Objections to McGinn's Cognitive Closure Argument

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Academic Year 2016/17

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1. Introduction

Contemporary neuroscience can directly monitor brain activity and we have certainly come far since ancient philosophers or Rene Descartes who tried to solve the mind-body problem. But we still do not seem to be able to explain how exactly consciousness emerges from human neurophysiology, if we assume the mind-body relation is of natural kind, that is. The task sounds simple, we ought to find a part of human body, presumably located in the brain, which gives rise to consciousness and serves as a link between our physical selves and our mental selves. The elusive nature of a seemingly simple solution to that problem is what drives philosophers either to mysterious conclusions of a metaphysical kind that would deny consciousness could be explained in terms of natural science, or to ever more thorough empirical investigation by those who believe natural sciences could ultimately provide a solution.

An interesting approach that seems to avoid pitfalls of both sides is proposed by Colin McGinn in his paper *Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?*[1] He develops a specific type of mysterianism often called new mysterianism that is based on the presupposition that the source of consciousness is in fact physical and explainable by natural science. It retains the mysterious character by further claiming that even given such presupposition, grasping consciousness is beyond limits of human cognitive capacities and we will in fact never be able to comprehend it fully, therefore it would remain indefinitely mysterious.

In this paper, I will argue McGinn is mistaken in his claim that humans are necessarily unable to ever comprehend the solution to the mind-body problem.

Firstly, I will explain McGinn's position as argued in the paper mentioned in more detail. His stance is seminal and acquaintance with his argument for cognitive closure with respect to the mind-body link of utmost importance for this paper. In the next section I will present an objection to McGinn's argument suggested by Uriah Kriegel who finds the argumentation questionable in terms of

[1] McGinn, 1989.

logical coherence based on the logic of questions and the way human language functions.[2] Thirdly, I will present a response to Kriegel by Erhan Demircioglu who is able to form a counterexample to Kriegel's theory of problem understanding and prove its main argument problematic in several ways which heavily undermines Kriegel's objection to McGinn.[3] I agree with Demircioglu's critique of Kriegel's paper, however I believe the whole debate presented in this paper is on the wrong track, and wish to address the modality of McGinn's position. Thus, I will finally suggest a wholly different approach to showing why McGinn was mistaken in his predictions about the possibility of humans understanding the solution to the mind-body problem.

2. McGinn

Colin McGinn has a fine way of settling some major differences between naturalist and mysterian theories. His favoured approach is naturalistic, and his paper is based on the assumption that the origin of consciousness is located physically and naturally in the brain. What he believes however, is that we are currently unable and will always be unable to recognize what part of the brain accounts for consciousness, and this is what makes his position mysterian.[4] The fact that humans will never understand what physical property of the brain gives rise to consciousness is what makes the mind-body connection with respect to consciousness mysterious, even though it is assumed to be fully natural and physical.

In line with his naturalistic tendencies, in his outline of cognitive closure McGinn introduces property P. This property is a natural property of human brains that would account for consciousness should we have access to it. However, the point of cognitive closure is that human minds, according to McGinn, lack the concept-forming procedures to grasp P. However, he does not take this to imply that P does not exist, it is a completely ordinary property of our physical brains, with the caveat that we simply cannot understand it. McGinn, therefore, has to prove that there exists a physical property

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[2] Kriegel, 2003.

[3] Demircioglu, 2016.

[4] McGinn, 1989, p. 350.

in our brains that bears consciousness in a non-mysterious way and that the full understanding of that property lies beyond limits of our knowledge. Obviously, to do so we also have to draw some borders of our attainable knowledge so as to show that human minds must necessarily be cognitively closed with respect to consciousness. The first half of the proof should already be clear from McGinn's naturalistic standpoint and is easily explained by declining any supernatural or mysterious explanation of consciousness. Doing so, it seems undeniable that there is some natural property in the brain that serves as a connection between our brains and our minds. However, the second part of his proof, the goal of which is to define borders of our knowledge and show that property P lies beyond them is more detailed and should be considered closely.

A big part of our knowledge obviously stems from our perceptive sensibilities. So, when we wish to know something about an object such as brain, we can turn to our perception and observe it in order to draw some knowledge. Then there is knowledge within limits of our cognitive capacities that is not instantiated through perception of the outer world, but through deeply individual and personal account of our own consciousness, called introspection. These two faculties, of perception and introspection, McGinn takes to draw the limits of human knowledge. As explained in his paper "There seem to be two possible avenues open to us in our aspiration to identify P: we could try to get to P by investigating consciousness directly, or we could look to the study of the brain for P" (McGinn, 1989, p. 354). That is, anything not reachable by our introspection or perception is placed beyond limits of our knowledge and we are cognitively closed to it meaning we will never be able to fully comprehend it. The argument stands that if we necessarily cannot account for the relation of our consciousness and the natural world using introspection and we necessarily cannot account for the same relation using our perception, therefore we necessarily cannot know the relation of our consciousness and natural world. To better understand this line of argumentation I am attributing to McGinn, please refer to Figure 1 which reads as follows: (1) if it is necessary that introspection cannot explain the relation between consciousness and the natural world, and (2) it is necessary that perception cannot explain the relation between consciousness and the natural world, therefore we necessarily cannot have the full knowledge about the relation of consciousness and the natural world.

$$\Box \neg I(R(C, NW))$$

$$\Box \neg P(R(C, NW))$$

$$\therefore \Box \neg K(R(C, NW))$$

Figure 1, McGinn's argument for the relation of consciousness and natural world with respect to the limits of our knowledge[5]

As property P in itself entails the relation between our consciousness and the natural world this argument can be tested by trying to understand property P by introspection and perception respectively to see whether the conclusion follows logically. Using introspection, we can know facts inaccessible to our perception and we use them to tap immediately into our consciousness. However, McGinn remarks that it seems to be pointless using introspection in attempting to understand and explain P because we assumed that P is a natural and physical property of our brain. By relying solely on introspection, we necessarily cannot grasp P because our introspection does not give us full access to its physical connection to our brain.[6] I think that this is a persuasive argument, and thus I take thus that the first premise of McGinn's argument is therefore true.

The second premise in McGinn's argument concerns the faculty of perception, and it would require us to perceptively find and explain P. This is something one would expect neuroscientists to accomplish by investigating the brain in hope of finding that natural and physical property that connects our consciousness and our brain. Employing perception to find a certain property of our brain would presumably mostly involve seeing that property, but that is problematic in a sense that there seems to be no way for us to see conscious states or consequently the point where they connect with our brain. Our perceptive senses are tuned to perceive the outer world in spatial terms, but cannot attribute conscious states to the brain spatially.[7] The idea that contemporary science can

[5] R = relation, C = consciousness, NW = natural world, I = introspection P = perception, K = knowledge.

[6] McGinn, 1989, p. 354-355.

[7] McGinn, 1989, p. 356-357.

seemingly always break objects into smaller parts and analyse them on a deeper level does not seem to apply to consciousness and we cannot expect to fragment the brain into ever smaller pieces until we find P, the property of our brain that brings consciousness about. What we are perceptually looking for is a spatial property, or any property bound by our perceptive senses, whereas consciousness seems to be of a completely different category and not definable in these terms. McGinn thinks this is the reason we are necessarily unable to perceptually recognize the natural property of our brain that bears consciousness, because we cannot perceive where consciousness lies and therefore cannot sense the connection between our brain and consciousness.[8]

There are, of course, other ways to engage perception in scientific or empirical research as we often theorise the unobservable parts of the universe. However, the problem of consciousness obviously not being physical still stands, and we could not use purely physical data to abstract something non-physical such as consciousness. That means there is no way to theoretically extend a property P from consciousness because as a natural and physical property it would need to rely upon physical data. And if we were to try start from the point of collectable physical data, we would not need non-physical data such as consciousness to explain it, and consequently we would have no need for a kind of property that would actualise consciousness.[9] There seems to be no model of explaining the physical world that would be adequate to explain or infer consciousness. That also means that P is beyond the grasp of our perception as argued earlier, and additionally beyond the grasp of any theoretical inference based on our perception. Perception, therefore, cannot explain the relation between consciousness and the natural world which makes the second premise true.

Now, the ultimate question stands whether the conclusion that we necessarily cannot have knowledge about the relation between consciousness and the natural world. If it is true that introspection, and respectively perception alone cannot account for that relation, does that necessarily mean that we cannot possibly have knowledge of the relation in question?

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[8] McGinn, 1989, p. 357-358.

[9] McGinn, 1989, p. 359.

One suggestion that McGinn recognizes might be that in order to fully encompass P we are shifting from one faculty to the other as if from one leg to another on a thin beam trying to find a firm footing that inevitably escapes us. But if we forget the gymnastics and imagine we were offered P on a silver plate, would we still be puzzled by the duality of our cognitive faculties of perception and introspection? Put that way it is obvious that such claim of juggling between our cognitive faculties are not stern enough to explain our puzzlement when it comes to P. We must rather be completely and permanently incapable of understanding the property that connects our consciousness and the natural world.[10]

To arrive at such a conclusion, we need to distinguish between absolute and relative cognitive closure. Simply put, if no mind could ever solve an issue, then that issue is of absolute cognitive closure; if some minds can solve an issue and some other kind of minds cannot, then the issue is relatively closed.[11] If we take our knowledge and our minds to be limited to the faculties of introspection and perception, we can now easily see that our minds are cognitively closed with respect to the property P. Also, we are not aware of any sort of mind that does not seem to be limited to the same faculties, but we can perhaps imagine such a mind. If we imagine a mind that operates in purely a priori terms and is not marred by limitations of introspection and perception, we can at best assume that such a mind would be able to grasp the link between the brain and consciousness in a priori terms similarly to how we are able to grasp numbers. This type of mind however, whilst imaginable, seems quite fanciful and from our perspective would not be a mind of any being remotely close to human, but of some mysterious, omniscient and higher being one would need to accept to exist in the first place. Taking that into consideration the cognitive closure with respect to the relation between consciousness and the natural world might as well be absolute, as there is no possible way we could attain knowledge of it.

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[10] McGinn, 1989, p. 360.

[11] McGinn, 1989, p. 360.

3. Uriah Kriegel's objection

There is a possible problem with McGinn's theory of cognitive closure that he does not address in his original paper. Uriah Kriegel argues that McGinn's logical structure of the given problem is incoherent as we cannot successfully understand a problem and at the same time fail to understand what would even count as its solution. Kriegel grounds his argument in theories of logic of questions and systematicity[12] of language as developed by Fodor, Stahl, et al.[13]. In this chapter I will outline Kriegel's counterargument to McGinn's idea of cognitive closure and explain what that counterargument means to the tradition of the New Mysterianism.

A very simple idea of how Kriegel's counterargument against McGinn's cognitive closure works can be applied to any mind that seems to be cognitively closed with respect to some knowledge. For example, the minds of rats presumably do not grasp trigonometry. However, rats are also presumably not worried by trigonometric problems, such problems do not pose themselves to rats and that is precisely because they do not understand trigonometry. For trigonometry to be problematic for rats, their minds would first necessarily have to possess some understanding of trigonometry[14]. So a mind can clearly be ignorant about something, but that ignorance cannot be only due to their failure to grasp a certain concept.

In McGinn's favour, it can be said that his theory of human cognitive closure with respect to the body-mind link is stronger than the simple case of rats explained in the previous paragraph. Remember how he claimed that even if we were offered the property P on a silver plate, we would still be puzzled as to how the body-mind link functions because our minds cannot even conceptualise this property. The importance of modality of his position really shows with regards to this as our minds simply cannot

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[12] Systematicity is a feature of thought sometimes attributed to human language by certain philosophers of language. The main idea is that the ability to entertain a thought is inherently connected to the ability to entertain another or several other thoughts. This way human language operates within a certain interconnected system.

[13] Kriegel, 2003, p. 177.

[14] Kriegel, 2003, p. 183.

and will never be able to account for the property P and we will never know the solution to the hard problem of consciousness. Intrinsically

Still, the hard problem of consciousness does pose itself to human minds or else we would not be discussing it and writing papers about it. McGinn seems to claim that we can not only recognize but also formally articulate the problem, but will necessarily never be able to solve it. Kriegel does not agree with that idea and he argues that there is a strong theoretical connection between understanding a problem and possible solutions to that problem. A thesis he thus supports is that we cannot formulate a problem without being capable to understand what would be its possible solution[15]. That thesis is obviously in direct opposition to McGinn's theory of cognitive closure which claims that we can formulate the problem, but will never be able to formulate its solution.

Consider, for comparison, the relations between simple questions and their answers. Kriegel claim there are clear conceptual connections between understanding a question and understanding the possible answers to that question, perhaps due to the systematicity of language[16]. One famous example is that one cannot fully understand the meaning of "John loves Mary" if the same person does not understand the sentence "Mary loves John," or even "John does not love Mary." For "John does not love Mary," and "John loves Mary" are conceptually the only two possible answers to the question "Does John love Mary?" it would seem that if a person were not to understand either of the former two or both, they would not understand the question either. Kriegel points out that a person does not need to know the correct answer to a question, or analogously a solution to a problem, but they must know what would count as an answer. Another example that does not concern yes/no question discussed above is the question of "What is John's weight?". In the case of this question, the important point is that the answer "John weighs 150 pounds" may even be wrong, but only if the answerers understand the meaning of that answer, do they truly understand the question. Conversely, if they understand the question "What is John's weight?" they will not answer "Yes" as that would not

[15] Kriegel, 2003, p. 184.

[16] Kriegel, 2003, p. 184.

answer the question. Understanding a question is thus necessarily connected to understanding its possible answers.[17]

Another important thing to note is a sort of isomorphism between questions and their possible answers. The set of all possible answers to the question "Does John love Mary?" and its negative counterpart "Does John not love Mary?" consists of positive and negative versions of "John loves Mary". This is because the two questions are arguably semantically the same and only used differently, but the fact is that this set of answers individuates the question. This is important because the fact that only certain kind of assertions constitute an answer to a question is precisely what makes it the question it is – it individuates the question and gives it specific meaning. This model has been used in formal logic of questions which further shows how questions entail assertions. The question "Has John stopped beating his wife?" for example, entails the assertion that "John used to beat his wife," and this is due to firm semantic entailment, not some contingent implication. So if the set consisting of positive and negative versions of "John has stopped beating his wife" entails the assertion that "John used to beat his wife," these individuate the question "Has John stopped beating his wife?" and confirm the entailment. Kriegel emphasises that the only model of logic of questions we use today is this one, grounded in the set of all possible answers individuating the questions.[18]

Kriegel also assumes if the set of all possible answers to a certain question individuates that question, then the set of all possible solutions to a problem individuates that problem. Now if a person cannot imagine what would count as an answer to a question, not only on the knowledge level as their answer may be incorrect, but in the sense that they cannot understand the assertion of that answer, then according to the aforementioned model, that person is unable to fully individuate and understand the question. Kriegel translates this to problems and their solutions: "If so, one cannot be said to understand a problem--again, not *fully*, at any rate--if one cannot envisage what *would* solve it" (Kriegel, 2002, p. 185; italics in the original); and continues more importantly:

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[17] Kriegel, 2003, p. 184.

[18] Kriegel, 2003, p. 185.

> If one cannot form a conception of what a possible solution to the Hard Problem would be, then one is not in a position to *identify* the problem in a way that fully *individuates* it and separates it from other problems. (Kriegel, 2003, p. 185; italics in the original)

Quoted above is his damning account of McGinn's view. McGinn believes that our minds are necessarily cognitively closed with respect to the solution to the Hard Problem of consciousness, but we are still obviously perfectly capable of formulating the problem itself and that is the reason why we are perennially puzzled by it. If we cannot formulate a solution to the problem (again, analogous to questions and their answers), how could we then formulate the problem and still be consistent with the model of logic of questions explained earlier? According to said model, the missing concept of the property P should be understandable to us if we were to use it in formulation of the Hard Problem, but McGinn claims P is impossible to be understood by our cognitive capacities.

Kriegel believes there are actually two different theses of cognitive closure. One claims that we are unable to solve the Hard Problem because we suppose that we are unable to make a certain empirical discovery that would solve it. The other one is held by McGinn and claims that we cannot solve the Hard Problem due to the structure of our own conceptual apparatus.[19] The former is highly speculative and questionable, but resists the criticism of Kriegel's proposed argument of the relation between problems and solutions. However, the latter, held by McGinn, Kriegel's argument proves to be incoherent if we were to accept his account of the relation between problems and solutions and the whole proposed model of logic of questions.

Kriegel doubles down on the thesis of empiric failure which makes his view of New Mysterianism even bleaker than that of McGinn. McGinn's theory is famously comforting in the sense that it gives us a clear answer as to why we cannot solve the Hard Problem – it is not that we are ignorant, our cognitive apparatus is not made to understand consciousness, but we are otherwise fully knowledgeable and competent within the limits of our cognitive capacities. Kriegel's view takes away that comfort, but he himself admits that there seems to be something principled in our ignorance of

[19] Kriegel, 2003, p. 188.

the causal origin of consciousness.[20] However, he believes this is because we fail to recognize or even admit to ourselves how profound our epistemic failure to empirically understand consciousness really is. As he so negatively puts it: "We have no clue about consciousness, and we have no clue about why we have no clue about consciousness" (Kriegel, 2003, p. 189).

From where we stand at the moment, we cannot even tell how mysterious consciousness is. We are unable to tell whether it even exists objectively and independently or is it relative to our cognition, neither how deep our empirical ignorance really is nor what research would bring us closer to the solution. Kriegel also remarks the problem itself offers no reason to prefer one approach over another, and similarly to McGinn recognizes that thinking long and hard about consciousness makes it even more mystifying and ever fleeing. In that sense, Kriegel is also a mysterianist and employs in his theory a sort of cognitive closure, just not the sort the McGinn proposes as he finds it illogical. Supposedly compromising McGinn's theory, his position is however shown to be dubious in its success achieve its goal as I will show in the next section.

4. Erhan Demircioglu's response to Kriegel

Kriegel's argument against McGinn's theory of cognitive closure with respect to the Hard Problem of consciousness also garnered some attention and criticism. One brief but uncompromising response comes from Erhan Demircioglu who in Demircioglu 2016 argues that both Kriegel's objection to McGinn's argument from analogy is inconclusive, and his argument against McGinn's mysterianism is suspect and unconvincing. In this section I will describe Demircioglu's counterarguments to the points Kriegel makes in his paper.

Demircioglu presents it as a radical claim against McGinn's mysterianism albeit with certain stipulations that make it less extreme.[21] Demircioglu firstly attacks Kriegel's counterargument to McGinn's analogy between human and animal minds. Where McGinn claims that there is a possibility that humans are cognitively closed with respect to P in the same way, for example, rats are closed to

[20] Kriegel, 2003, p. 188.

[21] Demircioglu, 2016, p. 2.

trigonometry, Kriegel answers that trigonometric problems do not even pose themselves to rats because rats are not aware of such concept as trigonometry, and the whole analogy cannot stand. Demircioglu suggests this inference can be successfully denied only if the property animals are cognitively closed to be such that they would be cognitively open to them only if they understood questions about those properties[22].

However, Demircioglu is able to construct a counterexample to Kriegel's argument in a case that would not be threatened by his objection to said analogy. For example, we know there exist colour-blind animals, and their cognitive closure to properties such as that of redness does not seem to be due to their failure to understand questions about redness. Conversely, some animals have a heightened sense of smell and this cognitive openness to properties of some olfactory sense data does not seem to stem from their capacity to understand questions about specific smells. Then the argument could be made as follows: (1) there are some properties animals are cognitively closed to regardless of their cognitive ability to understand questions about those properties; (2) humans are relevantly similar to animals; (3) therefore, it is possible that there exist some properties humans are cognitively closed to regardless of their cognitive ability to understand questions about them. Such an argument would be an argument from analogy, and one that is not vulnerable to Kriegel's objections.[23] Possibility of such an argument renders Kriegel's objections inconclusive at best as his standpoint does not show that all animal cognitive closure stems from the failure to understand relevant questions, which is necessary if he is to deny the analogical inference McGinn attempts in his original argument.

After introducing his argument in the case with rats and arguing against McGinn's argument from analogy, Kriegel devotes the bulk of his paper to a more developed argument against McGinn's mysterianist approach to the Hard Problem of consciousness. As we have seen in the previous section, the basic idea, in its very simplified form, is that sets of all possible solutions to a problem individuate that problem, and if we cannot understand or formulate at least one of those solutions then we cannot even understand or formulate the problem itself. Demircioglu immediately identifies a problem with

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[22] Demircioglu, 2016, p. 3.

[23] Demircioglu, 2016, p. 4.

this idea. The problem is that the mysterian standpoint can indeed claim that we do not understand the Hard Problem, which makes Kriegel's remark unrelated as such a claim would remove the grounds for Kriegel's argument that we must be able to form a solution to the Hard Problem. A solution to this in accordance with Kriegel's paper would be that if we do not understand the problem, we should not make bold conclusions about it as he suggests McGinn is doing, but rather we should investigate the issue more thoroughly to precisely identify the problem.[24] The way Demircioglu explains the debate at this point is important:

> So, according to Kriegel, there are conceptual connections between understanding a question and understanding its possible answers; and, if this is so, mysterianism about the solution of the mind-body problem can only be defended if we do not understand that problem, in which case, however, we do not have any good reason to subscribe to a particular thesis like mysterianism about our cognitive situation with respect to that problem (Demircioglu, 2016, p. 5).

Demircioglu identifies three parts of Kriegel's argument that he finds problematic. Firstly, he claims that it is possible to deny Kriegel's main point about the unfeasibility of understanding a problem without understanding its solution. Secondly, he claims that Kriegel's theory of problem understanding does not in fact dispute McGinn's mysterianism concerning the Hard Problem. Finally, he claims that even if we were to accept Kriegel's theory of problem understanding and take it to refute McGinn's mysterianism, we still would not be able to deny that human minds are closed with respect to the mind-body problem. I will now present them in the same order.

Demircioglu believes it obvious that there is a certain point at which we do not need to understand the concepts required for answering a question in order to answer that question (n.bn. Kriegel takes the relation of questions and answers to be analogous to that of problems and solutions). One example is that of a child that might understand the question "Where is x?" without being capable to understand or account for all the possible answers to that question. Some answers might include

[24] Kriegel, 2003, p. 186.

extensive knowledge of the theory of relativity or similar advanced knowledge one would assume a child has no access to. On the other hand, there are famous philosophical examples of cases in which we can understand questions or problems, but are unable to form or understand their answers and solutions. Such an example are the questions "What is it like to be a bat?" or "What is it like to have the experience of red?" if asked a colour-blind person. We assume the colour-blind person understand the latter, but is not able to form the answer. Demircioglu also points to Chomsky's thesis that

> …we are constitutionally programmed to understand only those languages that conform to some fixed universal principles, which entails that there might be some languages conforming to some other principles that we cannot understand (Demircioglu, 2016, p. 6).

If that thesis is valid it would serve as another example of there being a question we can understand but cannot answer, such as questions about the syntax of that alien language that we would understand, but could not answer because its syntax is unfathomable to us. Another thing Demircioglu emphasises is Kriegel's usage of specific examples such as yes/no questions which he finds too simplistic. Even an example that Kriegel himself uses, that of a question "What is John's weight?" is dubious according to Demircioglu, because it is unclear why one would need to know the number 150 or the measure of pound to understand the question. This point is not about the truth value of the given answer, as Kriegel does call it moot, but rather about the limit of understanding in the sense that there could be a person who can only understand numbers up to 10 and only understand kilogrammes which would not cover all the possible answers to the question, but we could still not deny that person understands the question. These examples show the unfeasibility of Kriegel's theory of understanding questions.

There is also a sense in which McGinn accepts that we in fact do understand solutions to the Hard Problem of consciousness, as he likens it to the solution of the way in which the liver secretes the bile.[25] We do not have the same in-depth knowledge of how or where exactly that process happens in

[25] McGinn, 1989, p. 362.

the case of the mind-body problem, but we do have an idea of what the solution to the mind-body problem would look like if we were not otherwise constrained and could account for it. This is as valid sense as any when it comes to understanding a possible solution, and even if McGinn were to accept Kriegel's model of understanding problems, he would not have to change a thing about his theory. If that is so, then Kriegel's argument does not truly affect McGinn's position.

However, Demircioglu thinks that even if we were insistent to accept that Kriegel's model of understanding questions is valid, and that this requires McGinn to accept that we do not actually understand the mind-body problem, and it would still not follow that human minds are not closed with respect to the solution of the problem. McGinn mentions in his paper that we cannot clearly formulate the mind-body problem and both this fact and our cognitive closure to its solutions are due to our lacking the appropriate conceptions of the brain and mind.[26] So even if we accept that we will never be able to fully understand the mind-body problem, we can still successfully argue for cognitive closure with respect to the solution of the mind-body problem. That we are unable to clearly formulate the problem is explained and justified by the idea that the cognitive closure with respect to its solution is true – we cannot understand the solution to the problem because of our inadequate conceptions of concepts involved such as brain and consciousness, and therefore we cannot formulate the problem clearly. If Demircioglu is right in these three points and in the first one regarding Kriegel's objection to the argument from analogy, then his criticism would severely undermine Kriegel's arguments against McGinn's form of mysterianism. It would prove Kriegel's objection invalid because not only could McGinn adopt a standpoint within the confines of his theory that evades Kriegel's criticism, but Kriegel's argument in itself, according to Demircioglu, does not sufficiently weaken McGinn's presented thesis at all.

5. Another objection to McGinn's closure argument

What makes McGinn's claims radical is the modality of his position, the idea that not only do we not have a ready answer to the hard problem of consciousness, but we will never have it because our

[26] McGinn, 1989, p. 349.

minds are simply incapable of forming it. Interestingly though, he does admit that we could imagine a mind that would be able to grasp P, but such minds would be too different to ours that we could simply no longer consider them human.[27] I believe there is no need for such necessity both in argument and calling minds that could answer the mind-body problem inhuman. Perhaps we only need a different perspective, perhaps granted by some other field of human knowledge and some other answers and solutions, which would allow us to grasp P from a different angle.

For instance, consider how Paul Churchland answers about a dozen of antireductionist conclusions with respect to the nature of light in his paper *The Rediscovery of Light*.[28] What eleven arguments Churchland considers tried to prove is the special nature of light in the sense that it is not reducible to physical substance, but is of a distinctive ontological category made possible by a special property only light possesses. Electromagnetic theory of light aptly proves all these theories wrong and is the basis for Churchland's deconstruction of antireductionist theories of light.

I wish to propose another possible objection to McGinn, and this example of Churchland's paper I find similar to how it would work. McGinn argues that humans necessarily cannot comprehend property P because our minds are cognitively closed with respect to it. In other words, McGinn claims that the true nature of this property P lies beyond the limits of our knowledge. Here, he seems to limit human knowledge before fully testing its potential. That is not to say the limits he considers, namely those of the reach of introspection and perception are completely arbitrary, but I see no reason why they would necessarily lead to cognitive closure with respect to property P.

I believe McGinn's idea of cognitive closure is far too strict in presupposing the final limits of our cognitive capacities. If anything, every time we talk or think about the limits of our cognitive capacities, or for that matter anything at all, we are thinking from within the limits of our cognitive capacities and it seems superfluous to explicitly set our limits, as if we could ever somehow think or act beyond them anyway. These explicit limitations then are stating the obvious and do not make things and theories any more necessary. If we can find something problematic, there most probably is a way to solve it,

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[27] McGinn (1989), pp. 381.

[28] Churchland, P. (1996.)

not to be confused with Kriegel's argument of logical systematicity of human language that claims a formulation of a question necessarily enables the formulation of an answer. And even if we are not aware of a solution and are barking up the wrong tree, I don't see any urgency to conclude that we as species would not be able to understand the solution to the problem if it were sufficiently explained in some other terms. What we are experiencing perhaps, is that we are not cognitively, but conceptually closed with respect to some knowledge, for instance of property P. By conceptual closure I mean that our current acquaintance with the world is insufficient to account for knowledge of some object, but that does not mean the limits of our conceptual capacities could not be broadened to eventually grasp the knowledge of said object. This type of closure is importantly different from cognitive closure because it presupposes no final limits to human knowledge or cognition and their potential, but does allow and account for the current limits of human knowledge as acquired to a certain point in time and which are subject to change.

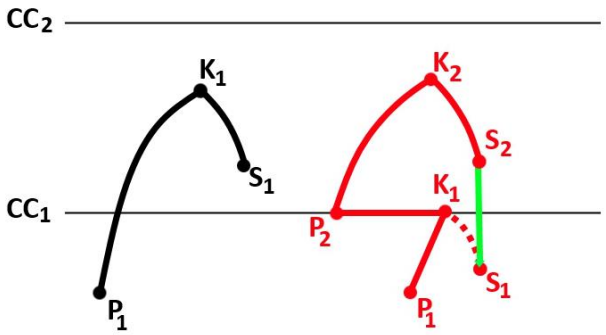

Figure 2, An illustration of thinking beyond our conceptual capacities.

I will now further explain this objection using the illustration Figure 2 above. Consider first on the left and across our current conceptual capacities CC1 that mark the current limits of our knowledge. Now, there is a problem P1 and to solve it we must possess some knowledge that would provide a solution. However, such knowledge K1 to the problem P1 lies beyond the limits of our conceptual capacities CC1 and so does the solution S1 in this case. If the mind-body problem is P1, then knowledge K1 that would point to the solution S1 lies beyond the limits of out cognitive capacities CC1. If so, no

wonder we are puzzled and sometimes pressed to mysterianist conclusions or other radical claims as we simply lack the conceptual means to ever understand and explain the solution S1.

However, consider the red graph on the right side of the illustration as I walk you through it. There is a problem P1 and even if we push to the limits of our cognitive capacities, all the knowledge K1 we can produce is not sufficient to account for the solution S1 (marked with a dotted line). However, there could be a problem P2, posited within the same limits of conceptual capacities CC1 that reformulates our views and required knowledge K2 and solution S2 that we can in fact produce. If that solution S2 would be analogous to the solution we were looking for but K1 could not provide, would we not say that we found the solution to P1? I would argue that is exactly what we would achieve. Again, P1 is the mind-body problem, and our knowledge K1 is simply not sufficient to tell us what the solution S1 to the problem P1 is, and sometimes draws us to mysterianist or otherwise radical conclusions. But then imagine someone were to examine some problem P2, and in investigation of this problem there is a breakthrough that pushes the limits of human conceptual capacities to now some new limits CC2. And within these new limits of human conceptual capacities CC2 there exists knowledge K2 that provides a solution S2 to the problem P2. However, if the solution S2 were analogous to the solution S1 we could not achieve within previous limits of our conceptual capacities CC1, then I would argue we would also have the answer to the original problem P1 – namely the solution to the mind-body problem.

This may sound hopeful or abstract in the sense that I am not through this scheme offering the seemingly most important thing and that is the S1 solution to the mind-body problem. I concede we are currently unable to come up with such solution, but at the same time I recognize that sometime in the future, our collective conceptual capacities could broaden and we could understand the solution to the mind-body problem. The same goes for anyone with a mysterianist or some other ready conclusion I would think; they might ascribe some special ontological status to consciousness or even claim as McGinn does that it is completely natural, but unreachable by human mind, and their beliefs would not change the fact that if we were to broaden our conceptual capacities and attain new knowledge, there is an obvious way in which we could one day solve the mind-body problem. Using

Churchland's paper I briefly touched upon earlier in the paper as an example, this is the exact method he uses to prove antireductionist theories about the nature of light wrong, and offer the solution to the problem of the nature of light.

Going back to McGinn's idea that we cannot grasp the property P and will never grasp it, with previously explained revolution in mind, it seems to me that there could be an imaginable way to grasp P without invoking inhuman or godly minds. Perhaps a more or less drastic reconsideration of the problem or focusing on some other problem not necessarily obviously related to the hard problem of consciousness would open our cognitive capacities in a way that would spur new knowledge that would in turn provide some theory we would find analogous to the solution of our initial mind-body relation problem. This argument and objection to McGinn goes against the modal strength of his theory, as I disagree with his claims that we humans will necessarily forever be unable to grasp the property P. The account of conceptual, rather than cognitive closure I proposed in my opinion explains our current situation and our future prospects more accurately. My position here is more hopeful than McGinn's, but not much more optimistic. We cannot seem to be able to solve the mind-body problem as of now, but instead of throwing ourselves against the wall of our conceptual closure, our best bet might well be leaving the issue aside and coming back to it later when we have made relevant progress in some other related fields.

6. Conclusion

As presented in this paper, there are possible theories of consciousness in philosophy of mind that are based on wholly naturalistic presuppositions and still manage to retain the mysterious character of the solution to the mind-body problem. Such a theory is famously proposed by Colin McGinn who argues that humans are necessarily cognitively closed with respect to the natural property P of the human brain that explains the connection between the physical brain and phenomenological consciousness. His argument considers the human faculties of introspection and perception to be the limits of human knowledge, and should the full understanding of said property P lie beyond the grasp of those faculties, then humans would never be able to understand the solution to the mind-body problem even if it were right in front of their noses. McGinn argues that this indeed is the case with

the property P, and humans are thus unable, and more importantly will always be unable to understand the solution to the mind-body problem.

An objection offered by Uriah Kriegel claims that the logical structure of McGinn's position is incoherent because we cannot at the same time understand a question and not understand what would count as a solution to that question. Kriegel's criticism is deeply rooted in theories of the logic of questions and systematicity of language as he emphasises a noticeable kind of isomorphism between questions and sets of possible answers to a certain question. Applying this to problems and sets of their possible solutions, he concludes that if we cannot understand what would count as a solution to a certain problem, then we cannot individuate that problem and differentiate it from some other problems. Therefore, if as McGinn claim, humans cannot understand property P, they must not be able to pose the mind-body problem. However, seeing that this problem does offer itself to us, we must logically be able to understand what a possible solution would look like, and McGinn's theory must be wrong on account of logical incoherence. Erhan Demircioglu swiftly proves Kriegel's objection inconclusive using numerous counterexamples as shown in Chapter 4 of this paper. Moreover, he suggests how McGinn could without straying from his theory accept that humans do in fact know what would count as a solution to the mind-body problem, and we only necessarily lack the empirical depth to form an answer. For these reasons Demircioglu concludes Kriegel's objection is either invalid or does not sufficiently weaken McGinn's theory.

I believe this debate following McGinn's position is misguided, and therefore in Chapter 5 propose another possible objection to his new mysterianism. In my opinion, the problematic part of McGinn's theory is the modality of cognitive closure. In this sense, I do not share the view that we can set final boundaries of our own cognitive capacities and count what falls within them. The bulk of Chapter 5, through the explanation of Figure 2 presents my case for finding a solution to a problem that seems unsolvable such as the mind-body problem (P1). Rather than assuming the solution lies beyond humanly graspable knowledge, I propose a case in which humans find another problem (P2), that requires some new or different knowledge gathered through investigation which leads to the solution to the (P2) that could be analogous to a solution to our original problem, namely the mind-

body problem (P1). There are numerous examples in the history of science alone that are consistent with such a scheme. What I suggest by this model is that we might not be able to solve the mind-body problem as of the moment speaking, but there is no urgency to conclude that we will necessarily never be able to solve it. Epistemological advancements in other fields or different aspects of our own field could viably provide a direct solution or a parallel thereof.

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