between mental-physical event correlation and heat conductivity-micro-vibratory phenomena becomes intelligible: Both are correlated because one phenomenon is reducible to the other.

My second reason for thinking that Oppy is using ‘natural’ in the ‘regular or normal’ sense is based on the following passage:

If it is hard to see how there can be simple, natural connections between mental states and brain states, then it is hard to see how there can be a simple, ‘natural’ way for an orthodoxly conceived monotheistic god to establish connections between mental states and brain states. Given the alleged difficulties that confront the materialist hypothesis that there are simple and natural connections between mental states and brain states, surely there are equally considerable difficulties that confront the contention that it is simple and natural to suppose that there is an orthodoxly conceived monotheistic god that brings it about that there are connections between mental states and brain states.²¹

This passage makes perfect sense if “natural” means “regular or normal.” Moreover, the context of this passage resides in Oppy’s response to Swinburne’s challenge “to establish natural, law-like connections between mental events and brain events,”²² and Swinburne clearly employs “natural” here to mean “regular.” Finally, Oppy’s remarks do not make sense if “natural” means “not surprising, at home, not odd.” On this reading, given theism, there is nothing unnatural (surprising, not at home, odd) about mental states or their natural (regular, usual) correlation with brain states, since the states and their correlations bear a relevant similarity to other entities in a theistic ontology and are explanatory within the resources of divine omnipotence. In this case, there is no difficulty with these being “natural” (not surprising, at home, not odd) given orthodox monotheism, contrary to what Oppy claims. Thus, it is more charitable to interpret “natural” as “regular or normal.”

Here is my third reason for interpreting “natural” as I do: In rebutting Swinburne’s argument that there are serious difficulties in seeing the connection between mental and brain states as a natural one, Oppy says this: “Chalmers (1996) provides a nice example of a theory in which there are simple, natural connections between phenomenal states and physical states, even though there is no, even in-principle, reduction of the one to the other.”²³ However, Chalmers’s approach is a version of panpsychism, and it is “natural” in only two senses: it is not theistic and it establishes “regular and normal” connections between the relevant states. But it is not natural in the sense that panpsychist mental entities are odd and not

²¹Ibid., 400.

²²Ibid., 398.

²³Ibid., 399.

at home in a physicalist, naturalist ontology, nor can their existence be adequately explained by the Grand Story with its combinatorial processes, a point that Chalmers acknowledges.²⁴ In fact, in what may be the most authoritative presentation and defense of panpsychism in recent years, David Skirbina frankly notes that “throughout history, panpsychism has, at almost every point, served as an antipode” to naturalism precisely because mental entities are odd and not at home in the naturalist ontological depiction of matter as brute, mechanical stuff.²⁵

Oppy’s use of “natural” is dialectically significant. It leads him to underestimate the difficulty that the existence of mental states (or their regular correlation with brain states) presents to naturalism as stated in premise (5), and to overestimate the ease with which naturalism can embrace and explain the irreducibly mental. These inaccurate estimates occur in two places.

The first resides in Oppy’s defeater of (5) which suggests that a naturalistic evolutionary explanation of mental correlations is available to the naturalist.²⁶ Now if Oppy is after regular correlations here, then given the existence of mental states and certain assumptions about their causal relation to brain states on the one hand, and environmental inputs and outputs on the other, an evolutionary explanation is, indeed, readily available in terms of the reproductive advantage certain correlations confer on the organisms that exhibit them. However, if the issue is one of explaining the origin of mental states in the first place, given the naturalist ontology and the simple rearrangement of parts in the atomic theory of matter and the processes of mutation, genetic drift, and so forth, then no such evolutionary explanation will be forthcoming. Such an explanation is the wrong kind of explanation altogether. It may be apt for explaining the origin of certain new relational structures, but it is singularly inadequate to explain the origin of *sui generis*, new, simple emergent properties by way of the evolutionary rearrangement of parts bereft even of the potentiality for the mental. This second task is more severe, and it is hardly addressed by Oppy’s brief appeal to evolutionary explanation.

The second inaccurate estimate resides in Oppy’s failure to assess accurately the expectedness of mental entities given naturalism and background knowledge: $P(e/\neg h \& k)$ where e =the existence of mental states, $\neg h$ =naturalism (technically, it is the negation of theism, but we can assume that theism and naturalism are the only live options for present purposes), and k =background knowledge. Basically, Oppy rests content to rebut Swinburne’s arguments that $P(e/\neg h \& k)$ is much lower than $P(e/h \& k)$ and, having done that in his mind, to conclude that there is no reason to see the former as lower than the latter. Now, in spite of how things go with

²⁴David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 106–108, 115, 121–122, 125, 126–129, 152–153, 170, 293–301, 305.

²⁵David Skirbina, *Panpsychism in the West* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 4.

²⁶Oppy, *Arguing about Gods*, 396.

Swinburne's reasons for this conclusion, I have already given a reason, in terms of the basic ontology of naturalism and the combinatorial processes constitutive of the Grand Story, for thinking that $P(e/\neg h \& k)$ is low indeed, given the proper characterization of "natural."

Furthermore, recall that in the early days of emergentism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, emergent properties were characterized epistemically, viz., as those which were unpredictable, even from a God's-eye perspective, from a complete knowledge of the subvenient base. That subvenient base provided no explanatory or predictive grounds for emergent properties precisely as emergent entities. Now it makes no difference for the relevance of this point that today we construe emergent properties ontologically and not epistemically. Even on the ontological construal, emergent properties are completely *sui generis* relative to the entities and processes at the subvenient base. In this regard, the following characterization by Timothy O'Connor may be taken as canonical:

An emergent property of type E will appear only in physical systems achieving some specific threshold of organized complexity. From an empirical point of view, this threshold will be arbitrary, one that would not be anticipated by a theorist whose understanding of the world was derived from theories developed entirely from observations of physical systems below the requisite complexity. In optimal circumstances, such a theorist would come to recognize the locally determinative interactive dispositions of basic physical entities. Hidden from his view, however, would be the tendency . . . to generate an emergent state.²⁷

For these reasons, $P(e/\neg h \& k)$ is so low as to approximate zero. And in light of my discussion earlier about how the presence of a rival affects the dialectical situation, it is question-begging and *ad hoc* for Oppy simply to label the existence of mental states (or their correlations with physical states) as a basic, naturalistic fact in need of no explanation.

At this point, someone may advance the following counterargument: There is reason to think that $P(e/\neg h \& k)$ is not low. Suppose we let *e* be the property of wetness and $\neg h$ be the hypothesis of H_2O . Then while *e* is totally unexpected, it is also physically necessary and so highly probable. The same could be said for mental properties and events.

In response, the first thing to note is Timothy O'Connor's point that emergent properties must be shown to arise by way of causal necessitation from a micro-physical base if we are to "render emergent phenomena naturalistically explicable."²⁸ Among his reasons for this claim is the assertion that if the link between micro-base and emergent properties is a contingent one, then the only explanation for the existence and constancy of the link is a theistic explanation.²⁹

²⁷Timothy O'Connor and Hong Yu Wong, "The Metaphysics of Emergence," *Nous* 39 (2005), 665–666.

²⁸Timothy O'Connor, *Persons and Causes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 112.

²⁹*Ibid.*, n8, 70–71

Second, setting aside reductive analyses of secondary qualities (such analyses render secondary qualities a bad analogy with mental properties/events as employed in AC and would be equivalent to denying premise [1]), since the mechanical philosophy of Galileo, Locke, and others, secondary qualities have been ubiquitously construed as contingently related to the relevant physical states. This can be seen by the fact that, though it has (rightly) fallen on hard times these days, for centuries the adjectival sense datum theory of perception was widely adopted in Western thought. On this view, secondary qualities (wetness, being red) could be lifted out of the physical object in the mind-independent world without perturbing that object, and placed in the mind as characteristics of sensation. This move entails that secondary qualities are not features of objects that are necessitated by their micro-bases; thus, even if we leave secondary qualities in objects, they are still contingently related to the objects' physical aspects. Moreover, just as we have very strong intuitions that zombie, disembodied, and inverted qualia worlds are possible, even within the range of worlds physically and relevantly similar to the actual world, so we have the same intuitions about secondary qualities (redness could have been correlated with a different wavelength, etc.). These intuitions are present whether we leave irreducible secondary qualities in the external objects themselves or place them in the mind.

Finally, along with mental and normative properties, secondary qualities are paradigm cases of *sui generis* new kinds of properties not characteristic of the micro-physical world. As such, it was customary in the early days of the mechanical philosophy to explain the existence and regular correlation of the instantiation of secondary qualities and physical properties as being the result of "God's good pleasure." Thus, the connections between secondary qualities and their correlated physical bases are contingent and have, themselves, been used in an argument for God in a way analogous to AC.

Space considerations forbid me from doing much here by way of estimating $P(e/h\&k)$ except to note one thing: given the proper understanding of "natural," it is clear that finite mental states are ontologically natural (they bear a relevant similarity to the core entities in the theistic ontology, viz., God's mental states) and explanatorily natural (their appearance is within the powers of Divine omnipotence). Given further reasons for why God would bring about finite conscious beings, $P(e/h\&k)$ is nowhere near as low as $P(e/\neg h\&k)$ which approaches zero. At least that is what the advocate of AC will argue.

Oppy's misconstrual of "natural," then, results in a mistaken assessment of $P(e/\neg h\&k)$, especially in relation to $P(e/h\&k)$. But his misconstrual also results in Oppy's identification of the wrong factor as the key one for a Bayesian assessment of AC. To see this, recall that:

$$\frac{P(h/e\&k)}{P(\neg h/e\&k)} = \frac{P(h)}{P(\neg h)} \times \frac{P(e/h\&k)}{P(e/\neg h\&k)}$$

Oppy claims that the key probability for AC is the prior probability of theism (and, I assume, the ratio of which it is a part). According to Oppy, given that this is not high, Swinburne's inductive arguments for orthodox monotheism "are in serious trouble."³⁰ Oppy reaches this conclusion before he begins to consider the expectedness of mental states on naturalism and theism, though I am certain that he takes comfort in this conclusion based on his later claim about the parity of the estimates regarding expectedness. Now, clearly, a low prior probability of theism does not by itself undercut AC. Even if that probability is low, it could be offset by an extremely low $P(e/\neg h \& k)$ which would, in turn, make the key ratio be $P(e/h \& k)$ over $P(e/\neg h \& k)$. And that is what an advocate of AC should argue, for even if $P(h)$ and $P(e/h \& k)$ are somewhat low, the really low factor is $P(e/\neg h \& k)$ which, as I said above, approximates zero.

My purpose has not been to argue for AC, but to respond to Oppy's main criticisms of it. And while I cannot argue the point here, it seems that the best move for Oppy to make is to reject (1) in favor of some version of strict physicalism, an option he regularly considers throughout his essay. For some, this move will be obvious and it is a small price to pay. For others, it is fodder for a *reductio* against naturalism.³¹

Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

³⁰Oppy, *Arguing about Gods*, 395.

³¹I wish to thank William Lane Craig, Thomas Flint and an anonymous referee for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.