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978-1-107-03787-8 - Knowledge, Thought, and the Case for Dualism

Richard Fumerton

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AND THE CASE FOR DUALISM

The relationship between mind and matter, mental states and physical states, has occupied the attention of philosophers for thousands of years. Richard Fumerton's primary concern is the knowledge argument for dualism – an argument that proceeds from the idea that we can know truths about our existence and our mental states without knowing any truths about the physical world. This view has come under relentless criticism, but here Fumerton makes a powerful case for its rehabilitation, demonstrating clearly the importance of its interconnections with a wide range of other controversies within philosophy. Fumerton analyzes philosophical views about the nature of thought and the relation of those views to arguments for dualism, and investigates the connection between a traditional form of foundationalism about knowledge, and a foundationalist view about thought that underlies traditional arguments for dualism. His book will be of great interest to those studying epistemology and the philosophy of mind.

RICHARD FUMERTON is the F. Wendell Miller Professor of Philosophy at the University of Iowa. His most recent publications include *Realism and the Correspondence Theory of Truth* (2002), *Epistemology* (2006), and *The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill* (with Wendy Donner, 2009).

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For Alex and Charlie

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Preface

The task of trying to say something interesting and original about the mind/body issue is daunting to say the least. Furthermore, the issues have become more and more complex as it becomes painfully clear that to settle some of the most fundamental issues in the philosophy of mind, one must reach conclusions on a host of other difficult and fundamental controversies that arise in different, though interrelated, areas of philosophy. These areas include, but are not limited to, epistemology, general metaphysics (including the metaphysics of property exemplification), philosophy of language (particularly those issues concerning intentionality that spill over into the philosophy of mind), and philosophy of science. This relatively short book cannot possibly hope to settle all of the controversies that are relevant to an assessment of various forms of dualism. In fact, I'm convinced that it is only a lifetime of work in all of the relevant areas of philosophy that could be construed as a convincing case for the positions that will be discussed in the book.

In what follows I'm interested primarily in the plausibility of so-called knowledge arguments for property dualism. But even here I realize that to fully defend the arguments I offer, I would need to more fully defend some of the epistemological premises I bring to the table. In a number of places I engage in the admittedly annoying practice of referring my reader to other works in which I have tried to provide more complete defenses of premises on which I rely. If the reader hasn't read

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those other works and has no particular inclination to do so, I still hope that the following discussion will be interesting if thought of as the defense of a very complex *conditional*. Indeed, I'm most interested in figuring out what views in the philosophy of mind one should adopt if one accepts the rather controversial epistemological positions I have been defending for several decades. In short, I am interested in exploring the implications of a radical empiricist and internalist foundationalism, and an equally radical content internalism, for the philosophy of mind.

One might initially suppose that the conditional won't be that interesting if the antecedent is loaded up in the way described above. But such a conclusion is premature. Indeed, as Russell, Maxwell, Chalmers, and Stoljar have argued, it *may* be that views most closely associated with traditional dualism offer at least conceptual room for the physicalist. And this is one of the most important issues to be addressed in what follows.

There is no getting around the fact that the issues involved are complex. But I'm not sure they need to be quite as complicated as some of the philosophical writing on this topic makes them. I try hard to make the material in this book as accessible as I can. I want the book to be interesting (and no doubt controversial) to the professional philosopher, but readable and thought-provoking for the interested undergraduate. A price for taking this approach is that I do not discuss extensively the voluminous literature on all of the topics I address.

There are so many people I should thank for the many philosophical discussions that have influenced my thought on these matters. They include countless colleagues and students – too many to thank individually. But I should probably begin by expressing my appreciation to the late Grover Maxwell for including me in a discussion group when I visited the

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University of Minnesota some thirty years ago. Maxwell was the paradigm of a philosopher who was willing to go wherever argument led him. While he is still perhaps most famous for his (1962) influential paper attacking the idea that there is a clear observation/theoretical distinction, he noted in a footnote (ft. 5) to that paper that there is an extreme form of foundationalism that might put one in a better position to argue for a hard and fast distinction between foundational (observational) knowledge and inferred (theoretical) knowledge. To his great credit he continued to think about that idea and, inspired by Russell and Kripke, started to explore (1978) the very view that he set aside in his earlier work as too extreme.

I learned how to do philosophy at Brown University, and I will always be grateful to Chisholm, Sosa, and Van Cleve for the education I received and the examples they set for their students. My views might be wrong, but I always hope that the conclusions I reach and the arguments I give are relatively clear. At Iowa I have learned a great deal and enjoyed discussion with all of my colleagues, but in topics related to the intersections of epistemology with philosophy of mind I should particularly thank Gustav Bergmann, Laird Addis, Panayot Butchvarov, Philip Cummins, Diane Jeske, Gregory Landini, and Evan Fales. My former student John DePoe looked carefully at an early draft of the manuscript and his questions and comments were extremely helpful. Seth Jones helped me enormously working with me on the index and proofreading the manuscript. I also want to thank anonymous referees who gave me all sorts of invaluable advice and criticism.

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