I, __ Gary A. Blahnik ______________________________, hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

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This work and its defense approved by:

Chair: John Bickle, Ph. D.
        John McEvory, Ph. D.
        Koffi Maglo, Ph. D.
Experientialism:

Integrating Mind & Body, Spirit & Matter, the One & the Many

by

Gary Allen Blahnik
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Previous Degrees:  B. A. Linguistics & Religion
                  M. A. English
                  M. Ed. Counseling
                  Ph.D. Humanities

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Committee Chair:  John Bickle, Ph.D.
Abstract

*Experientialism* proposes a new way to address the mind:body problem in philosophy. Traditional notions of mind (i.e. the mental) and body (i.e. the physical) are integrated into a philosophical perspective that, arguably, refuses to let the mind be separated from the body without distorting reality as determined by human beings. It asserts that experience defined as the necessary combination of cognition, affect, behavior, sensation, environment, and the “I” is equal to reality, thus arguing against realism and philosophies derivative of realism, rationalism and philosophies derivative of rationalism, and the dualistic philosophies that combine realism and rationalism (e.g. empiricism, phenomenology, etc.). If we cannot remove ourselves from experience, as so defined, then traditional objective reality exists within the experiential structure and traditional relative reality necessarily contains objective aspects. Within experientialism, objective philosophies are understood as meta-experiential constructs, i.e. distortions of reality, and relative philosophies are understood as naïve.
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PART 1: A Brief History of “isms” and “ologies”

1. The Problem of the One and the Many

   Philosophy, if not all of human life, can, I think, ultimately be understood within the context of the one versus the many. Is there one, absolute, objective reality from which we human beings draw our various and often conflicting perspectives? Or are there as many realities as there are people, realities in which all people are correct and from which no person can escape? Plato advanced the absolutist, objectivist thesis that there is only one reality, the reality of forms. The forms are ultimate, perfect, and unchanging realities, whereas earthly realities are but mere shadows of the forms. The shadows are not true realities, but they might participate from time to time in the true realities of the forms (Plato, 1986). Plato’s contemporary, Protagorus, advanced a relativist, subjectivist thesis that maintained that everyone has his or her own reality and that all of these realities, even if they conflict with each other, are right (Plato, 1992).

   Objectivism appeals to all people inasmuch as all people know that there are at least some aspects of the world they inhabit that are what they are, regardless of how people might understand them to be. Relativism also appeals to all people inasmuch as all people know that there are at least some aspects of their own experience that cannot be verified directly by other people but are, nevertheless, real to those individuals who experience them. It seems that these two opposing ‘reality structures’ are inescapable aspects of that which we call reality. It just depends upon the individuals involved as to ‘what’ they consider to be objective and ‘what’ they consider to be relative.

   It seems also in some ways that the closer we get to ‘who we are’, the more objectivist we tend to be. And in some ways the further away from ‘who we are’, the more relativist we tend to be. For instance, if an evolutionist and a creationist discuss the aesthetic qualities of a work of art, they might very well advance two opposing opinions about the work, while neither of them would care to come to blows over their differences. But when they get on the topic of evolution and creation, they might very well get heated and aggressive during their discussion. Now, if an aesthetician gets into a discussion with a logician, where the aesthetcian advances the reality of beauty in ambiguity and the logician advances the un-reality of
contradiction, these two people might very well get heated. Whereas, if these same two people advanced
their opinions about evolution and creation, neither of them might ever think of touching the other in an
aggressive manner or of raising his or her voice in dispute.

The evolutionist is in good part defined by his (let’s say) adherence to the theory of evolution. And
the theory of evolution accounts for reality (of which he and everybody else is a part) by claiming that
reality is reducible to changing patterns of energy through time. Whereas the creationist is in good part
defined by her (let’s say) adherence to the theory of creation. And the theory of creation accounts for
reality (of which she and everybody else is a part) by claiming that reality is something created and
sustained by God.

Both evolutionist and creationist are advancing an objectivist claim. The claim seems to rest upon
that objectivism in all of us that makes us ‘who we are’. When ‘who we are’ gets challenged or threatened,
we tend to respond with our whole being, both physically and mentally, or physically, mentally, and
spiritually. It is the objectivist aspect of us with which we identify. When this aspect is challenged or
threatened, ‘we’ are challenged or threatened. And when we are threatened, we tend to defend ourselves,
often times aggressively.

Protagorus might argue that both evolutionist and creationist are right: the evolutionist is right for
him and the creationist is right for her, and since neither of them can get outside of their own understanding
of reality, then both understandings must be right. The creationist might convince the evolutionist of the
validity of her own ontology and, simultaneously, the invalidity of his ontology, and hence gain a convert.
But this does not mean that the creationist has somehow pierced the bubble that constitutes her ontology
and entered into the realm of objective reality. Rather, it means that she has managed to convince the
evolutionist of the error of his ways. But was the evolutionist in error? How could the evolutionist be in
error if every person’s reality is right?
2. Realism: The Original Objectivism

The term “realism” has been applied to many areas of human life, and each of these areas has its own slant on what this term means. I wish to define realism in a particular way, even though this way might differ from the traditional ways it is used in philosophy and other areas of human endeavor.

Simply put, realism is an ontology (reality structure) that asserts that there is one world apart from the human mind, whether that world consists of material and/or immaterial beings, and that this world, or at least aspects of it, can be directly known to us as it is and not simply as we understand it to be. Understood in this way, realistic ontologies comprise the bulk of western philosophies, religions, and world views prior to Descartes and the modern Western era. Animistic ontologies, where the world around us is comprised of spiritual entities with natures of their own, Platonic forms, where the world around us is but a shadow of the real world of forms, and the theistic ontologies, where a powerful immaterial spirit creates less powerful spirits as well as de-spirited beings (material objects) are all examples of realism.

But ancient and medieval realism was dominated by supernatural beings. These beings usually had power over people and nature. Throughout this work, supernaturalism will be viewed as an original form of rationalism, but its rationalistic foundations were not experienced as rational, i.e. as mental. Rather, they were experienced as realistic. God and things supernatural were believed to exist as realistic, objective beings. Hence, I will include supernatural ontologies under realism. But it should be kept in mind that underneath this realism lies a deeper rationalism. Supernaturalism is ultimately a world of the mind and mental phenomena writ large, or reified. After Descartes and the development of science, supernaturalism was “returned” to its origin by collapsing into the mind. I hope that this way of understanding our ontological past will become clearer as this work unfolds.
3. Theistic Realism: Reified Rationalism

Theistic realism asserts that God is an objective immaterial being who would exist as he is, whether human beings existed or not. According to theistic realism, this knowledge of God is not conjured up by our own minds. It is either ‘implanted’ in us by God himself or ‘communicated’ to us by God, nature, and/or some other beings or forces. We might not be able to grasp or understand the fullness of God, but that does not detract from the ‘fact’ that God is the ultimate source of our objective knowledge of him. Without God there would be no human mind to have knowledge of him or anything else.

Aquinas argues that God is an intelligible light who has created a lesser light of intelligence (people), but this does not mean that the human light of intelligence must understand God as a being entirely conditioned by the limitations of human intelligence. To do such would be to align with relativism. Rather, the reverse is the case for Aquinas. That is, human beings can grasp the essence of God because the greater intelligence (God) has the power to overcome the limitations of the lesser intelligences (people). Aquinas says that “if God is seen through a medium [human intelligence], He is not seen in His essence. But if seen by any created light [human intelligence], He is seen through a medium. Therefore He is not seen in His essence. Further, what is created can be natural to some creature. And thus, that creature would not need any other light to see God; which is impossible. Therefore it is not necessary that every creature should require a superadded light in order to see the essence of God (Aquinas, 1960). Aquinas argues that the created light of human intelligence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a human being to grasp the essence of God. We need our intelligence to be ‘awakened’ by the intelligence of God, but we cannot wrap our intelligence around God. Rather, as it is written in Psalms 35, 10: “In Thy light we shall see light.” It is the light of God that is objective and unchanging reality. It stirs human intelligence and allows us to see it as it is, i.e. its essence, even though we are not capable of understanding all aspects of God.

Theistic realism has also asserted that human beings are made of body and soul and that the soul can be divided into parts. Augustine writes that “there are three kinds of vision” [soul functions]: corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual. The corporeal “vision” is that of our senses, the spiritual is “whatever
is not of a body, and yet is something” i.e. signs of things formed in the mind (e.g. a thought or image of a bodily thing), and the mental is our understanding of the signs of things formed in the mind (Augustine, 1964). Augustine uses the sentence “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” to exemplify. He says that we can see the letters on the paper by virtue of our sensual soul; we can form an image of our neighbor in our minds by virtue of our spiritual soul; and we can understand the meaning of love and the other words we use by virtue of our intellectual or mental soul.

But all of these “visions” are manifestations of one soul, i.e. an unextended, incorporeal being that rules over the body, which is corporeal and extended in space. Our soul “sees” through the senses, the imagination, and the understanding. Sensual knowledge is the least important, imaginative knowledge next, and understanding (imageless ‘things’) the most important form of knowledge attainable by the soul.

The soul, for Augustine, is real and objective. It has a nature of its own, regardless of what anyone might think or claim. It does not depend upon or derive from the mind of people. Rather, the mind of people is an integral part of the soul. Also, the soul could exist without the body, but the body could not exist without the soul. But if the soul exists without a body, then that soul is not human, for a human must be necessarily composed of body and soul (Augustine, 1964). Hence, though soul is greater and more self-subsistent than the body, the body is a necessary aspect of the human soul. It is just not a necessary aspect of God, i.e. the supreme, body-less ‘soul’.

Contemporary Christian understanding of the mind:body problem that so bothers science and modern thinkers organizes reality into three ‘substances’: spirit, mind and matter. These substances are arranged hierarchically, with spirit on top and in control of the other substances. Spirit (Augustine’s intelligence or understanding) in its eternal and unchanging form (God) created and sustains everything other than Himself. He created and sustains the spirit, mind, and body of all human beings. The human spirit (Augustine’s intellect or understanding) is that which understands God’s existence and wills the mind and body to act; the mind (Augustine’s spirit) is that which understands the physical world around itself and operates in conjunction with that world. It is that which thinks, cogitates, calculates, reasons, etc. The body is the matter that is acted upon by the mind and the spirit. The mind acts upon the body (and other
physical bodies outside of the mind) by understanding and manipulating them in accordance with one’s understanding of them. This is what science generally does. The spirit acts upon both mind and body by understanding the mind and body to be creations of the eternal and unchanging spirit (God) and by willing the mind and body to act in particular ways. This is what science generally denies.

In Christianity spirit has an existence of its own. It exists whether or not there are other spirits or minds to understand it. It is the reason other spirits and minds exist. This spirit imparts itself to other spirits (human beings) and sustains their existence. The spirit of human beings can understand the essence of God because it 1) shares God’s nature and 2) can be overcome by the power of God. Animals, though created by God, cannot understand God’s essence because they 1) don’t share His nature (do not possess spirit) and 2) don’t possess a mind that admits of recognizing God’s power.

In Christianity mind has an existence that is both realistic and dependent. The mind exists on its own in that it has control over the body, but its existence is dependant upon the spirit, ultimately the spirit which is God, and not upon the body, which is generally the claim of science. The mind is an active agent in relation to the body and the bodies of nature. It acts upon the body through understanding it and willing it to perform actions. Here, modern Christianity’s ‘mind’ is similar to medieval Christianity’s ‘understanding’ or ‘intellect’. Science, it seems, has challenged the existence of God and the spirit he has supposedly imparted to human beings by replacing God with matter or energy and inverting the dependent relationship between mind and body. Such a challenge has altered Christianity’s understanding of the mind. It has elevated the mind to the status of something capable of understanding abstract ideas (including the idea of God) in addition to understanding the body and the bodies of nature. In the modern world of science, the existence of a human spirit or a divine connection is all but gone.

Modern Christianity has integrated itself with psychology by reframing the existence of the soul into the existence of the self, divesting the soul of much of its supernatural force. Modern Christianity is much more amenable to the idea of a three part system of human nature comprised of: self – mind – body, where self dominates the mind and the mind dominates the body. Understanding reality in these terms allows Christianity to keep its hierarchical structure of reality with immaterial things still having power
over material things. The mind still has power over the body. The body is still that which serves and needs to be controlled by the mind.

So far I’ve described how the Christian ontology has existed in at least two forms: 1) medieval supernatural Christianity’s three part hierarchical system of spirit – mind – body, where spirit represents both God the creator and the human spirit, and 2) modern Christianity’s three part hierarchical system of spirit as distant creator of: self – mind – body. Because of the challenge of science, modern Christianity has had to recognize the validity of the natural hierarchy or psychology’s three part system of self – mind – body, but it has not given up the notion of God as creator. Rather, God’s role tends to be more deistic in nature, i.e. he created a world that since creation has probably evolved according to the principles instilled in evolution by God. In other words, the spiritual aspect of human beings has virtually lost its divine connection and has become psychologized. The soul as a being that continues on after death has taken on the status of an article of faith rather than an active part of the human being. Fewer and fewer Christians today are frightened by the threat of eternal damnation.

In order to understand theistic realism in its experiential form, the supernatural must be ‘reduced’ to the natural. God, the soul, and other supernatural entities must be understood experientially. To the extent that they are held to be super-experiential, they are criticized as being meta-experiential constructs. Unfortunately, a proper elaboration of this contention must wait until the experientialist philosophy is explicated. But that doesn’t keep us from re-forming our understanding of the history of philosophy so as to get a clearer understanding of experientialism. To this end, we can re-direct our thinking to modern philosophy, science, and the development of more rationalistic, relativistic ontologies.

Underlying the various objective realisms prior to Descartes and the development of science was the ever-present relativism of many personal or individual realities. All objective realisms not only fought with each other so one could convince or impose one’s reality upon the other, and, hence confirm the validity of one’s own brand of realism, but they also fought amongst themselves. Conflicts would arise within each camp, and they had to be dealt with. Sometimes they were ‘put down’ by the infliction of pain or death; sometimes dissidents broke away from the camp and formed their own objective realism; but
never to my knowledge had anyone in the western tradition fundamentally transformed objective realism until Descartes.

Relativistically and humanistically, theological realism is nothing more than the few dominating the many. Since relativism holds that there are as many realities as there are people, and all of these realities are right, then in a world of apparent objective realisms it is just a matter of whose reality is going to dominate at any given time. Here we look to the clergy of the various objective realisms. For in theological realisms that are based on a sacred book or scriptures someone is needed to edit and interpret those books. It is usually left to the clergy to perform these tasks. Prior to Descartes and the development of science, the few clergy dominated the many in determining what was real, and conflicts were settled through power, oppression, ex-communication, threats of damnation, and other hierarchically determined mental and physical forms of punishment.

As natural philosophers (pre-scientists) began to undermine theology’s account of creation and human beings’ place in it, the supernatural ‘reality’ of God was also being undermined, a process still going on today. Since most of contemporary philosophy does not claim much adherence to the supernatural existence of God, nor much of any supernatural existences; and since science generally rejects the supernatural existence of God; and because the supernatural existence of God as held by many, but by no means all theists, is not compatible with the experientialist philosophy I wish to develop, I want to reframe supernatural existence within the structure of experience. In doing so, I will necessarily have to “reduce” the supernatural to the experiential, but such a reduction, I believe, will not undermine the relevance of supernatural beliefs, but only keep them from becoming more than they are.

Psychology has already re-framed the supernatural three-part ontology (spirit – mind – body) into another three part ontology (self – mind – body). In effect, the self represents that aspect of God’s nature that either inhabits the body (mind-oriented psychology) or arises from the workings of the brain (body-oriented psychology); it replaces the medieval human spirit. The mind is equated with the mental functions of thinking, cogitating, calculating, reasoning, etc., and the body is equated with anatomy and physiology and the material workings of nature (chemistry and physics).
Experientialism brings the idea and or experience of God into the structure of experience. And since experience is not constituted by any supernatural component, God and supernatural things will have to be understood in experiential terms. I will argue that God and the supernatural develop out of experience, and that experience consists of the rational or mental components of cognition, affect, and the "I" and the realistic or material components of sensation, behavior, and the environment (physical world). The supernatural will show itself to be the result of experiential interaction. Hopefully, it will become more apparent to the reader why I used both realism and rationalism in the title of this section when I develop the philosophy of experientialism.

4. The Rationalist Challenge

Descartes offered the first real challenge to realism, especially theistic realism. He was raised in the Catholic tradition and, hence, believed in Christian theistic realism. But he also experienced a good deal of contradiction between what he had learned as a child and what he had come to believe as an adult. The methods of science were beginning to capture people’s imaginations. Fundamentally new ways of determining reality were being explored and developed. Ontology (or reality) was becoming human-centered as opposed to the God-centeredness of medieval theistic realism. Human beings were coming to see themselves, rather than God, as ultimate determiners of reality. The human mind was coming to be understood as something that integrates the functions of understanding abstract entities with the function of understanding concrete entities. In other words, the human mind was expanding its power to determine reality by integrating the human spirit’s capacity to understand abstract entities with its capacity to understand concrete material entities. No longer was a separate ontological capacity of mind (i.e. spirit) needed to explain the phenomena of God and soul.

Descartes argued that the human mind is the ultimate determiner of reality and our only certain basis for knowledge. He doubted the certainty of the senses because the senses can be mistaken. He doubted the certainty of his own body because he could be dreaming and his ‘body’ could be a phantom. He doubted the certainty of mathematics because a demon could be playing tricks with his mind. But he
couldn’t doubt that he was doubting. Doubting was a function of his mind, whether or not what he thought matched what he sensed, what he dreamt, or what a demon might put into it. That which was in his mind, was his. And he could not doubt his connection to that which was in his mind. Hence, what was in his mind was real (Descartes, 1989).

In locating reality in the human mind, Descartes rejects realism and posits a rationalism. Instead of beings (e.g. God) and physical objects (e.g. trees) coming into the mind as they are, as if the mind were simply an opening for reality to enter, Descartes fixes the human mind as something that always ‘intercepts’ beings and entities and ‘makes them its own’.

At first blush, it looks like Descartes has also rejected traditional objectivism and posited a relativism whereby we cannot get beyond our own minds and ‘into’ any objective reality. But such was not the case. Because when he investigated the contents of his mind to find what reality really was, he found the objectivism of physical objects and God. He argued that physical objects outside the mind are not conjured by the mind, but that they exist independently of the mind and produce in the mind the knowledge that they exist outside the mind. Likewise, he argued that God exists outside the mind and has implanted in us knowledge of himself as existing outside the mind.

Again, one must ask, is reality one or many? If reality lies in the human mind, and some minds have different, if not contradictory, contents, then are all minds right? Do all minds possess ‘real’ reality? Or does the world of beings and objects transcend the mind even though they might have to ‘come through’ the mind or ‘be conditioned’ by the mind and, hence, have their reality slightly altered?

Descartes’ rationalism forced realism onto a new plane. Prior to Descartes, conflicting realisms fought amongst each other for supremacy. Egyptians fought Jews, Jews fought Christians, Christians fought Arabs, etc. Each group possessed a realistic, objective ontology, but these ontologies were not always compatible. Since realistic objectivism holds that there is but one reality and that that reality exists outside the mind, everybody wanted their reality to be that one reality, or at least come closest to being that one. Descartes made the first attempt to ‘level the playing field’ upon which all of these conflicting ontologies warred against each other. By relocating reality from outside the mind to inside the mind,
Descartes put *all* human beings center stage. No longer could a few human beings (e.g. clergy) determine reality for everybody else. Every thinking being could determine reality for him or herself.

But Descartes fudged. While he maintained that the human mind is the ultimate determiner of reality, he also maintained that there exist greater realities than the human mind. These greater realities were God and nature. God and nature ‘make’ the human mind what it is, and, hence, determine its reality. Descartes might have looked inside his own mind and found God-as-existing-beyond-the-mind, but what happens when an atheist does the same? He (let’s say) will not find that idea in his mind. He might find the antithesis of that idea in his mind. A strict relativist will have to affirm that both people are right. Rather than admit that, Descartes affirmed the age old theological realism and natural realism. But he did so on a whole new playing field. That new playing field included the human mind. It is the human mind that informs us that God-exists-beyond-the-mind and that nature-exists-beyond-the-mind.

Kant knew that Descartes fudged and he proceeded to develop a ‘hermetically sealed’ rationalism. Kant argued that we cannot ‘get to’ the world outside the mind as-it-is, because we cannot get outside of our minds (Kant, 1902). Since the only way we can understand the world outside our minds is with our minds, then it follows that reality is only that which our minds disclose. Hence, a true study of reality is a study of mind. And that is what Kant gives us in his three Critiques: *The Critique of Pure Reason* is an explication of the structure of the mind in relation to the physical world outside the mind, *The Critique of Practical Reason* is an explication of the structure of the mind in relation to ethics and human organization, and the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* is an explication of the structure of the mind in relation to the world of art and beauty. In each work, Kant seeks to show how the world outside the mind is virtually impenetrable. The mind *always* gets in the way. *Everything* is conditioned by the mind, except, of course, the mind itself.

Kant takes Descartes’ initial attempt to unseat theistic realism and replaces it with rationalism to its ultimate conclusion. In locating space, time, causation, etc. within the human mind, Kant divested God and nature of their objectivizing power. Descartes couldn’t rid himself of the overwhelming idea that God and nature exist independently of his own mind without lying to himself. So he kept the idea that God and
nature existed independently of his mind. This not only made it possible for him to publish his work under the scrutiny and power of the Church, but it also set the scene for the development of science. Establishing nature as that upon which the human mind depends opens the door for a fundamentally new objective realism: science. Kant virtually took theistic realism out of the picture by establishing a strong rationalism, but he was not able to take nature out of the picture. Modern philosophy developed alongside materialistic science, having shucked the confines of theological realism.

I am purposefully using the term ‘rationalism’ to apply to Kant rather than ‘idealism’, which is often applied to him in the literature, because I want to develop a history of ontological development based on the dualism of mind and body. I will understand idealism as a type of rationalism, but not rationalism as a type of idealism. In other words, I am using the term ‘rationalism’ as a broad fundamental ontological category to represent all mind-based ontologies, and I am using the term ‘realism’ to represent all body-based ontologies. Hopefully, my reasons for doing so will become apparent as this work develops.

5. The Transition From Supernaturalism to Naturalism

There are two aspects of human experience that carry with them ‘objectivizing power’: God (mind) and nature (matter). By ‘objectivizing power’, I mean that people tend to experience their own personal immaterial nature and the public material nature as objectively real. That is, we tend to experience our own thoughts and feelings as well as cups and trees as real not only for us but for everyone, though everyone does not have sensual access to some of those realities. Since others don’t have sensual access to some aspects of our experiences, it might be difficult for them to validate those realities. But regardless of the validation problem, we still tend to experience these personal phenomena as objectively real.

As science and its method of validating the objectively real developed and gained adherents, the objective reality of God and other things supernatural was seriously challenged. It is much easier to gain validation of the existence of things that anyone with properly functioning senses could affirm than it is to validate the existence of personal, immaterial beings. Two people looking at an average glass of water might more readily match their experiences with each other than they would in regard to their experience of
a religious service. Both would tend to experience the objective reality of the glass of water, whereas they
both need not affirm the objective reality of God in relation to the service.

So when Descartes relocated the determiner of reality from the supernatural world to the natural, he
deposed God of his ultimate authority and substituted something that was, perhaps, less difficult to validate
than God but still more difficult to validate than the physical world: ideas. If God and things supernatural
are divested of their objective reality as supernatural beings but kept as objective realities of the mind, then
we alter the plane of objective reality so that more people can determine the workings of that reality for
themselves. Locating the power to determine reality in all people’s rational capacities and taking that
power away from the elite few (clergy) served to collapse the supernatural world into the natural, opening
the door for the development of empirical science.

Once the fear of God was dispelled from one’s experience, one was free to approach reality in
different ways. Since the physical world seemed to offer the broadest possible avenue for validation by
others, it seemed to be a good place to start. In this sense, Descartes’ rationalism served not only as a way
to transfer the locus of power to determine reality from the supernatural to the natural plane, but it also
bridged the gap between the supernatural and the material. Kant’s rationalism finished the job started by
Descartes by collapsing the supernatural into the natural and expanding the power of the mind in
determining objective reality. If we were to find God in Kant’s system, he would be part-and-parcel a
product of mind.

The rationalist challenge paved the way for the development of empirical science. It freed human
beings from the hierarchically organized grip of supernatural forces and allowed them to utilize their
natural minds to understand the natural world around them and themselves in relation to it. The body,
which had been an object to be controlled and ‘tamed’ by the mind now became an object of study. It,
along with the objects of the natural world surrounding the mind, became the most verifiable form of
reality available. People could see what they were talking about, observe how these physical objects move
in relation to each other, and apply their rational capacities to form hypotheses and theories about them.
The more this was done, the more success people had in understanding and manipulating nature. The more
success they had, the more objective their determinations seemed. Their successes only added to the already strong “objectivizing power” of the physical world.

6. The Empirical Transformation

Rationalism’s attack on theistic realism served to diminish the controlling grip of supernaturalism and to open the door for the development of naturalism. Nature was conceived even by theistic realism to be composed of a different substance from the supernatural. That substance was matter. Though the term ‘matter’ is currently undergoing changes in physics as Einsteinian relativity and quantum physics continue to replace Newtonian physics, for our purposes, I will use ‘matter’ to mean the traditional conception of particles (atoms) that take up space. I will also equate the term ‘matter’ with the term ‘body’ and try to keep my terminology consistent.

The rationalism underlying theistic realism maintained that there are such things as innate ideas. Our idea of God was argued to be the most fundamental innate idea there was. Locke criticized innate ideas by introducing developmental ideas into philosophical discourse (Locke, 1997). No longer were philosophers to create ontologies based solely on adult reasoning. Locke sought to debunk the notion of innate ideas in part by pointing out how children differ from adults. He noticed no such thing as an innate idea of God in children. Rather, he argued that children had to be taught about God. He also argued that not all cultures or people believe in God and those that do often differ in their conceptions of God. In arguing for the relativistic nature of the idea of God and other ‘innate’ notions, Locke not only attacked theistic realism but also its rationalistic foundation. He took God not only out of heaven but out of the human mind as well.

Where did our knowledge of God come from if not from God (medieval Christianity) or our own minds (rationalism)? With Locke, the rationalism of Descartes shifts to the materialism of science via a synthesis of realistic and rationalistic philosophy.

Empiricism is the philosophy underlying science. Natural philosophers (early scientists) coming out of the conflict between theistic realism and humanistic rationalism adopted both ‘isms’ by synthesizing
them into a new ‘ism’. Empiricism is realistic in that it accepts the objects that exist outside the mind as having natures of their own and that are, in this sense, self-subsistent. These objects, for the most part, do not need the existence of human beings for their existence. How these objects subsist is a matter of some debate, but most empiricists seem to lean toward the Lockean materialistic form of realism rather than the Berkeleyan idealistic (or rationalistic) form. Therefore, I will use the term ‘empiricism’ to refer primarily to materialistic empiricism.

But empiricism is also rationalistic in that it accepts the Kantian thesis that we can never “get to” the objects as-they-are. Empiricists therefore construct a correspondence theory of reality where they continuously seek to ‘match’ their mental understanding of the world with the physical reality of that world.

But many scientists allow themselves to slide into a naïve realism and ‘forget’ that their minds are always conditioning those objects. This tendency to ‘forget’ the relevance of their minds seems to be so far-reaching in practice that many scientists tend to assume that scientific facts are actually objective entities and not a necessary combination of a mental and a physical version of them. This lack of critical thinking admits of an uncritical presentation of an objective world. The empirical synthesis is distorted. The rationalistic component is covered over by the realistic component, and the latter is tacitly if not explicitly assumed to be the ‘real’ reality. So empiricism, though essentially composed of ideological paradox, tends to ‘show itself’ and even “understand itself” as a new form or realism.

Rationalism reversed the assumptions of realism, but it did not eliminate realism. Science, generally, does what Descartes did. It accepts that the mind will always condition reality outside of the mind, but having accepted that, it forgets it and assumes that the reality that exists outside of the mind is ‘more real’ than the reality in the mind. Descartes was roundly criticized for doing this, but this was not enough to rid the new empiricism of its realistic bias. Without the rationalistic foundation that theistic realism supplied, empiricists were left to shift their foundation of reality from supernatural immaterialism to natural materialism. And the ‘objectifying power’ of realism found expression in the other ‘substance’, i.e. matter (body).
This flaw is understandable if we look at the certainty we experience in relation to the existence of objects outside our minds. Descartes, scientists, and people in general tend overwhelmingly to experience objects outside their minds as objective. How do we account for this fact? How do these objects exist without our being there to see them or interact with them? Materialism supplies an answer: they are made of something that can exist independently of us. And when this idea is extended to the human body, we have the materialistic basis of all reality.

With matter as the only substance comprising reality, the rationalistic element of empiricism is easily ‘forgotten’. Science, in general, disregards the existence of the mind as scientists go about their business. So when science ‘discovers’ new objects, theories, or laws, it forgets that their discoveries are actually renderings of their own minds in conjunction with the physical world. And by ‘renderings’ I do not mean fictional accounts. The ‘objectivizing power’ of realism is strong and is experienced to be fundamentally different from experiences of fiction, so scientists would tend to deny that their understandings, laws and theories are mere fictional accounts. Yet there is a nagging element of fiction in them. This element is the rational component of empiricism. Denying the existence of the mind’s part in determining reality, whether tacitly or explicitly, distorts the empiricist transformation of the realist: rationalist dichotomy.

Berkeley rejected materialistic empiricism and sought to re-establish theistic realism in conjunction with empiricism. He argued that all objects considered material are actually combinations of ideas (Berkeley, 1988). That is, when we interact with a ball, we see its shape, size, color; feel its texture, etc. If all these sense data were to be eliminated, then the ball would disappear. In other words, the only way a human being can know a physical object outside of his mind is via sense data. Therefore, it is the sense data that exist, not matter. And when he tried to account for his knowledge that these objects exist independently of his interacting with them, he offered that these sensual ideas are in the mind of God. Hence, the objects will exist when we aren’t around to experience them.

Berkeley’s idealistic empiricism sought not only to counter the power of a growing materialistic empiricism but also to re-establish a theistic, supernatural realism. But Berkeley didn’t need God to
account for what psychologists refer to as ‘object constancy’ or ‘object permanence’. He could have argued a straight rationalist thesis that holds that we ‘know’ that physical objects remain in tact when we are not interacting with them because that knowledge is in our minds. Our minds ‘tell us’ that some objects are permanent. Whether or not the object actually is in tact when we are not experientially connected to it is impossible to prove. We can only prove the existence of that with which we are in some way in contact. This latter notion is more consistent with quantum physics, and it doesn’t require a return to supernatural theism to support itself.

7. The Phenomenological and Pragmatic Transformations

The battle between realism and rationalism continued into the nineteen and twentieth centuries. Hegel accepted the rationalist thesis that the mind conditions everything outside the mind, but he rejected Kant’s ‘hermetically sealed’ form of rationalism. Hegel couldn’t accept the logical conclusion that Kant’s rationalism forced us to draw, i.e. that the only legitimate study of reality is the study of the human mind. He understood the mind to be one aspect of reality and objects outside of the mind as another aspect. In other words, if we are to talk reality at all, we have to include both mind and matter. Reality, for Hegel and the phenomenologists that followed, is composed of mental and physical phenomena as opposed to being mental ideas and physical objects. Thoughts and feelings are mental phenomena, while bodies and objects in nature are physical phenomena. Both ‘sets’ of phenomena are necessary if we are going to talk meaningfully about reality (Hegel, 1977).

But Hegel moved away from trying to legitimize the reality of matter and placed both things of the mind and things of matter within an overarching Spirit. Mind and matter became manifestations of Spirit. In Hegel, rationalism won out over realism. Idealism contextualized materialism.

Shortly after Hegel, Husserl advanced the theory of intentionality which held that consciousness is consciousness-of-something (Husserl, 1931). By this he meant that when we are conscious, we have to be conscious of something, whether that something is mental (thought, feeling) or physical (bodies, objects). This theory linked inextricably the human mind with an object of some sort. “Pure consciousness” was
impossible. Consciousness always came with an ‘object’. Pure materiality was inconsequential because human beings have to have some sort of contact with an object; otherwise, we would never realize that it existed. And if we never realize that something exists, then how can it be real? Only when we realize its existence is it real. In short, reality is that which is real-for-us.

Husserl’s phenomenology also forced a synthesis of the real and the rational. No longer were we to understand reality as dual in nature: mind vs. matter (or body). Rather, reality was singular; it was composed of phenomena. And these phenomena came in two types: mental and physical. But in order for Husserl to maintain that mental phenomena could be objects of consciousness, he had to split consciousness into that which is conscious (ego) and that which is the object of consciousness (idea, feeling, etc.). When he did this, he opened the door for a continuation of the battle between the rational and the real. Just like theistic realism split mind into spirit and mind, phenomenology split mind into transcendent ego and object of consciousness, whether that object is mental or physical. This created two distinct ontological worlds, though as subsets within one phenomenological world. Just like Hegel did in arguing for the equality of existence between mental and physical phenomena only to ‘break form’ and assert that both mental things and physical things are part of a bigger system (spirit), Husserl argued for the equality of mental and physical phenomena, only to ‘break form’ and assert that the essence of any mental or physical phenomenon lay in the mind.

For instance, if an ‘equality-oriented’ phenomenologist were to study a physical object that he (let’s say) was not familiar with, he would seek to describe its appearance and movements as best he could. This relationship looks like this: “I”— [consciousness – object], where the “I” represents that which is conscious and [consciousness – object] represents the inextricable connection between consciousness and an object of consciousness. When looking at a physical object, the “I” could be neglected or overlooked. The researcher would be interested in the object and lose sight of the functioning “I” (just like material empiricists lose sight of the function of their own minds when studying a physical thing), but when the “I” is “looking at” a thought, an idea, or a feelings, then its function is hard to overlook. When studying the contents of our own minds, we seem to be forced to recognize the existence of that which is “looking at” or
studying those mental contents. The ‘that’ which is studying is, for Husserl, the transcendent ego. Once it is admitted that there is a transcendent ego studying the mental contents of one’s own mind, then we have an ontology that is constituted by two distinct components: transcendent ego and [consciousness – object]. Positing the existence of a transcendent ego puts the phenomenologists back into the dualistic ballpark. Now there exists a mental or mind phenomenon (ego) that studies mental objects (ideas, feelings) and physical objects (body, objects in nature), and we’re back where we started, though on a fundamentally different plane. Now the question is: in which area does reality lie, the transcendent ego or the objects of consciousness?

Husserl eventually gave way to the ‘objectivizing power’ of “God” (or the rational), just as Hegel had done. The continental European bias toward the rational became evident when Husserl located essences (the ‘real’ phenomena) in the mind and awarded physical objects dependent ontological status. His ‘transcendental phenomenology’ affirmed the superiority of rationalistic reality at the expense of the realistic.

To counter Husserl’s rationalist bias, existential phenomenologists like Sartre and Heidegger denied the existence of a transcendental “I”. Sartre said in effect that when we study a physical or mental phenomenon, we engage in a series of experiences, some that are constituted with the “I” and some that are not. For instance, when we study a physical object and are not aware of the fact that we are studying that object, our consciousness is non-reflective. We are ‘into’ what we are studying. When we study our own mental contents, we are equally absorbed in the enterprise. It doesn’t matter if the object of consciousness is mental or physical; there is no “I” in either of these consciousnesses that studies these phenomena. But when we reflect upon ourselves as studying the physical object or the contents of our minds, then our consciousness includes the “I”. Understanding the “I” as a component of consciousness at one moment in time (self-reflection) and not as a component of consciousness at another moment in time (non-reflection) rids us of the notion of the transcendent ego. There is no ego that oversees non-reflective and self-reflective experiences but rather one that goes in and out of consciousness (Sartre, 1957).
While Sartre got rid of the notion of the transcendental ego, he did not get rid of the notion of essences and the duality of being. He divided being into the ‘for-itself’ and the ‘in-itself’, where the ‘for itself’ referred to self-reflective experiences and the in-itself referred to non-reflective experiences. For example, when we look at a tree non-reflectively, the tree represents the ‘in-itself’ of the phenomenon of the tree. If someone were to ask us what we are doing while we are looking at the tree, we could reflect upon ourselves looking at the tree and then tell the person what we are doing. This reflecting upon ourselves looking at the tree represents the ‘for-itself’ aspect of the being of the tree. The ‘for-itself’ is constituted by self-reflection and the looking at the tree. If we then reflect upon our image of the tree ‘in our head’ and ‘study’ it, the image of the tree in our head represents the ‘in-itself’ of the cognition.

If this analysis is accurate, then the ‘in-itself’ of the tree (in nature) is fundamentally different from the tree as an objective physical existent (as science mistakenly tends to affirm). And the ‘in-itself’ of the image (or cognition) allows the phenomenologist to affirm the separate though equal existence of mental phenomena (which science cannot do without reducing mental phenomena to matter). But in positing the split existence of the ‘for-itself’, Sartre, like Hegel and Husserl before him, allows for a duality of being. As per our example, the self-reflective experience consists of ‘self-reflection’ and looking-at-the-tree, or, to simplify: the self and looking at the tree. As soon as the self is understood to exist over and against the looking-at-the-tree, the rational is pitted against the real, where the rational is represented by the self and the real by both physical phenomena outside of the mind (e.g. tree) and mental phenomena inside the mind (e.g. image of the tree). But in Sartre’s case, instead of opting for rationalism to be the locus of being (phenomenal essences), he opted for realism.

As applied to our example, the essence of the tree lies not in the tree-as-physical-object (this is naïve science and common sense realism) but in the tree-as-related-to-us. The tree-as-related-to-us is represented in the non-reflective experience of looking at the tree (tree as in-itself) and the self-reflective experience of looking at the tree (tree as for-itself). In both experiences, the looking-at-the-tree is where the phenomenal essence of being (reality) is located, and not in the self, which accompanies the looking-at-the-tree in the self-reflective experience.
When Sartre got rid of the transcendent ego, he was left with the task of locating essences somewhere. Since he got rid of the rationalistic “power” component, i.e. the ego, he was left with the realistic “power” component, i.e. the physical phenomenon. He overlooked the rest of the rationalistic component (self) after he extracted the transcendent ego. Just like the scientists who accepted empiricism and then overlooked its rationalistic component, existential phenomenologists like Sartre and Heidegger overlooked the rationalistic component of phenomena and located essence “in the things themselves”.

The phenomenologists divided themselves up into the same old camps: existential phenomenologists were transformed realistic empiricists and the transcendental phenomenologists were transformed rationalistic empiricists. The synthesis of mind and body, where the mental phenomena and the physical phenomena were equal in their claims to ontological status, was short-lived. It was overtaken by the realistic/rationalistic bias.

When empiricism tried to synthesize the mind and the body or the rational and the real, it gave lip service to the rationalistic aspect of the combination and acted as if the realistic aspect was the only reality. Allowing itself with materialism, empiricism forced its rationalistic element into the background, sometimes so far into the background that it was denied, even while it was operating within the minds of scientists. Materialism, equipped with a heavy dose of ‘objectivizing power” began to account for rationalistic components (thoughts, ideas) by reducing them to forms of matter. Science accepted the Cartesian circle as consistent and real. Phenomenology picked up the torch that empiricism dropped and forced a synthesis of the mind and the body, the mental and the physical (or material). It allotted equal reality to both things mental and physical. Husserl believed that he had developed a new, more inclusive, science, the science of phenomena (Husserl, 1931). But this science soon split into rationalistic and realistic camps, and the mind:body split continued.

Pierce, James and Dewey did the same thing in America that Hegel and Husserl did in Europe. Pragmatism (or what James called a radical empiricism) sought to elevate the reality of the forgotten rationalism constituting materialistic empiricism. The pragmatists maintained that the mind cannot be eliminated from reality or derived from another reality (matter) but that both mind and matter were needed
to discuss reality at all; mind and matter were two sides of the same reality coin. Their ‘acid test’ of reality was ‘does it work’, does the combination of things mental and physical work together in a whole (James, 1981).

While Continental European philosophy centered on the rationalistic aspect of reality, seeking essences, whether mind-based or body (matter)-based, the American philosophy of pragmatism centered on the materialistic aspect. James could not get rid of metaphysics like the materialistic empiricists and analytic philosophers sought to do. He could not accept the narrow limitations of materialistic science. But neither could he admit to the existence of rationalistic essences. So the pragmatists, like the phenomenologists, transformed reality into a necessary combination of the mental and the physical and used practical coherence of the various and sundry systems (combinations) to elevate pragmatic realities above pure relativism. Not ‘everyone’s’ reality was equally ‘real’, but rather those realities that combine rationalistic (mental) and realistic (physical) aspects into a coherent whole had greater claim to reality.

Both philosophies transformed idealistic and materialistic empiricism in the same way empiricism transformed realism and rationalism. They just did it from opposing ends. Continental philosophy sought to raise the reality status of matter and the body, and American pragmatism sought to raise the reality status of the mental and the mind. James included religious experience as legitimate ontology, whereas his empirical cohorts tended to reject all forms of the ‘supernatural’ from the status of ontology. Sartre eliminated the transcendent ego and located essential being (essences) in the things themselves instead of locating them within the mind (Husserl) or an overarching Spirit (Hegel). But the “objectivizing power” of the dual nature of reality, of the mind and body, the mental and the physical, kept re-asserting itself every time an integration of the two was attempted.

Viewed from the perspective of a battle between the mind and the body or the mental and the physical for ontological supremacy, the history of philosophy (and all other areas of human life) could be understood as a recognition of two opposing worlds that have been trying, paradoxically, to integrate themselves as they sought to establish supremacy over each other. Viewed from this perspective, the era of supernatural realism (ancient and medieval eras) consisted of the supremacy of the mind over the body,
though the mind was split into two components, the natural and the supernatural, where the supernatural controlled the whole system. When science started debunking long held religious ideas, the reified mind of the supernatural eventually collapsed into the mind proper and became the ‘self’ of psychology. Once the supernatural was made natural, the mind qua mind and the body continued their fight for supremacy though without the supernatural distortions. The mind in Continental Europe held on to its supremacy in the face of a growing materialistic science through Descartes’ and Kant’s rationalism, which served to raise the legitimacy of the natural mind over against the supernatural mind while it countered the growing strength of materialism. The body (matter) of Anglo-American philosophy held on to its supremacy in the face of a still strong reified rationalism (supernaturalism) and a growing natural rationalism, but it couldn’t get rid of natural rationalism no matter how hard it tried. Pragmatism attempted to reestablish the ontological legitimacy of the mind within a materialistic framework.

8. A Brief Summary

Though empiricism succeeded initially in synthesizing rationalism and realism, it split itself into materialistic and rationalistic camps. The materialist camp consisted of Locke and Hume’s materialistic-leaning empiricism and the rationalistic camp consisted of Berkeley’s rationalistic-leaning empiricism. Though the dualism of mind and body integrated itself as separate but equal realities by ridding rationalism of its supernatural distortion, it could not integrate natural rationalism with natural materialism. The “objectivizing power” of each ontological area was too strongly opposed to each other.

Though natural rationalism succeeded in integrating supernatural rationalism with natural rationalism by collapsing the supernatural into the natural, it did not succeed in swallowing up realism. Realism just shifted its weight from supernatural rationalism to materialism. So when empiricism synthesized the rational with the real, it did so by synthesizing the mental with the material. But the strength of the materialist aspect of this dual ontology has been winning out in practice, so much so that pragmatism had to counter it in an attempt to once again even the playing field.
Though natural rationalism succeeded in countering the power of a growing materialistic empiricism, which was more accurately, I think, a naïve realism, through the work of Kant, it eventually had to give way to the new influx of realism in the form of Hegelian phenomenology. Kant could not eliminate the power of the body (matter) no matter how hard he tried. Hegel brought it back in his phenomenology, changing realism to include both mental and physical phenomena. Ontology was once again transformed to another level.

The underlying power of integration would not let either rationalism (mind) or realism (body) win out over the other. Kant’s rationalism tried to eliminate materialism altogether, and it failed. Materialistic empiricism, analytic philosophy and positivism tried to eliminate rationalism altogether, but they failed. Neither side would permit the other side to swallow it up. And both sides tried to integrate themselves with each other, first through the empirical synthesis, and later through the phenomenological/pragmatic synthesis. But both of these attempts at synthesis failed as the “objectivizing power” of each camp asserted itself in the mind:body developments within the transformed ontological structure.

What I hope to offer in the following pages is a third attempt at synthesizing mind and body, the mental with the physical, and the many with the one. This time I trust that the synthesis will ‘take’ and form an actual integration of mind and body, equalizing the power of the mental with the physical, and uniting the many with the one in one ontological structure. I certainly cannot guarantee its success, but I also certainly cannot deny in myself the need to try.
PART 2: Experientialism

1. The Structure of Experience: A Definition

In attempting to integrate the mind & body, the mental & physical, and the many & the one, beyond the historical efforts that have already taken place, I found it necessary to develop a fundamentally new perspective and to re-organize our current vocabularies to fit this perspective. In doing so, I certainly do not wish to disregard these ‘isms’ and ‘ologies’ or to fail to recognize my great debt to them and those who developed them. It is out of a profound respect for the power of realism and rationalism and for all those who sought to integrate them that I offer this work.

Experientialism maintains that experience equals reality, and that experience is constituted by six components: cognition, affect, behavior, sensation, the environment, and the “I”. Consciousness, on the other hand, is constituted by five components: cognition, affect, behavior, sensation, and the environment. This distinction is heuristic rather than ontological. Whether or not we maintain that consciousness exists prior to experience and that experience is ultimately ‘founded upon’ consciousness is of little concern, because it is only out of experience that we can make any claim about consciousness. It is only out of experience that we can make any objective claim at all.

Cognition refers to all the thoughts, ideas, images, understandings, cogitations, calculations, etc. that ‘go through our minds’. Affect refers to feelings, emotions, and moods. Behavior refers to our bodies in motion, whether that motion is internal as in physiology or external as in comportment. Sensation refers to the functioning of our five senses (seeing, hearing, etc.). Environment refers to the world around us, including our own bodies. And the “I” refers to the function of ownership, i.e. my thought, my feeling, my behavior, my sensation, and my environment/body.

2. The Interdependence of Components of Experience

All of these components are necessary if experience is to exist. If one of these components were to be eliminated, all would be eliminated. For example, if environment were to be eliminated, then there
would be no world around us: no people, no objects, no earth, no air, no space, no physical body. There would just be ‘us’, whatever ‘us’ would be, existing in a vacuum, which, it seems, is impossible.

Supernatural realism offers that there would exist a soul, i.e. a disembodied existent, among other disembodied existents, perhaps in a non-physical place where souls can congregate, i.e. heaven. But the problem with this notion, aside from our inability to verify souls and heaven sensually, is that any such belief is part-and-parcel experiential. Whether or not there actually are souls or heaven is of absolutely no consequence, because we cannot ‘get out of’ the experiential structures within which we participate to grasp this “objective” reality.

For example, if I were to maintain that my soul will continue on after my death, the experience within which I participate would look like this:

Cognition: My soul will continue on after I die
Affect: confidence
Behavior: talking
Sensation: other person
Environ: room
“I”: ownership

If I were then asked to prove this to someone who did not understand or agree with me, then I might refer to the Bible for support. But such a referral would look like this:

Cognition: It says in Revelations….
Affect: increased confidence
Behavior: looking at Bible
Sensation: Bible
Environment: room
“I”: ownership

I would still be ‘in’ the experiential structure. Simply because I refer to a book that is held by some people to be the authoritative word of God does not mean that I have somehow transcended experience. Nor because my confidence increases the more I quote from that book does it mean that I am any closer to
any absolute objective reality-beyond-experience. It merely means that I am very confident in what I am saying.

So when responding to the supernatural realist, the experientialist might re-frame the supernaturalist’s claim by placing it in experience, and keeping it there.

If sensations were to be eliminated from experience, then we would not be able to see, hear, taste, smell or feel anything. If there existed an environment for us to be in contact with, we would not know it because there would be no way for us to be in contact with it.

This idea is challenged by transcendental meditators who maintain that they can achieve a state of pure consciousness, where all contact with the world around them is transcended. It is also challenged by people who have done work with sensory deprivation. They contend that when people are cut off from all sensory input, then they will hallucinate a world of their own. This is supposed to indicate that sensory input is not necessary for there to be cognitive functioning.

In rebuttal to both of these challenges, it could be argued that the transcendental meditator might be successful in lowering the threshold of consciousness in relation to the environment or even of achieving an altered state whereby he would not remember anything happening around him for a period of time, but this does not mean that he has eliminated all sensory input. The same could be true for the people in sensory deprivation tanks. They might have their sensory input greatly diminished, and this diminishment prompts them to hallucinate as a form of compensation, but this does not mean that they have successfully eliminated all sensory input. If all sensory input were eliminated, we would be unconscious or dead.

If we eliminate the behavioral component of consciousness, then we would not be aware of any physiological activity within our body or that our bodies are comporting themselves in relation to an environment. In effect, we would be unconscious or dead.

Arguments against this idea can easily be found in our beliefs about, and empirical evidence for, unconscious states of being. We are not aware of physiological activity or our bodily comportment if we are asleep or in some other unconscious state, and yet we exist. Therefore, ontology includes conscious
and unconscious states of being. Hence, that which is real must be something more than experience; it must be something that includes experience as a part of existence.

The argument against this notion is that any claim we make about unconscious states is made consciously. We know that there are unconscious states of being because we infer from observation of others and possibly ourselves if videotaped that such states exist. We also infer that we must have been unconscious if the last thing we remember while conscious differs significantly from what we experience now; things have changed. But in both of these instances, it is the inference that is real. Whether or not there exist unconscious states beyond the experiential inference is wholly inconsequential.

If we eliminate the affective component of experience, then we would be reduced to automatons or machines. We could think without feeling anything in relation to our thinking, i.e. no interest, no excitement, no boredom, no apathy, no confidence, no indifference. In effect, we would be unconscious, inhuman, or dead.

Materialistic science offers the strongest argument I know against this claim. For if everything is made out of matter, then emotions are made out of matter. Science has identified the limbic system of the brain as the center for emotions and various neurotransmitters as causally related to alterations in emotion. It posits that stimuli from outside and inside the human organism will cause a response from the nervous system, which will then stimulate other areas of the body, and cause a variety of behaviors that will, in turn, effect the environment; and the deterministic cause-and-effect chain continues indefinitely.

We will deal extensively with materialistic science’s contentions throughout this work. Suffice it to say right now that experientialism will argue that to the extent that science reduces feelings and emotions to the workings of matter, it disregards the existence of the feelings and emotions that drive the very work scientists do; it skews experience toward its environmental component, and hence it provides us with a distorted version of reality.

If we eliminate the cognitive component from consciousness, we would not be able to understand anything about the world around us or the world inside us. We would, in effect, be unconscious or dead.
Again, science offers a strong argument against this idea, not because the total elimination of brain activity would be equivalent to death, and in death there is no consciousness, but because its materialistic basis does not support the experientialist contention that experience equals reality. For science, reality is something independent, as well as constitutive, of the human mind. Cognition is reduced to the material functioning of the brain and other related biological entities. Hence, if the brain ceases to function, then we are not conscious. We are, in effect, dead.

Again, the experientialist argument in relation to science will be developed throughout this entire work. The extent to which science reduces cognition to electro-chemical activity in the brain is the extent to which it disregards the thoughts and ideas that direct the very work scientists do. When cognition is reduced to matter in motion, then experience is skewed and reality is distorted.

3. A Meta-Experiential Construct

When a creationist claims that God created and sustains the world, she (let’s say) is making an objective claim. She is claiming that this is so not only for her but for everybody, whether everybody believes this or not. When an evolutionist claims that the universe started with the Big Bang and develops and changes through the laws of evolution, he (let’s say) is also making an objective claim. Both the creationist and the evolutionist are claiming that the experience within which they are operating exists because of some causes other than experience itself, i.e. that their very claims are the product of processes other than the experience within which their claim exists.

When asked to support or prove her claim, a creationist might quote the Bible, disclose personal experience, relay testimony, give a rational argument, etc. When asked to support or prove his claim, an evolutionist might convey claims from geology, paleontology, comparative anatomy, etc. These sets of experiences might look like this:
**Creationist**

Cognition:  God created the world and us  
Affect:    confidence  
Behavior:  talking  
Sensation:  other person  
Environ:  room  
“I”:  ownership  

Which is replaced by:  
Cognition:  bible quote  
Affect:    increased confidence  
Behavior:  reading  
Sensation:  bible  
Environ:  room  
“I”:  ownership

**Evolutionist**

Cognition:  We and the universe evolved from primordial matter  
Affect:    confidence  
Behavior:  talking  
Sensation:  other person  
Environ:  room  
“I”:  ownership  

Which is replaced by:  
Cognition:  Paleontology data  
Affect:    increased confidence  
Behavior:  reading (from text)  
Sensation:  text  
Environ:  room  
“I”:  ownership
Though both creationist and evolutionist are making objective claims, neither of them get outside of their respective experiential structures to make good or prove the objectivity of their claim. And neither of them will ever get outside of the experiential structures within which their claims exist. Any attempt to get out of the structure of experience will land them back in experience. If this is so, then the referent of their respective claims (e.g. an actual God’s act of creation and actual matter’s evolutionary processes) must be owned [by the experiencer]. It is the creationist’s claim that God created the universe; it is the evolutionist’s claim that the universe evolved from primordial matter. Whether God “actually” created the universe, or whether it “actually” evolved from primordial matter is wholly inconsequential. What “is” consequential is that we believe, hold, are certain of, or have faith in the claims we make.

When someone makes an objective claim and assumes that the ‘reality’ that supposedly corresponds to his (let’s say) claim is somehow greater or more ontologically powerful than his claim itself, then he is creating a meta-experiential construct. A meta-experiential construct is a cognition that is held to correspond with a reality beyond experience, a ‘reality’ that somehow determines, creates, and/or sustains experience itself. But since we cannot get beyond experience, then every objective cognition that is held to be beyond experience is fundamentally false. It is false not because it does not accurately capture the reality corresponding to the claim; it is false because it assumes that we can get outside of the experiential structure and grasp ‘objective’ reality.

Objective claims or beliefs are objective inasmuch as they are components of experience. When they are held to transcend experience, then they lose their objectivity and their reality. They become unrealities, types of reified experiences, experiences made into something outside of or beyond themselves. When we make an objective claim without owning the objectivity of that claim, while maintaining the objectivity of the claim, then we are creating a meta-experiential construct. For instance, when a theist claims that he (let’s say) is doing X because it is God’s will for him to do X, while not owning the claim, then he is denying ownership of the claim to the degree that he understands himself as a vessel through which God is imparting His will. Likewise, when an evolutionist claims that she (let’s say) is doing Y because her genes dispose her to do Y within environment E, while not owning her own claim, then she is
creating a meta-experiential construct. In order to avoid the criticism of creating a meta-experiential construct, the creationist and the evolutionist must own the objectivity of their own claims. Their claims can be rendered: My doing X is God’s will [for me] and My doing Y is the result of my genetic structure within a certain environment [for me]. Whether or not their objective claims actually “capture” a referent beyond experience is totally inconsequential.

Experientialism, as an ontology, stands as a whole, opposed to the reductionism of materialism, the reductionism of rationalism, and the distorted reductionism of supernatural realism. It seeks neither to replace these ontologies with yet another objectivistic ontology nor to develop a pure relativistic ontology, but to integrate these two ontological perspectives into a new ontology that combines relativism and objectivism, where the rational and the real cannot be pulled apart from each other so that one can dominate the other. It seeks to integrate the rational with the real, the mind with the body, and the many with the one, and to refuse the ascendancy of either of them.

4. The Structure of Experience: An Analysis

When we look at a tree, do we see a product of God’s creation (supernatural realism), something conditioned entirely by our own mind (rationalism), ideas of extension, size, shape, color, and texture that exist in and independently of our minds (idealism, or rationalistic empiricism), a collection of particles that take up space (materialism), qualities of extension, size, shape, color, and texture that exist in the objects themselves (materialistic empiricism), a phenomenon whose essence lies in the tree’s connection to the human mind (existential phenomenology), a phenomenon whose essence lies in the mind’s connection to the tree (transcendental phenomenology), or an object that is a part of a coherent combination of physical and mental existents (pragmatism)?

All of these ‘isms’ and ‘ologies’ have sought to account for the reality of this tree by positing ‘other’ realities. Supernatural realism posits the reality of God to account for the existence of the tree; rationalism posits the existence of a particularly constituted mind (Kant) that conditions all physical reality; materialism posits the existence of particles that take up space and move according to their own natures
(atoms); empiricism posits the existence of ideas or qualities of objects known through perception or sensation; phenomenology posits essences that inhere within the mind’s connection with the object of consciousness or within the object’s connection with the mind; pragmatism posits the existence of both mental things and physical things combined into a coherent ‘world’.

Stated this way, we can trace the development or evolution of mind-body dualism and see how those realities that have been ‘added’ to the reality of the tree in order to account for the tree’s existence reflect a ‘coming together’ or ‘synthesis’ of the mental and the physical.

For instance, the early development of supernatural realism fought to reign supreme over all other ontologies (reality structures). To the extent that it succeeded it perpetuated a distorted form of rationalism. The belief that human qualities of power, justice, virtue, knowledge, love, mercy, etc. existed to an infinite degree outside of human beings and within a being wholly independent of them was not held merely to be a belief, i.e. a rationalistic entity. Rather, it was held to be a reality not only independent of human beings and human minds, but also one that created and sustained the existence of human beings. Human beings were dependent upon this ‘reality’ for their very existence. Such an inversion of rationalism had to be addressed before the mind:body problem or the dualism that underlay supernatural realism could be seen.

Descartes initiated the process of inverting supernatural realism and returning rationalistic components to their rightful owners, i.e. human beings, by founding ultimate reality within the human mind. Kant finished the job that Descartes started by eliminating all possibility of knowing the world around us as it is and confining ultimate reality to the structure of the human mind. The development of Descartes through Kant solidified supernatural realism’s return to rationalism. Human beings reclaimed their own qualities. Now rationalism could be seen more clearly as natural rather than supernatural.

But natural rationalism put us in the position of denying our own experience of the world around us, i.e. nature! It forced us to realize that our minds ‘got in the way’ or ‘conditioned’ everything we came into contact with in the world around us, but we couldn’t get away from the ‘objectivizing power’ of realism. We ‘knew’ that the tree we were looking at existed independently of us and had a nature of its own, even though we also knew that the only way we could know the tree we were looking at was through
our minds! The two knowledges opposed each other and we were either caught in a logical contradiction or in living a paradox.

With supernatural realism greatly reduced in its power to account for the tree’s existence, we were forced to turn our accountings elsewhere. But all of these new accountings were to take place on the plane of naturalism.

Many people argued that the tree existed independently of us because it is made of things that do not need us around for them to function (e.g. atoms). But this notion defied experience also because when people look at a tree they do not see a bunch of atoms traveling around at great speeds, let alone even tinier electrons traveling around the nucleus of these atoms. To a person not familiar with physics or disposed to thinking in these terms, this notion might seem like science fiction or the product of insanity.

One way to bridge materialism with everyday experience is to posit the existence of sense data: extension (3-dimensionality), size, shape, color, texture, etc. We can ‘see’ the tree as a three-dimensional object that is a certain size, shape, color, etc. This notion aligns well with everyday experience, and it is a way to keep our minds ‘grounded’ in the world around us. Even a person who, from time to time, hallucinates a tree will have to admit, during times of lucidity, that the actual tree possesses certain qualities that are ‘more real’ than the qualities possessed by the hallucinatory tree.

But what if one person sees the object one way and another person sees it another way, and neither of them can ‘get out of’ their way of seeing. The person hallucinating can become lucid and then understand his hallucinations in terms of his lucid experience, but a color-blind person cannot (unless anatomically or physiologically manipulated) see the same quality that a color-seeing person could see. And if the color-blind people in the world greatly outnumbered the color-seeing people, then we might have a much different science of color than we currently have. Right now, because the color-seeing people greatly outnumber the color-blind people, the science of color recognizes the existence of certain colors that color-blind people do not. But the reverse also can be argued: that color-blind people recognize the existence of colors that color-seeing people do not. For instance, a color-blind person might see two shades of a particular color whereas a color-seeing person would see the same two colors as quite divergent.
Which one is right? Are the colors shades of one color or two distinctly different colors? If neither the color-blind person nor the color-seeing person can get outside of his experience, then the idea that there is an ultimate reality of color and that both of these people cannot be ‘right’ is fundamentally in error.

Color is certainly not the only quality possessed by objects in the world around us that admits of discrepancy in human experience. A child can experience the house she (let’s say) is living in as ‘really big’ only to leave the house and return to it as an adult and experience it as ‘really small’. The pure (Kantian) rationalist would argue that the size of the house is the product of how the mind ‘conditions’ it. Unfortunately, Kant’s rationalism does not include developmental ideas. Kant’s ‘mind’ is an absolute unchanging structure that once and for all conditions the world around us according to its own ‘rules of conditioning’. This is one reason Hegel rejected the logical conclusions that Kant’s rationalism forces upon us and opted to include the realistic component of material reality. This forced Kantian rationalism to deal with materialistic realism. The two realities forged a dialogue that takes place in time. The mind interacts with matter; and matter, in turn, acts upon mind; which, in turn, interacts with matter, etc. This dialogue between mind and matter forced us to think in terms of the passage of time: history. It introduced the notion of development and change into Kant’s rationalistic unchanging structure of the mind. Locke’s materialistic empiricism already introduced change into ontology by negating the notion of innate ideas and replacing it with learning from experience. So when Darwin came along, he was already disposed to thinking in terms of changing ontology. His theory of evolution followed naturally from this disposition.

Though the empiricist’s positing of sense data to account for the reality of a tree helped ‘ground’ the human mind in ‘reality’ and gave diverging experiences of physical objects in the world a ground upon which to agree, it was not enough to synthesize mind and body. As long as people don’t see things the same way, we are going to have ontological discrepancies. And when change is introduced into ontology, then we have an even greater problem. Now we have to come to agreement on how any given object in the world around us changes. We need to agree not only on the ‘anatomy’ but the ‘physiology’ of the ‘body’.

From the experientialist point of view, the tree that we are looking at is an integral component of experience. The experience can be rendered thusly:
The tree is an object in our environment that we are sensing and know to be a tree. It is not simply an object that exists independently of our minds that ‘comes into’ our minds unmodified or unconditioned (realism, materialistic realism, naïve materialistic empiricism). Nor is it something that is the product of the structure of our minds (rationalism). Rather, it is a component of experience that cannot be separated from the other components of experience.

When we attempt to separate the objects in our environment from experience and posit a reality other than experience to account for them, we distort reality. Experience will not ‘allow’ us to get outside of itself. Every attempt we make at getting beyond experience and offering up an alternative ground upon which to base experience, we land up back in experience, though we might not know it.

For instance, the scientist who looks at a tree and posits that the tree is made of atoms that are constituted in a particular way, move in a particular way, and interact with each other in a particular way does nothing to get outside of the experiential structure within which he (let’s say) participates. Rather, he explains the experience within which he participates (depicted above) by participating in another experience that bears an explanatory relationship to the original experience. Incredibly oversimplified, this structure could be represented in this fashion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognition:</th>
<th>that is a tree</th>
<th>Cognition:</th>
<th>It is made of atoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect:</td>
<td>interest</td>
<td>Affect:</td>
<td>interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior:</td>
<td>looking at tree</td>
<td>Behavior:</td>
<td>reflectively looking at tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation:</td>
<td>the tree</td>
<td>Sensation:</td>
<td>the tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment:</td>
<td>outside</td>
<td>Environment:</td>
<td>outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”:</td>
<td>ownership</td>
<td>“I”:</td>
<td>ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This structure might be allotted to Democritus, an early Greek philosopher who believed that there existed these indestructible tiny particles that composed all of what we call reality. Other Greek philosophers discussed the idea; if they accepted it, then they applied it to other areas of experience; and if they rejected it, then it dropped from their explanations of experience. Viewed more precisely (though certainly still over-simplified), the experiential structures might look like this:

Cognition: atoms make up everything around us
Affect: confidence
Behavior: reflectively looking at tree
Sensation: tree
Environ: outside
“I”: ownership

↓
Cognition: image of tiny particles in conjunction with knowing that that is a tree
Affect: increased confidence
Behavior: more intensely reflectively looking at tree
Sensation: less clear tree
Environ: outside
“I”: ownership

↓
Cognition: that is grass
Affect: slightly increased confidence
Behavior: looking at grass
Sensation: grass
Environ: outside
“I”: ownership

↓
Cognition: image of tiny particles in conjunction with knowing that that is grass
Affect: slightly increased confidence
Let’s say that the materialist’s experiential structure looks something like the above. In positing that atoms make up all that is around us, he (let’s say) is wholly within the structure of experience. The fact that he is claiming that there are such things as atoms that exist beyond what he is actually seeing exists, but only as a claim. That is, his claim in the first experience is that atoms make up everything around us. This claim is nothing other than an aspect of the cognitive component of the experience within which he participates. He is not looking at the atoms that supposedly make up the tree. Rather, he is looking at the tree itself. The experience within which he participates is constituted in part by the tree, but the tree in the first experience is being reflected upon. Therefore, it has a different quality than if it were not being reflected upon. For instance, if, just prior the reflecting upon the tree, the materialist was looking at the tree and appreciating its splendor, only to pass from this experience to the experience of asking a question in relation to the tree’s constitution, and then to pass into the experience of claiming that the tree is constituted by atoms, then the set of experiences might look like this:

Behavior: looking at tree
Sensation: tree
Environ: outside
“I”: ownership

As we pass from one experience to another we do not get outside of the structure of experience.
• Non-Reflective, Reflective, and Self-Reflective Experience

The first experience in this set can be characterized as non-reflective. A non-reflective experience is an experience that is primarily characterized by the environmental component of experience. That is, the environmental component is focal in the experience; everything else is peripheral. So when the materialist is looking at the tree and feeling aesthetic beauty in relation to it, he is ‘caught up’ in the tree itself. Another type of non-reflective experience might be his looking at the tree like a botanist might look at it as he goes about classifying the tree. In other words, a non-reflective experience is an experience characterized by a focal environmental component.

When the materialist’s experience shifts from “beautiful tree” to “what is the tree made of?”, the focus shifts from the environment (tree) to the cognition (question). The tree, which was being felt aesthetically, is now replaced by the question as to the tree’s constitution. Simply because the materialist’s experience shifts from ‘focal environment’ to ‘focal cognition’ does not mean that he has transcended the experiential structure. Rather, it means that because of “who he is in this situation”, his experiential structure shifts focus from the environmental to the cognitive component. If the person were not a materialistic scientist or philosopher disposed to thinking of reality or being but, instead, an artist disposed to thinking of painting, then his experience might well shift from ‘beautiful tree’ to ‘how can I capture this...
on canvas?”. But since he is a materialistic scientist or philosopher, we will have him shift to “what is this tree ultimately made of?”

The point is, neither the person as materialist or as painter has transcended experience simply because his respective experiential structures have shifted focal components. The materialist participates in an experience focalized by the cognition, “what is this tree ultimately made of?”, and the artist participates in an experience focalized by the cognition, “how can I capture this on canvas?” Each shift is a shift from non-reflective to reflective experience. Reflective experience, then, will be defined as those experiences consisting of cognition as the focal component.

But as the materialist is looking at the tree and experiencing its splendor, his friend asks him what he is doing? His experience now shifts to a self-reflective experience that could look like this:

Cognition: I’m looking at that beautiful tree
Affect: appreciation
Behavior: talking to friend
Sensation: friend
Environ: outside
“I”: ownership

Self-reflective experience refers to experiences in which the cognitive component consists of a cognitivized “I” and a self-indicating component. In this example, the cognitivized “I” is represented by the “I’m” in the cognition, and the self-indicating component is represented by the “looking” in the cognition. The “looking” refers to the behavioral component that points to or indicates him. The “tree” that refers to the actual tree in the environment is not a self-indicating component because it does not serve to point to or indicate the ‘self’, i.e. him.

The materialist has not gotten outside of the experiential structure within which he participates. There is no “I” or ego that transcends the cognition of “I’m looking at that beautiful tree”. In this sense, experientialism concurs with existential phenomenology in its debunking of the transcendental ego, but it doesn’t agree with its claim that the self-reflective experience consists of two parts: an ego and an object-
of-consciousness. The existential phenomenologist might argue here that when the materialist reflects upon his looking at the tree, the mental aspect of his experience consists of his ego (self) and his looking-at-the-tree. But the experience as analyzed above does not have him looking at the tree at all. In fact, he is looking at his friend while he is saying that he is looking at the tree. Are we to hold the idea of “his-looking-at-the-tree” as the object of his ego or self, or are we to hold “his telling-his-friend-that-he-is-looking-at-the-tree” as the object of his ego? If the existential phenomenologist opts for the former, then he (let’s say) gives cognition more ontological weight than the situation within which the person lives, and this idea tends to run contrary to Heidegger’s argument for locating being (reality) within Dasein (being-in…a situation) (Heidegger, 1996). And if the existential phenomenologist opts for the latter, then he merges into Husserl’s territory of a transcendental ego. It is the ‘transcendental ego’ that is aware of the materialist’s act of telling-his-friend-that-he-is-looking-at-the-tree. And Sartre has already rejected that notion.

- **Focal and Peripheral Consciousness**

  Experientially, consciousness is divided into focal and peripheral aspects. The focal aspect refers to that aspect of each component which dominates consciousness. The peripheral aspect refers to all the rest of the contents of consciousness. Peripheral contents vary in their intensity and impact upon the focal content, and all of them have the potential for entering focal consciousness. This can be represented in this fashion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal Consciousness</th>
<th>Peripheral Consciousness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognition: beautiful tree</td>
<td>orientation, realism of tree, knowledge of objects in environment, own body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect: aesthetic feeling</td>
<td>confidence, comfortable, safe,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior: looking at tree</td>
<td>standing, blinking, heart beating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation: tree</td>
<td>objects in environment, own body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ: immediate outside</td>
<td>surrounding environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”: ownership</td>
<td>ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since the person in this example (we’ll say) is in control of himself in this environment, the feeling of confidence is associated with orientation; since the person is familiar with the environment, the feeling of comfort is associated with knowledge of the environment. Both feelings of comfort and confidence support the knowledge of the realism of the tree. Safety is another feeling accompanying orientation in, and familiarity with, the environment. Any of these peripheral feelings could enter focal consciousness. For instance, if the person is asked a question in regard to his safety, he could easily assess his feeling of safety. When he does so, the aesthetic feeling will recede into peripheral consciousness.

The same dynamic could be applied to all contents within peripheral consciousness, even the realism of the tree which is located within the periphery of cognition, though this might well require other contents to enter peripheral consciousness before the realistic aspect of the cognitive periphery could change. For instance, if the person is taking a drug and is beginning to experience its effects, then the periphery of consciousness could be constituted in part by a fuzziness in visual sensation. As this fuzziness gets stronger and the sensation of the tree begins to alter from real to surreal, then the surreal peripheral content might overtake the real peripheral content and the tree will start to be seen as surreal. If the person cannot account through memory and reasoning for the introduction of the surreal aspect of the tree in the cognitive periphery, then he might experience some fear or curiosity in relation to this new content. As the surreal content becomes more pronounced, it could shift into focal consciousness. If the real content should never return to peripheral consciousness, then the person would have to adjust to the surreality of the tree.

Locating realism and surrealism in the peripheral aspect of the cognitive component of consciousness addresses the problem of realism that has plagued the mind:body problem throughout history. “How” we experience objects around us depends upon the contents of the cognitive component of experience in addition to the sensual components. The other components also exert an influence upon the realistic/surrealistic aspect of the cognitive periphery and the sensations. “That” we experience objects around us depends upon the environmental component of experience. Therefore, if we hallucinate a tree (a complete hallucination and not, let’s say, a drug induced alteration of an actual tree), then a tree will not be the content of the environmental component of experience. In this case, we will have confused or conflated
a type of surreal content of cognition with a real content, i.e. we will have understood the surreal content to be real. When we are able to differentiate surreal from real content, then we will have made significant movement toward understanding realism as an aspect of cognition without reducing objects in the environment to contents of the mind and without barring what has traditionally been referred to as the physical environment from being understood as-it-is, i.e. the total conditioning effect of the mind. Experientially, objects in the environment are contents of the environmental component of experience and not separate realities, independent of the “mind”; and the “mind” does not condition all of the objects in the environment (rationalism) because the “mind”, experientially, is nothing other than the contents of the cognitive and/or affective components of experience, depending upon one’s understanding of “mind”.

- **The Cognitivized “I” and the Self-Indicating Component**

  In the self-reflective experience, the cognitive component of consciousness consists of the cognitivized “I” of “I’m”, the self-indicating component of “looking”, and the rest of the cognition of “at that beautiful tree”. Democritus has identified himself as the performer of the behavior of looking. The looking is ‘his’ behavior. The behavior of looking points to or indicates him as the owner of the action. The tree does not coincide with his recognition of himself; rather, his behavior of looking does this. Hence, his behavior in this example is the self-indicating component of the cognitive component of experience. The rest of the cognition refers to what he is looking at. It connects a piece of history with the present moment. But nowhere is there any evidence of a splitting of the cognition into two separate components, i.e. ego and object-of-consciousness. The cognitivized “I”, the self-indicating component, and the rest of the cognition are united into one cognition. And that cognition is owned [by Democritus].

  When Hume sought to find the self through reflection, he could not find it as-it-is. Rather, he always “stumbled upon some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception” (Hume, 1988). When Russell sought to find the self, he noticed that “we always seemed to come upon some particular thought or feeling, and not upon the “I” which has the thought or feeling. Nevertheless there are some reasons for thinking that we are acquainted with the “I”, though the
acquaintance is hard to disentangle from other things” (Russell, 1988). Russell could not isolate the self from the thought or the feeling, but he knew that the self was not limited to the thought or the feeling; it was ‘something more’ (my quotation).

The formula for phenomenology is: $I - [awareness - object]$, where the “$I$” represents the ego, transcendent ego, or self, and the [awareness – object] represents that of which we are aware, whether that be a physical object in our environment or our own thoughts and feelings. In this view, there are two separate but interrelated ‘entities’: 1) the ego, self or “$I$” and 2) that of which the ego is aware. In this view, awareness (or consciousness) is like a medium that connects the “$I$” with the object.

But when we reflect upon ourselves, we will notice that every reflection involves one or more components of consciousness. Hume identified three pairs of sensations: heat:cold, light:shade, and pain:pleasure and one pair of feelings: love:hatred (Hume, 1969). Russell identified two of those components: cognition and affect (Russell, 1988). I wish to extend Russell’s and Hume’s list to include all components of consciousness. The following is a list of examples (with an analysis) of self-indicating components of consciousness:

**Cognition**: When asked what are we thinking about, experience shifts from a reflective experience to a self-reflective experience. The shift looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognition</th>
<th>Affect</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Sensation</th>
<th>Environ</th>
<th>“$I$”</th>
<th>Cognition (what are you doing?)</th>
<th>Affect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$5 \times 6 = 30$</td>
<td>interest</td>
<td>sitting reflectively</td>
<td>whatever we can sense in the room</td>
<td>room</td>
<td>ownership</td>
<td>(what are you doing?)</td>
<td>mild surprise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first experience in this set is a reflective experience. The “I” represents ownership of components of consciousness. The “I” is a function and not an ego, a self, an entity, a phenomenon or a thing. When we participate in a reflective experience, as we do in all experiences, we own the thought, feeling, behavior (both internal and external), sensation, and environment that constitute the experience. The thought \((5 \times 6 = 30)\) is my thought, the feeling (interest) is my feeling, etc.

This ownership is not to be confused with Husserl’s transcendental ego. The transcendental ego is ‘that’ which is thinking a thought. The experiential “I” is not separate from the thought that constitutes the cognitive component of consciousness; it is co-existent with the thought. If the thought were to exist and not co-exist with ownership, then we would not know that we are thinking a thought. The thought might occur, but ‘we’ would not be aware that we are thinking it. “Thoughts” that might ‘occur’ in sleep, while sleep-walking, while in a coma, while undergoing dissociation, or while in some similar altered state of consciousness might not be owned by us. Hence, they would not be real to us. If someone told us that we talked in our sleep, and we accept the idea that the behavior of talking is inextricably associated with cognition, and we have no experiential access to this event (e.g. a video-tape recording), then it is an event beyond our experience, and as such, not real to us. The report of it by the other person and all the
ramifications of that report are certainly real to us though. The upshot of this is that if we do not own our own thoughts, then our cognition would be reduced to the function of a calculator or computer.

When the person in our example asks us what we are doing, our cognition shifts from 5x6=30 to our understanding the words that are being used by the person. It then shifts to “I’m multiplying”. The “I’m” represents the cognitivized “I” and the “multiplying” represents the self-indicating component. To be a little more accurate, the “I” represents the cognitivized “I” and the “am” represents the tense in which the “I” exists. This tense will always be the present tense. Self-reflective experience is always constituted by the immediate present. Our reporting of what we are doing is an immediate present accounting of a past and present event. The self-indicating component of experience is our cognitive activity of thinking, i.e. multiplying. When we are simply multiplying, our multiplying exists without a cognitivized “I”. We are ‘into’ the multiplying. But when we are interrupted, our attention shifts from what we are thinking to reflection on ourselves thinking. Some component or components of experience become focal in conjunction with a cognitivized “I”. In this case, it is our thinking, or the cognitive component of consciousness, that connects us to ourselves. This cognitive component is referred to as a self-indicating component. It is what Russell identified when he reflected upon himself. What Russell couldn’t name or grasp was the ‘something more’ than a cognition. Experientialism refers to this something more as a cognitivized “I” coupled with the function of ownership.

An experience that is constituted by a cognitivized “I” but is missing the function of ownership would be similar to those experiences reported by people who are subjected to repeated sexual trauma. Some people will ‘leave their bodies’ during a sexual encounter with someone they do not want to have sex with. They might not remember the sexual encounter at all, but they might be able to recount their experience of traveling to another part of the room, or to another country, or to ‘another world’. We will develop this idea later in the text. Suffice it to say right now that there are examples of experiences within which a cognitivized “I” might not be matched with the “I” as ownership, or where two experiences occur virtually simultaneously where one of the ‘experiences’ is lost to consciousness, perhaps forever, and the other experience is imaginary.
Affect: When looking at some old photographs, we feel a sudden sadness. This set of experiences might look like this:

Cognition: Here’s one of Sandy on her rocking horse
Affect: interest
Behavior: looking at photograph
Sensation: photograph
Environ: room
“I”: ownership

Cognition: I miss her so much
Affect: sadness
Behavior: staring at photograph
Sensation: less clear photograph
Environ: room
“I”: ownership

Here the first experience is non-reflective. The focus is on the photograph itself. The second experience replaces the first and now the focus is oneself feeling sad. The self-indicating component within this experience is the sadness. The person cognitivizes this sadness in terms of “miss her so much”. She (let’s say) behavioralizes this sadness in the activity of staring. But it is the sadness that points to her as owner of the cognitivized “I”. She could also have thought something like: “(remembering her like) this makes me sad”. Here she uses the term “sad” instead of “miss (her) so much”.

Behavior: When a person dancing becomes aware that someone is looking at him (let’s say) critically, the set of experiences might look like this:

Cognition: nice rhythm
Affect: happy
Behavior: dancing
| Sensation: | partner |
| Environ: | dance floor |
| “I”: | ownership |

| Cognition: | she’s looking at me critically |
| Affect: | confusion |
| Behavior: | dancing with puzzled look |
| Sensation: | other person |
| Environ: | dance floor |
| “I”: | ownership |

| Cognition: | I look stupid, don’t I? |
| Affect: | embarrassment |
| Behavior: | slowed dancing, turning from other’s gaze |
| Sensation: | floor, people’s legs, sick feeling in stomach |
| Environ: | dance floor |
| “I”: | ownership |

In this set of experiences it is the behavior of the individual that serves as the self-indicating component. He is not thinking that the critical gaze of the other is aimed at his hair, his clothes or anything else that might constitute the environmental component of experience. Rather, he is thinking of his dancing. It is his behavior that is attached to the cognitivized “I” within the cognitive component of consciousness, and he owns the entire set of components.

**Sensation:** When a person is working on a puzzle at the kitchen table, he (let’s say) suddenly becomes aware of a hunger pang in his stomach. This set of experiences might look like this:

| Cognition: | where does this piece go? |
| Affect: | slight irritation |
| Behavior: | looking for place for piece |
In this experience, it is the sensation of hunger that serves as the self-indicating component of the cognitive component of consciousness. The hunger is cognitivized as “hungry”, but it could just as well have been cognitivized as “that food smells really good” (not in the context of an olfactory aesthetic analysis) or “I want something to eat”. The sensation is behavioralized as “looking absently (staring briefly) at puzzle”. The person isn’t staring because he has lost interest in the puzzle. Rather, he is staring because the focus of his experience shifts from working the puzzle to realizing his hunger (sensation).

**Environment:** When a person wakes up and doesn’t know where she (let’s say) is, the experiences might look like this:

Cognition: who’s jacket is that?
Affect: curious
Behavior: looking at jacket
Sensation: jacket
Environ: room
“T”: ownership

↓

Cognition: where am I?
In the second experience, it is not the fear that points to or indicates her (let’s say) as owner, but rather the room she is in. The room she is in is an extricable part of the experience within which she participates. It is not a variety of stimuli composed of light and sound waves that causes her nervous system to respond in a particular fashion, which, in turn, activates her feeling of fear, causing her to look around the room. Such is a scientific analysis of the situation. Experientially, such an analysis is an explanatory accounting of her behavior of looking around the room, or of her feeling of fear, or of her thought of “where am I”, and as an explanatory accounting, it is part-and-parcel experiential.

The “I”: There is no example of the component of the “I” because the “I” is a function and not an isolatable ‘thing’ or ‘phenomenon’. The “I” as function can be cognized as in the cognitivized “I” (self-reflective experience), but it cannot be focalized as a separate ‘entity’. Like Hume and Russell, I cannot seem to isolate any ‘I’ or ‘self’ or ‘ego’ in self-reflective experience. It always seems to be attached to some component of consciousness. I can isolate that component and ‘look’ at it through my mental ‘eye’ but when I do this I am merely shifting into a reflective experience where the component itself becomes focal, all of which I own.

- The Question of Relativism

Equating reality with experience, when ‘experience’ is defined as the necessary combination of components of consciousness as owned, opens the door for the development of a pure relativism. For if all experience is structured in this way, then how are we to tell which experiences are ‘right’ and which are ‘wrong’ when we are faced with contradictory claims? After all, the theist claims that God exists independently of human beings, and the atheist claims that God doesn’t exist at all and that he is a product
of human imagination. So is the theist or the atheist right? Or are they both wrong? It seems that they can’t both be right, unless we accept the relativist thesis that all people’s realities are right, even if they contradict each other. Does experientialism side with the relativists? Because if we cannot get outside of experience to any supposed objective reality, then how do we deal with conflicting experiential realities?

For experientialism, traditionally conceived objective reality as reality with a nature of its own apart from human experience must be transformed into the objective reality of experience itself. After Descartes re-located the objective reality of the supernatural from heaven to the natural mind and made the mind the ultimate determiner of reality, he then proceeded to explore the ideas in the mind (at least his mind) so he could elaborate on what constitutes reality. There he found the ideas of God-as-objective-reality and nature-as-objective-reality, among various other ideas. When Kant re-located all supernatural and natural objective realities within the human mind and did not allow them to get back outside of the mind, as Descartes had done, he proceeded to explore the ‘real’ objective reality, i.e. the structure of the mind. All things supernatural and natural were eliminated from objective reality. They were inaccessible. When experientialism re-locates traditionally conceived objective realities within experience, it forces ‘objective reality’ to transform itself not into ideas in the mind (Descartes) or into the structure of the mind (Kant) or into matter existing outside and constitutive of the mind (material empiricism) but into the structure of experience itself.

Experience consists of six components. All of these components must exist for there to be experience. And all of these components support each other and sustain each other’s existence. So when a conflict arises between people who are making opposing objective claims, it is not that which corresponds with the claim that is objective reality, but rather it is how that claim is made that constitutes objective reality. It is not that there actually is a God who created the world that is ontologically relevant; rather, it is that this belief or claim constitutes the cognitive component of a simple, strong and right experiential structure that is ontologically relevant. The same holds true for the idea that we are the product of billions of years of changing matter. Since neither the creationist nor the evolutionist can get outside of the experiential structures within which they participate, any claims they make in relation to objective reality-
beyond-experience are of absolutely no consequence to anyone. What is of great consequence, though, is the fact that they are making, believing in, and acting upon the claim.

If objective reality is relocated within experience, thus making claims relative to each other, and if pure relativism is something difficult, if not impossible, to maintain, then how are we to deal with conflicting objective claims? Let’s look at the structures of two conflicting experiences to answer this question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognition</th>
<th>Cognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>that object is red</td>
<td>that object is dark gray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>Affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confidence</td>
<td>confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking at object, talking</td>
<td>looking at object, talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation</td>
<td>Sensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ</td>
<td>Environ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”:</td>
<td>“I”:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ownership</td>
<td>ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Simple, Strong and Right (SSR) Experiences:**

  Let’s say that both of these experiences are structurally simple, strong, and right (SSR). By *simple* I mean that the components of the experience are singular: there is only one ‘content’ for each component. This means that the components consist of one focal content and a number of subordinate peripheral contents. For instance, in the first experience, the cognition “that object is red” consists of the focal content of the idea “that object is red”, whereas the peripheral contents of the cognitive component are numerous and include: knowing where I am, knowing where the object is in relation to other objects, knowing what some or all of the other objects are, knowing that I have a slight ache in my head, knowing that I am standing and looking at the object, knowing that the object is an object and not a part of that upon which the objects rests, knowing that the object is a solid, three-dimensional object and not a hologram or a hallucination, etc.

  The cognition is accompanied by the affect of confidence. The cognition does not cause the affect, as some sciences or cognitive psychology might maintain. Rather, it co-exists with the affect and the affect supports the existence of the cognition. This means that if the affect were to change, then the cognition
would also change, to one that was consistent with the new affect. The affective component is also focally singular and any other peripheral feelings are subordinate to the focal content. For instance, the focal affect of “confidence” might be accompanied by any number of peripheral contents which include: a feeling of curiosity as to why I am doing what I’m doing, a slight feeling of irritation because I don’t like being in situations where I don’t know exactly what I’m doing, a residual feeling of the embarrassment I felt when I volunteered for this demonstration, an overall feeling of belonging in this room with these people, etc.

The cognition and the affect co-exist with the behavioral component, which is divided into “interior” and “exterior” aspects. The interior aspect refers to the physiology of my body, and the exterior aspect refers to my body’s comportment in relation to my environment. Focally, I am looking at the object in a particular way, so as to describe it’s color. Peripherally, I am in the standing comportment, I am moving my eyes in a certain way, my heart is beating at a certain pace, etc.

The cognition, affect, and behavior are accompanied by a set of sensations. Focally, I see the object. Peripherally, I see the desk upon which the object rests, I see parts of the room, I hear myself talking, I feel a slight pang of hunger, I feel a slight ache in my foot, I smell the odor in the room, I taste the roof of my mouth as my tongue rubs against it, etc.

These four components of consciousness are joined by the environmental component. The focal aspect of this component is the object that I am looking at. The peripheral aspect includes: the room, some objects in the room, the light and sounds in the room, the odors in the room, part of outside the room, etc. The peripheral aspects of the environmental component will tend to mirror the peripheral aspects of the sensational and cognitive components that correspond with the sensational components. For instance, though I am focused on the object while being in a room, the aspects of the room that are in the periphery of my sensual field are also in the periphery of the environmental component of consciousness. The environment is restricted to the focal:peripheral content of the components that make up the experience within which I participate. The environment is inextricably “attached” to the other components of consciousness.
When the content of the focal components of consciousness is singular and the peripheral contents are subordinate to the focal content, then the experiential structure is said to be simple.

An experience is **strong** when it tends to produce *confirmation experiences*. A confirmation experience is an experience, experiential structure, or frame (synonyms) that confirms the rightness of the initial or target experience (i.e. the experience being analyzed). For instance, I might look at the object again when I hear that the other person identified the color of the object as dark gray. The second look serves as a confirmation experience in relation to the first look. I experience it again as red. Another example of a confirmation experience is the creationist’s experience of the Bible passage and the evolutionist’s citing various facts in various sciences. These experiences confirm the rightness of their respective target experiences. Confirmation experiences do not confirm “what” is being held to be real. Rather, they confirm the rightness of the target experience’s structure.

The **rightness** of an experience refers to the contents of the structure in support of the identity of the person. It is ‘who I am in this situation.” For example, the person identifying the object as red is ‘who this person is in this situation”, i.e. me seeing object as red. If I were to be given a drug that alters my perception, and I see the object as dark gray, and I am not aware, either focally or peripherally, that my perception has been influenced by a drug, then ‘who I am in this situation’ is a person who sees the object as dark gray. But it is likely that, if given a drug to alter my perception, the perception will not be exactly the same as it would have been if I had not been given the drug. Hence, it might be very difficult, if not impossible, for me to see the same dark gray while on the drug then I would have seen if not on the drug. But if the difference in perceptions is so slight, then it could be rendered as **insignificant**. And if insignificant, then I could be said to be “who I am in this situation”, i.e. me seeing the object as dark gray.

If both experiences above are simple, strong and right, then that which is being claimed in each experience is real. The object ‘is’ red for the person who sees it as red, and the object ‘is’ dark gray for the person who sees it as dark gray. And neither person can get outside of the structures within which he (let’s say) participates to prove to the other that what he maintains to be the case “is” or “is not” the case.
Experientially, any notion of “is the case” or “is not the case” is opening the door for meta-experiential construction.

Science might respond by arguing that the light wave frequencies that enter both people’s eyes are the same, regardless of how they might be experienced by the people. Therefore, the light waves are objective realities, independent of anyone’s experience. Experientially, the scientist’s assertion that the light waves’ frequencies are the same is based on his indirect observations of such, and these observations are nothing other than sensational components of consciousness. These components inextricably co-exist with the other components of consciousness, as owned. As sensual observations, then, the scientific response would be grounded in experience. And as rational inference, the scientific response would be solidly grounded in the cognitive component of consciousness. But when science moves beyond this and draws the conclusion that these light wave frequencies exist beyond experience, then it has created a meta-experiential construct that has no basis in experience.

Even if light wave frequencies could be directly observed as environmental phenomena, they could only be observed in conjunction with cognition (and the other components of consciousness). Any environment ontologically separated from cognition is a distortion of reality.

A similar criticism can be leveled against supernatural realism. Supernatural realism maintains that certain ‘things’ or ‘beings’ exist and have a nature of their own, whether any human being is around to experience them or not. But when the experiential structure of any supernatural claim is analyzed, it is found that the reality of the thing or being that is claimed is absolutely nowhere to be found. For instance, when a theist claims that:

| Cognition: | God exists |
| Affect: | confidence |
| Behavior: | talking |
| Sensation: | other person |
| Environ: | other person, room |
| “I”: | ownership |
she (let’s say) is making an objective claim, but the claim’s objectivity lies not in the fact that her claim matches any ‘greater reality’ that exists beyond the experiences within which she participates. It lies, rather, in the structure of experience itself. If the experience is simple, strong and right, then the claim is real. And simply because the claim is real does not mean that it matches any ‘greater reality’. Whether it matches a greater reality or not is inconsequential. That which might exist beyond experience is of no use to us. Until it becomes a part of someone’s experience, then it is as good as not existing at all.

Let’s take a hypothetical example to make this clearer. A woman develops some aches and pains that she doesn’t recognize (i.e. cannot identify or label). These are new experiences for her. She goes to a doctor and the doctor listens to her words and observes her behavior and is not sure what to make of it. The list of symptoms doesn’t seem to fit any diagnostic criteria for any known disease, so he consults with another doctor. They decide it might be Y-disease that is afflicting her, and the prescribe medication-P. The medication fails to alter the woman’s ‘symptoms.

If we stop our example here and ask, what is real in this situation, we come up with a list that includes: the woman’s aches and pains, the doctor’s understanding of her aches and pains, the doctor’s confusion, the doctor’s decision, the prescribed medicine, the woman having taken the medication, and the continuation of the aches and pains. Though oversimplified, we could stop here and say that this is all that is real. “That” which is causing the woman’s aches and pains is unknown altogether. That is, there is no thought, idea, image, understanding or cognition of any sort that is attached to an environmental component that is the cause of the woman’s symptoms. The doctor might hypothesize that it is a bacterium that is causing her symptoms, but what is real here is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognition:</th>
<th>I believe that a type of bacterium is causing these symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect:</td>
<td>doubtful confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior:</td>
<td>talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation:</td>
<td>patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ:</td>
<td>room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clearly, we can see here that there exists no actual bacterium within the doctor’s experiential structure. The ‘word’ bacterium is certainly a constituent of the experience. The thought, bacterium, is a part of the structure, but the environmental component of the experience does not contain a bacterium, either focally or peripherally.

The material empiricist might object and say that the bacterium would exist within the patient’s environmental component, not the doctor’s. So let’s analyze the patient’s experiential structure and see.

Her structure might look like this:

Cognition: I believe I have a bacterium in me causing this pain
Affect: doubtful confidence
Behavior: talking (to another person), rubbing belly
Sensation: other person, belly, aches and pains
Environ room, belly

Again, there doesn’t seem to ‘be’ any bacterium in experience. To be sure there is the doubtful belief that a bacterium is causing the aches and pains, and certainly the aches and pains are real, but beyond this she cannot go. Until that bacterium (if it is a bacterium that is causing the aches and pains) enters an experiential structure within which someone is participating, then the existence of it is wholly inconsequential. Even if the doctors ‘discover’ a new bacterium, study it, and develop a drug to combat it, the existence of the bacterium-beyond-experience is inconsequential. But the existence of the bacterium-within-experience is very consequential. The hypothesis that it exists can prompt a set of experiences that lead to a discovery of a new bacterium and eventually to a cure for the disease.

Again, the material empiricist (scientist) might object. He might contend that the doctor who ‘discovers’ the bacterium is finding it ‘in the woman’ or at least outside of his own mind. Clearly, his own mind is not conditioning the existence of the bacterium, as Kant might contend, and, hence, his own
experience is not dictating the existence of the bacterium. In fact, the reverse is the case: the actual bacterium is determining the existence of his sensations and the thoughts connected to them.

This argument, and all materialistic empirical arguments, rests upon a distorted dualistic ontology. Simply because the doctor experiences the bacterium to exist independently of his own mind does not mean that he has broken free of experience and discovered the bacterium as-it-is, apart from human experience.

If we were to analyze this experience, it might look like this:

Cognition: a new ‘thing’
Affect: excited
Behavior: looking through microscope
Sensation: ‘thing’
Environ: lab
“I”: ownership

At this point the doctor is aware that the ‘thing’ he is looking at is a ‘thing’ rather than an aspect of another ‘thing’, etc. But up to this point, ‘what’ the thing ‘is’, other than its being a ‘thing’, is unknown. If we look beyond the focal cognition of “a new thing” and into the periphery of the cognitive component of consciousness, we find the content of ‘thing-ness’ or ‘object-ness’. That is, the doctor could have cognized the ‘thing’ not as a ‘thing’, separate from other ‘things’, but as an extension of another thing, e.g. an anomaly or a deformity. But he did not. And we cannot at this point contend that he did not understand it to be an extension of another thing because it, ‘in fact’, is not an extension but a thing itself, because the experience within which such an understanding exists does not yet exist! That experience in which the doctor contends that the ‘thing’ he is looking at is a ‘thing’, separate from other things, does not yet exist. What exists at this point is the understanding that the ‘thing’ he is looking at is a ‘thing’, separate from other things. This pair of experiences could look like this:
The first experience contains the content of ‘thing-ness’ in the periphery of the cognitive component of consciousness. The second experience does not contain ‘thing-ness’ in the periphery of consciousness. It doesn’t even contain the ‘thing’ as a component of the environment. Rather, it contains, at best, an image of the thing. The ‘thing-ness’ of the thing has become the subject of the doctor’s thinking. The ‘thing-ness’ of the thing has become the focal aspect of the explanatory experience within which the doctor participates. When he assumes that the explanatory-experience is somehow more real than the
experience within which the understanding of ‘thing-ness’ exists in relation to looking at the thing, then he
is creating a meta-experiential construct, i.e. an unreality or a distortion of reality. Instead of understanding
the explanation he gives in conjunction to his initial experience as a confirmation-experience of the
rightness of his initial experience, he awards the explanatory-experience ontological primacy over that of
the initial-experience.

What the doctor has done is focalize a peripheral component of his experience of looking at the
‘thing’ and made that peripheral component the reason why he experiences the thing as a ‘thing’. This is a
fundamental distortion of reality.

- **Compound and Complex Experiences**

  A compound experience refers to any two or more simple, strong and right (SSR) experiences that
  conflict with each other. When the creationist is first exposed to the theory of evolution, she might
  experience a conflict. She is invested in her belief in creationism (i.e. it is who she is), but she is interested
  in the theory of evolution (partially invested). The interest might vacillate with repulsion, but if the
  interest-experience is stronger than the repulsion-experience, then it will prompt more confirmation-
experiences, and the interest in the theory will grow. She will start thinking more about evolution, working
  through some of the conceptual problems, and these experiences will be countered by confirmation-
experiences in relation to her belief in creationism. If the evolution-experiences are stronger than the
  creationist-experiences, then the person will change her beliefs. She will reject the creationist stance and
  adopt the evolutionist stance.

  Compound-experiences are an unavoidable part of life and an integral part of change and growth.
  They can arise from individual experiential processes or, more usually, from interpersonal experiential
  processes.

  Complex-experiences refer to experiential structures that have become skewed or distorting of
  reality. The creation of a complex experiential structure is the product of interpersonal dynamics. They do
  not naturally arise from individual experience.
For example, if the creationist's interest in evolution is real (SSR), but she is not capable of expressing her interest (living it) around other people, then she engages in a complex experiential structure. She “splits” herself into two “selves”, the one who is interested in evolution and seeks out more on the subject, and the one who doesn’t want to incur the rejection of others who are important to her. Her evolutionist self is clandestine in relation to her creationist self.

But if her evolution-experiences are stronger than her creationist-experiences, then her weaker experience is the one she “shows” to those who are important to her, and her stronger experience is the one she engages in in secret. The experience is complex. The stronger experience has gone ‘underground’ and the weaker experience is shown to others. If the weaker experience is honed to appear sincere, then she might well gain the acceptance, if not the accolades, of others, but such acceptance is ultimately hollow. A false-self is created. And if the person comes to ‘live in’ the false self, and profess a belief in it (i.e. defend it), then the complex structure is ‘complete’. The false-self has become more real than the real-self (SSR experiences). A complex structure can be represented in this fashion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Real Self</th>
<th>False Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognition: [I believe in evolution]*</td>
<td>I believe in creationism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect: [confidence]</td>
<td>pseudo-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior: [expressing belief]</td>
<td>false-witnessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation: [other person]</td>
<td>other “person” **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ: [person in room]</td>
<td>“person” in room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”: ownership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rousseau captured the complex structure in his political philosophy when he said that “The strongest is never strong enough to be master all the time, unless he transforms force into right and obedience into duty” (Rousseau, 1987). Applied to our example, those who are

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* The brackets represent the stronger of two experiences that has been denied, repressed, suppressed, or overridden by the weaker experience.

** “person” is in quotations because the person has become more an object to be manipulated than a person to be respected.
important to the woman are in the position of master. They have power over her. Their rejection of her can cause her great pain, if not psychological or “self” destruction. They represent the “stronger” in this situation. They are “stronger” because they transformed force in right and obedience into duty. They do not use the threat of physical force to make the woman obey their will; rather, they convert physical force into psychological force and, instead, threaten the psychological life of the woman. And if they are successful in their efforts, they and the woman will convince themselves that they have the right to do this and that she has the duty to obey them.

Complex structures can be plotted along a continuum. At one end of the continuum, the experiential structures that constitute the complex-experience are clearly in conflict, and the person knows he (let’s say) is misrepresenting himself or deceiving others. At the other end of the continuum, the structures are nearly isomorphic, and the person doesn’t ‘know’ he is deceiving himself or others; he ‘believes’ in what he does. But this isomorphism is never really complete. It is falseness passing for truth. Rousseau’s strong masters fall into this category; they have convinced themselves that they have a right to impose their wills on others; and others have convinced themselves that they have a duty to obey.

**Immediate and Explanatory Experiences**

*Immediate-experience* refers to all experiential structures. It is the experience occurring ‘now’. *Explanatory-experience* refers to a particular type of immediate experience, one that refers to, and affirms the rightness of, an immediate-experience.

For example, at some point in an evolutionist’s life, he (let’s say) conceives the idea that we as a species have evolved over millions of years. When he conceives this idea, he is not himself traversing these millions of years. Hence, all aspects of these millions of years are not constituents of any experience within which he participates. Rather, the ‘idea’ is a part of experience. The idea constitutes the cognitive component of the experiential structure within which he participates. As such, it is part of an immediate experience. But this experience is not
just an immediate experience. It is also an explanatory-experience. It explains how we human beings have come to inhabit this world. Up to this point, the evolutionist is on good experiential ground. He is offering an explanation of the origin of human beings (and possibly the entire universe). But then there takes place an ontological slight of mind. The evolutionist ‘disowns’ his own cognition. He ‘extracts’ himself from experience and offers an explanation of all experience without recognizing that his explanation is just another immediate experience, though a different type from the others.

The most an explanatory-experience can do is to confirm the rightness of another immediate experience. In conceiving that we have evolved over millions of years, the evolutionist confirms the rightness of all those related experiences which preceded the confident proclamation.

Let’s say that the evolutionist had been raised a creationist. He was taught at home and throughout grade school that God created the world. And he accepted this idea without much question. But when he attended high school, he was introduced to the theory of evolution. His experiences of creation and evolution conflicted with each other. At first, he resisted accepting evolution as a better theory than creationism, but he was strongly attracted to the theory of evolution nevertheless. The more he investigated the theory, the greater his appreciation and acceptance of it, the more he rejected the legitimacy of creationism. All of the experiences in which he participated that served to prompt the target-experience above can be thought of as confirmation-experiences. All of the experiences which follow in the wake of the target-experience that are consistent with the target-experience are also confirmation-experiences. So confirmation-experiences, as a descriptor, can be applied to experiences that come before or after the target-experience as long as they are consistent with the target experience. The target-experience can also be a confirmation-experience of some other target-experience. The sum total of confirmation-experiences in regard to a particular intellectual issue compose the theory of that issue. A theory is a set of inter-related confirmation-experiences that address a certain issue or issues in a consistent manner.

- **Theory Building**

Foucault argues that knowledge in the sciences is not simply facts in conjunction with theories that explain facts, but it is also “a space in which the subject may take up a position…, a field of coordination.
and subordination of statements in which concepts appear…, and is defined by the possibilities of use and
appropriation offered by discourse….” (Foucault, 1972). He understands scientific knowledge to be a
collection of situations and lived experiences which have become ‘distilled’ into theories and scientific
laws.

Much like Heidegger who argued that science is an enterprise that systematically reduces being-in-the-world (Da-Sein) to a ‘construction’ of being (Heidegger, 1953), Foucault argues that the various
scientific discourses are the products of their respective historical situations. Neither Heidegger nor
Foucault could accept the materialistic empirical ‘objectivies’ of science. They understand science to be
inextricably enmeshed in lived human experience.

James and the pragmatists predated this notion by framing the sciences within collections of
material and immaterial observations, ideas, and theories that are coherent in their own right. For James,
reality was less the objective world outside of human experience and more a coherent collection of
subjective (mental) and objective (physical) ‘worlds’ (James, 1981).

Experientialism, likewise, maintains that the sciences are not the products of objective or quasi-
objective fact gathering based on observation in conjunction with explanatory theories but rather
compilations of interconnected experiences that serve to confirm (or disconfirm) each other. Materialistic
science, as a method of knowing, distorts reality by reducing it to the physical environment. It bases its
construction of reality upon the assumption that all reality is physical in nature. Idealistic science (ala
Berkeley), as a method of knowing, also distorts reality by reducing it to cognition (though Berkeley argues
for a supernatural rather than a natural origin of knowledge). Materialistic science uses the senses to ‘get
to’ the material world and tries to develop its theories based on sensual information. It uses cognition to
manipulate the sensual content so as to unify the various and sundry sense data, but it tends not to
recognize that it is doing so. Rather, it ‘bypasses’ or ‘forgets’ this characteristic of “being-in-the-world”
and assumes that observations are devoid of the other components of consciousness, especially that of
affect, and scientific theories present themselves as rational, detached, unemotional determinations of
reality.
The experientialist argument against materialistic science is simple once its ontological framework is accepted. Science reduces reality to one component of experience and seeks to explain all the other components of reality in terms of that one component. Hence, it takes reality, which is manifold, and reduces it to matter seeking to explain the manifold in terms of matter. But each explanation is nothing other than more experiences either confirming or disconfirming other experiences.

The real power of materialistic science lies in the SSR structures of explanatory experience. The false power of materialistic science lies in its ability to convert force into right and obedience into duty. Force, in this case, is ideological. Scientists do not normally physically force someone to do their will. This tends to be against the law. They are not supposed to trick anyone into doing their will either. This also is against the law. But scientists can exert their power over others by establishing objective reality as reality-beyond-experience. Scientists can convince themselves that they have the right to impose their beliefs upon others inasmuch as they convince themselves that they have captured reality-beyond-experience, and that others have the duty to obey them, for their own good.

Hence, psychiatrists can commit patients against their wills into mental hospitals for their own good; medical boards can deny licensure to people against their own wills for the good of the public; therapists can convince clients that they have a disorder when clients resist such a notion; studies can create the illusion of objectivity and statistical analyses can fortify that illusion.

- The Self

When Descartes moved the locus for determining reality from God’s heaven, the Bible, and the clergy to the human mind, he set the stage for the naturalization of the self. In Descartes’ system, the self lies between the physical world of objects and the spiritual world of God, as it does for Augustine and Aquinas, but Kant’s hermetically sealed rationalism argued away the objective existence of nature and forced a division of the rationalist world into the transcendental ego (self) and everything else mental. The physical world as-it-is was unreachable; only our version of the physical world was attainable. But Kant was not primarily a relativist. He objectified the reality of reason, the categories of mind (e.g. space, time, causation, etc.), and other things mental. For Kant, the structure of mind was objective reality.
So within Kant’s rationalism, when we look at a physical object in the environment, we see a particular object, as opposed to other objects, and/or as opposed to the background or environment within which the object is located, but this object is an object not because it possesses qualities of ‘object-ness’ outside of our minds, but rather because our minds dispose us to experience the object as an object.

For instance, if we look at an object (e.g. a cup) on another object (e.g. a desk) in a room, we know that the object is ‘an’ object, separate from other objects like the desk because our minds automatically confer the notion of ‘object-ness’ to the object. We could have looked at the cup and understood ‘it’ as just a part of the desk which projected out and had a different color and texture, etc. In other words, the cup would not be an object in itself but part of an object. The same could be said about the desk and the floor it rests upon. The fact that human beings can see objects as objects is, for Kant, the result of innate categories of mind.

So in Kant’s rationalistic system, if we are to study reality, we need to study the structure of our own minds and see how our minds ‘condition’ all that we come into contact with, even our own bodies. But how do we study the structure of our own minds? What constitutes the ‘we’ in that question?

In order to study the structure of the mind and its effects upon the world around us, Kant had to utilize the notion of a transcendental ego. The transcendental ego is ‘that’ which studies the structure of the mind and its effect on the environment. The transcendental ego is at once ‘in’ the mind and ‘apart’ from it. It is at once similar to and dissimilar from the rest of the mind. And since the categories of mind were, for Kant, objective realities, then it was natural for him to think that the transcendental ego was also an objective reality.

Kant and the medieval thinkers had one thing in common: their idea of the self was primarily a static one. Though the Catholic Church established the age of reason to about seven years, and hence, allotted some thought to developmental ideas, the self or soul was something given to us whole by God. We could put stains on our souls when we sinned, but that was the only way the soul was subject to change. Kant eliminated the changeability of the soul or self (transcendental ego) altogether. For Kant, it was like we human beings were born adults. He was not concerned about development.
It was Hegel who introduced the notion of change into ontological constructions. This change in philosophy paralleled a growing recognition in the young sciences of the importance of the scientific method. Science recognized that the physical world outside of the human mind, which included the human body, needed to be understood as close as possible on its own terms, i.e. as it really is and not just as we understand it to be. But at the same time, science realized that scientists were people, subject to human limitations, and, hence, had to understand this world through the mind. Since the mind can distort the physical world, it was important to keep grounding statements, theories, and laws about physical reality ‘in’ physical reality. In order to keep our biases and distortions to a minimum, scientists had to support their claims with empirical evidence. The more evidence, the stronger the claim.

But this method of determining reality admitted of a continuous process of grounding and re-grounding understanding in the empirical world. Not only were people set up by Descartes and Kant to be the ultimate determiners of reality, but now the history of people was introduced into ontological determinations. What people determine to be real at one time might not align with what they determine to be real at a later time. Change is inherent within the scientific method. And change is inherent within Hegel’s dialectical ontological system. Hegel accepted Kant’s rationalism, admitting that the mind conditions everything it comes into contact with, but he rejected Kant’s hermetically sealed version of rationalism. Hegel accepted science’s empirical leanings, along with its underlying realism, but he rejected its “hermetically sealed” version of it, i.e. materialism. For Hegel (at least one aspect of Hegel), reality was determined by the interaction between the human mind and the physical world. The mind acted upon the environment as it understood it to be, and the environment “acted” upon the human mind as it did. If human understanding of the environment did not match the environment’s “action” upon the mind, then the mind either had to re-organize itself in relation to the environment or find a way to alter the environment to fit its understanding of it. When the mind re-organized itself, it changed. When it changed, so too did our understanding of the environment.

Where Hegel parted with science was in his contention that this dynamic interplay between mind and physical world was transpiring within a grander objective idealism. Hegel invited religious
supernaturalism back into his naturalistic accounting of reality by arguing that the dialectic between mind and body, the mental and the physical, the many and the one took place within an objective ideality of Spirit. Spirit was the all-embracing reality that was evolving through the dialectic between mind and body. So even though Hegel rejected Kant’s hermetically-sealed version of rationalism by allowing a real mind to interact with a real physical world, thus producing reality, he affirmed the mind or the mental as objective. The physical world was subject to or dependent upon the evolution of the mind.

Balancing Hegel’s dialectical idealism was Marx’s dialectical materialism. Marx accepted the dialectic between the mind and the body (matter), but he rejected the all-embracing ideality of Spirit. Instead, he located the objective, all-embracing aspect of reality in economic organization. It is how we organize ourselves economically that gives rise and conditions other “ontology-producing” activities, i.e. religion, science, government, etc. In grounding ultimate reality in economic organization, Marx aligned himself with the material realism that underlay the methods of science (Marx, 1988). In grounding ultimate reality in Spirit, Hegel aligned himself with the idealism that underlay religion. The battle between mind and body, the mental and the physical, the many and the one continued.

For Hegel, the self is an active agent who interacts with and alters his (let’s say) environment, and that environment, in turn, interacts with and alters that self. The dialogue between self and environment takes place in time, and the self is continually changing itself into something new. The self is dynamic. For Marx, the self is the result of economic forces. The proletariat’s self differs from the bourgeois self in that the proletariat finds meaning for being within the determinations of the bourgeoisie. One class of people creates a self for another class of people by exploiting them economically. Marx agreed with Rousseau when he said that a master is as much a slave as the slave, because in order to retain his position of power the master must be ever vigilant in his control of the slave, thus giving the slave power over him. But ultimately, when push comes to shove, it is better to be a master than a slave. The freedom and the spoils are to the master’s advantage.
Hegel’s sense of self aligns quite well with traditional religion and Kantian rationalism, and Marx’s sense of self aligns quite well with materialist empiricism. Again, we see the mind:matter or mind:body problem at work.

Husserl picks up where Hegel leaves off, and he goes Hegel one better by positing his theory of intentionality. When Husserl said that whenever we are conscious, we are necessarily conscious of something (i.e. his theory of intentionality), he linked consciousness with an object of consciousness (Husserl, 1931). The idea that consciousness is something totally separate from those things of which we are conscious was rejected. The empirical conception of reality that preceded Husserl’s phenomenological conception argued that the world outside the mind (and consciousness) existed ‘on its own’ and that the world inside the mind (consciousness) likewise existed ‘on its own’. That is, the empiricist accepted both the rationalistic idea that we cannot get outside of our minds so as to understand the world around us as it is and, hence, are subject continuously to conditioning that outside world, and the realistic idea that there is, in fact, a world outside of our minds that has a nature of its own, whether we are in contact with it or not. But Husserl argued that the conception of ‘two worlds’ (mind and matter, mental and physical, etc.) was faulty because we can never be simply conscious. Whenever we are conscious, we must be conscious of something, whether that something is mental (e.g. thoughts, feelings) or physical (e.g. tables, behavior). The theory of intentionality forces a necessary link between mind (consciousness) and mind (thoughts, feelings) or between mind (consciousness) and body or matter (physical environment, including our own body). If we understand Husserl’s theory of intentionality to be the first step in ‘integrating’ the mind with the environment (or the world outside of the mind), and the first step in defining consciousness as something more than a medium or state of being through which ‘we’ know ‘the world’, then we might be in a better position to understand and appreciate the fundamental shift in thinking that an experientialist conception of reality and ethics might afford.

Let’s take Husserl’s lead and transform it. If we understand the mind’s connection to the world outside of the mind to be represented linearly as: “I”–consciousness–object, then Husserl’s theory of
intentionality alters this fundamental representation to look like this: “I”–[consciousness–object].

Consciousness cannot be understood without an object of consciousness.

If we ‘flesh out’ the “objects of consciousness” imbedded within the theory of intentionality and identify all of the possible “objects” of consciousness, it seems that we will find:

- **Cognition:** which include all thoughts, ideas, understandings, images, memories, etc. that are ‘in our minds’
- **Affect:** which include all emotions, feelings, and moods
- **Behavior:** which include internal behaviors or physiology and external behaviors or comportment
- **Sensation:** which include sensations and sense data from all senses
- **Environment:** which includes all aspects of the physical world outside our minds, (including our own bodies) with which we are in contact

When we are conscious, we are necessarily conscious of something. That ‘something’, I am arguing, consists of all of the components listed above. This contention can be verified experientially by answering the following question: When you are conscious, what are you conscious of? Possible answers are: objects in the environment (in motion or standing still), light, sounds, thoughts, feelings, ideas, relationships, moods, own body, looking, moving, people (in motion or standing still), odors, crying, etc.

These ‘objects’ can be categorized in this fashion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognition:</th>
<th>Affect:</th>
<th>Behavior:</th>
<th>Sensation:</th>
<th>Environment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ideas</td>
<td>feelings</td>
<td>moving</td>
<td>light</td>
<td>being outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationships</td>
<td>moods</td>
<td>crying</td>
<td>sounds</td>
<td>own body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memories</td>
<td>emotions</td>
<td>looking</td>
<td>odors</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you reflect upon yourself, what exactly constitutes your reflection, or what is it that you are ‘reflecting upon’? Possible answers: face, body, blemishes, clothes, odors, aspirations, wanting, traits, aches, pains, happiness, irritable, rocking, blinking, being angry, bleeding, burping, tickles, possessions,
slumping posture, hunger, crying, tapping fingers, scratching head, memories, goals, pressure in stomach, things to do, being conscious, boredom, stars, itches, relation to others, relation to room, interest, memories, etc. These objects of self-reflection can be categorized in this fashion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognition:</th>
<th>Affect:</th>
<th>Behavior:</th>
<th>Sensation:</th>
<th>Environment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aspirations</td>
<td>wanting</td>
<td>rocking</td>
<td>aches</td>
<td>face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traits</td>
<td>happiness</td>
<td>blinking</td>
<td>butterflies</td>
<td>body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memories</td>
<td>irritable</td>
<td>tapping</td>
<td>itches</td>
<td>blemishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goals</td>
<td>boredom</td>
<td>scratching</td>
<td>hunger</td>
<td>relation to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>things to do</td>
<td>hating</td>
<td>bleeding</td>
<td></td>
<td>relation to room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being conscious</td>
<td>interest</td>
<td>crying</td>
<td>pressure in stomach</td>
<td>stars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Husserl’s theory of intentionality is ‘fleshed out’, we can see that when we are conscious, we are conscious of components of consciousness, and when we are conscious of ourselves (self-reflection), we are also conscious of components of consciousness. The difference between consciousness and experience is the owning of components of consciousness. In experience, these are ‘my’ thoughts, ‘my’ feelings, ‘my’ behaviors, ‘my sensations’, and ‘my’ environment. The “I”, or ownership, is inextricably intertwined in the structure of experience. And experience is ontological.

The traditional triad: “I” – consciousness – object and Husserl’s significant alteration of it into the dualistic “[consciousness – object]”, is altered yet again into the “monistic” experiential structure. Experientially, not only does the object of consciousness collapse into consciousness itself, but so too does the “I”. We cannot detach the ownership of components of experience from those components without destroying experience altogether.

In a non-reflective experience, we are not focally aware of ourselves, but we are also peripherally aware of ourselves. For instance, when we are listening to a piece of music, we might be “caught up” in the music and not be aware of ourselves listening to it. The experience might look like this:

Cognition: solo violin
Affect: longing
In this experience, we own our knowledge of what instrument is making the sound we are listening to; we own the longing we feel in relation to the sound; we own the listening behavior in which we are engaged, we own the sound of the violin; and we own our location, yet we are not focally aware of ourselves owning any of these components. But we can become focally aware of ourselves in relation to all of them if experience shifts from non-reflective to self-reflective. For instance, an ache in the periphery of the sensation component of experience might become focal as it increases in intensity. Our focus within the non-reflective experience is the violin sound in the room (i.e. the environmental component). When the ache in our foot (let’s say) becomes focal, experience immediately shifts to:

- Cognition: my foot hurts
- Affect: slight irritation
- Behavior: inclining head toward foot
- Sensation: pain in foot
- Environ: foot in room
- “I”: ownership

In this self-reflective experience, the sensation component becomes the self-indicating component. It is that component that draws us to ourselves in relation to components of experience. Without a self-indicating component, we would not be aware of ourselves in relation to components of consciousness. A pain in our foot would not be experienced as a pain in our foot.

We might very well, though, be aware of the pain in our foot, but we would not be clearly aware of the pain or the foot being “ours”. This type of experience would look like this:

- Cognition: foot hurts
- Affect: slight irritation
- Behavior: inclining head toward foot
In this experience, we recognize that there is a sensation that one might call pain and that the pain is in a foot, but we wouldn’t be clearly aware that the foot and the pain is ours. It would be as if we were referring to our own foot and pain from a third person point of view. These types of experiences characterize forms of dissociative experiences and experiences of brain damaged people. In this instance, the sensation component is either not a self-indicating component of consciousness, though it is owned [by us] (if the ownership can be focalized), or it is a self-indicating component that is deficient in strength. For instance, if someone were to ask us if our foot hurts, we would be able to affirm that it does even though we wouldn’t feel the pain as clearly, intimately and inextricably attached to us. We might display behavior that doesn’t seem to match what we are saying but it would match the way we are saying it. We might appear somewhat dazed and confused.

If experience shifts from non-reflective to self-reflective with a (strong) self-indicating component, then the ownership which existed in peripheral consciousness shifts to focal consciousness and becomes cognitivized, while also remaining in peripheral consciousness, and we are clearly and intimately aware of the pain as ours. The cognitive component of consciousness would consist of the self-indicating component, which is the sensation of pain in foot (i.e. “hurt foot”) and a cognitivized “I” (i.e. “my”). We would simultaneously own this component of consciousness. The ownership is the “I”, which is never removed from peripheral consciousness, but “split” into itself as peripheral ownership and as cognitivized “I”. So when we are self-reflective, we also own the self-reflection. Or, to put it another way, the cognitive component consists of a cognitivized “I” and a self-indicating component, and that cognitive component is owned. A self-reflective experience minus a cognitivized “I” would be similar to the dissociative experience above. That is, without the cognitivized “I”, the self-indicating component, though focal, possesses little strength. We can connect it to ourselves, but not very clearly or intimately. We are to some degree dissociated from it. When the self-indicating component possesses a much greater strength
then the cognitivized “I”, then we are either hallucinating or engaged in a similar experience whereby the self-indicating component takes on environmental status.

For instance, a man who hears voices that aren’t actually in the environment is engaged in an experience that would look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Real Self</th>
<th>False Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognition: [“stay away from me”]</td>
<td>“stay away from her”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect:</td>
<td>ambivalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[defensiveness]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior:</td>
<td>unusual stare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[speaking forcefully]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation:</td>
<td>voice of person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[her]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ:</td>
<td>voice of person in room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[her in room]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”:</td>
<td>ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this experience, the real self consists of what the person would think, feel, do, and sense in that environment if he (let’s say) were not hallucinating. The real self-experience is simple, strong and right, but because of a history of rejection and distortion of the real self, the person hallucinating will protect the real self from more rejection and distortion with the false self. The cognition “get away from me” is the self-indicating component, but the “me” aspect of it (i.e. the cognitivized “I”) is virtually gone. Instead of telling his mother (let’s say) to stay away from him (because she is attacking the validity of his real self), he objectifies his own thought within the hallucination. He detaches or dissociates himself from his own thought and substitutes “her” for “me”, which serves virtually to remove the cognitivized “I” from experience, leaving him with an over-powerful self-indicating component. The thought becomes “real”, out there, in the environment. The hallucination, in effect, protects his real self from ‘annihilation’ by over-strengthening the self-indicating component (the thought itself) while virtually eliminating the cognitivized “I”.

- **Object Relations Theory**

In psychology object relations theory maintains that there are distinguishable though overlapping phases of psychological growth, and that completion of these phases is necessary for psychological
wholeness as adults and incompleteness of any of the phases has pathological consequences. It is in this
developmental theory that experientialism finds much fruitfulness.

According to object relations theory there are four general phases and three sub-phases of
separation and individuation:
Autism, 0-2 months
Symbiosis, 2-6 months
Separation-Individuation, 6-24 months
   Hatching Subphase, 6-10 months
   Practicing Subphase, 10-16 months
   Rapprochement Subphase, 16-24 months
Developing Object Constancy, 24-36+ months

Though there are theorists such as Fairbairn (1943), Isaacs (1943) and Klein (1959) who have
suggested that people relate to objects from birth and even in utero, most object relations theorists maintain
that early infancy is characterized by an absence of object relations (Hamilton, 1990). At this autistic phase
of development, the infant’s neurophysiological makeup is insufficiently developed to allow it to relate to
its environment as being composed of separate and distinct objects. To the newborn there is no distinction
between itself and its environment. It does not have the physical capacity to maintain object constancy.
When an object (like mother’s breast) is out of its sensual field, it is virtually out of existence. And when
the object is in its sensual field, there is a blending between the infant and the object, where the infant
attaches itself to the object without any awareness that it is doing so.

This idea aligns well with the early behaviorist concept of stimulus-response, where the stimulus
(mother’s breast) causes a response (suckling) and the organism that is responding in such a manner does
so out of necessity (reflexively) rather than out of some rudimentary form of choice.

There is evidence that infants respond to light, color (Oster 1975), movement (Bower 1965), and
sound (Werthehemer 1961), taste (Jensen 1932), smell (Engen and Lipsitt 1965) and touch (Lipsitt and
Levy 1959), but these elements of the environment may be blended into each other as in moist sweetness,
warm colors, and felt visions (Hamilton 1990). And there appears to be no solid evidence that newborn infants are able to distinguish between human and nonhuman objects. This evidence aligns with the experientialist contention that consciousness is composed of cognitive, affective, behavioral, sensual, and environmental components, without these components being owned, and, possibly, without these components being distinguishable clearly from each other. At the autistic phase of development the infant’s cognitive capacities are in tact enough to let it distinguish in some fashion between light and sound, touch and taste, etc. but not to let it know that these phenomena are related to it. Such rudimentary distinctions are cognitive understandings in relation to the environment via the senses.

And if the infant is capable of cognizing in this manner, it must also be able to be affectively related to that which it cognizes. I think we can legitimately say that a newborn infant can sustain interest in its environment for periods of time, which may give way to satiation and disinterest. An interested infant also behaves in an interested manner. The suckling reflex may be extinguished if the infant is satiated. The infant may even repel the breast when it is introduced to it when it no longer needs it. These repulsions can be interpreted as rudimentary signs of irritation.

An example of an early infant’s consciousness structure may be rendered thus:

cognition: object (understood)

affect: interest

behavior: grasping, suckling

sense: breast, nipple

environ: room

All of the components of consciousness exist simultaneously, as they do in adult consciousness. What differentiates infant from adult consciousness primarily is the absence or diminution of the “I”. The infant does not own its own understandings, feelings, behaviors, sensations, and body. Rather, it responds to its environment and its own internal cues (e.g. sensations) in a non-self-reflective manner.

We can also maintain that the consciousness structure is simple and strong but not yet right. It is simple in that the components of consciousness are singular; there are no other components vying for
“space in consciousness”. If infants are capable of splitting their attention between, let’s say, sucking on mother’s nipple and being stroked on the head by mother’s hand, then consciousness could be *layered*, where, let’s say, the nipple is focal in consciousness and the head stroking is peripheral, or vice-versa.

We can also say that the consciousness structure is strong in that it prompts more structures of its kind. The infant continues to suck at the nipple, thus confirming its original consciousness structure. And it will continue to do so until the consciousness structure changes. These changes could initiate from any component of consciousness. For instance, if the infant is physically satisfied or satiated, its interest in the breast will change from an active form of interest (sucking) to a passive form (maintaining mouth around nipple without sucking). The infant would still be interested in the nipple, in sensing it against its lips, but it would not want to suck on it at that moment.

The consciousness structure could change when the mother withdraws her breast from the infant. Here the environmental component of consciousness changes from presence of breast to absence of breast, which will prompt a change in the entire consciousness structure within which the infant participates.

The changing of one component of consciousness does not occur without the entire componential structure of consciousness changing, because components of consciousness must be consistent with each other if they are to be sustained in consciousness. For instance, if mother withdraws her breast, the environmental aspect of consciousness within which the infant participates is changed. It changes from “nipple, milk” to “air”. The affect of interest (in relation to nipple) can not be sustained in consciousness if there is no nipple present. Nor can the understanding of “nipple, milk” and the sensation of “nipple, milk”. When one component of consciousness changes, so too do all the other components. The new structure can be rendered thus:

Cognition: nipple being withdrawn (understood)
Affect: preventive alertness
Behavior: slight grasping of nipple with mouth
Sense: nipple
Environ: room
If this is an accurate accounting of an infant’s experiential structure, then we can say that even at the early stages of infancy the componential structure of the necessary co-existence of components of consciousness and the necessity of componential consistency is intact and operative. The inter-componential characteristics of simplicity and strength are also present and functioning. What does not seem to exist is the ownership of these components. Though if Fairbairn’s theory of object relatedness in utero can be shown to have some empirical validity, we may rightly maintain that the “I” does exist in some rudimentary form from birth and that the autistic phase of development can be better understood as a rudimentary form of the symbiosis phase.

Mahler (1975) maintains that in the autistic phase of development there exists only “fleeting responsivity to external stimuli”, which Hamilton interprets as being only small amounts of emotion being invested in the external world but that these small amounts serve as the basis for developing into the symbiotic phase where the objects in the environment are better differentiated and, hence, more easily emotionally invested.

Experientially, it is this emotional investment in the objects in the environment that will serve as the basis for the development of the “I”-as-ownership. When the infant is capable of self-reflection or of being a part of an experience that is composed of a self-indicating component of consciousness and the “I”-as-ownership, then it is beginning the process of differentiation. In object relations language, the contact between mother (or caregiver) and infant supplies the interpersonal basis for the development of a budding sense of self. Through repeated responses to needs, mothers supply the infant with the external stimuli
necessary for psychological growth. Without such contact, the infant is likely to remain within the autistic phase or even die.

Object relations theorists conceive of the development of the self as the result primarily of its sensual contact with the environment. The infant will, in a sense, develop a sense of self from the “outside in” and the “inside out” simultaneously. Though it may possess the genetic-neurophysiological capacity to develop a sense of self (function of ownership), it requires the cooperation of the environment (mother) for this to happen. The infant’s psychological development is not only biologically but also socially determined.

It is the symbiotic phase (2-6 months), where the infant begins to organize and remember experiences of being hungry and fed, held and laid down, and of seeing, hearing, and smelling his mother’s and his own body that provides the infant with the biological and social circumstances necessary for the development of the self (Hamilton 1990).

Experientially, it is not the “self” that is developing at this point but rather the experiential foundations for the self. In the symbiotic phase, relatively consistent responses from the environment (mother) to behavioral expressions of biological needs provides the circumstances necessary for the infant to recognize self-indicating components of consciousness as its own. For instance, the infant can recognize its hunger pangs and the warmth of its body due to mother’s contact with it as its own, but it does not yet recognize itself as a separate being in relation to its mother capable of evaluating its own experience. It is this capacity to evaluate its own experience that sets the stage for the development of the self. What happens in the symbiotic stage of development is the collection of sets of self-indicating components of consciousness connected to each other by identification-memories. That is, the infant at one time is able to own its hunger pangs as its own and at another time the warmth of its mother’s body in relation to its own warmth as its own (a symbiotic warmth), and through what object relations theory calls “memory traces” and experientialist theory calls identification-memories, the infant is able to maintain itself as the locus of both experiences.
But by saying this I do not mean that there exists some sort of transcendent “I” that somehow connects these two different experiences into a singular subject that experiences them. In experientialist theory, experience is not that which is experienced by a human being. Rather, it is that within which a human being participates. Experience is “larger” than human identity. As experience “moves”, so too does human identity. Therefore, the ownership that exists in relation to self-indicating components of consciousness at the symbiotic phase of psychological development occurs in relatively discreet patterns that are connected by the cognitive capacity to remember. But it is possible for the infant not to know that these discreet patterns of ownership do not belong to the same being, if it cannot remember ever having been a part of such an experiential pattern. It would be as if these self-indicating components of consciousness were being owned in separate disconnected instances.

When the infant is able to recognize self-indicating components of consciousness as its own, the experiential structure within which it participates is usually simple, strong, and right. An example would be the following:

Cognition: pain in stomach (understood)
Affect : irritation
Behavior: body squirming, eyes wincing
Sense : pain in stomach
Environ : crib
“I” : ownership

Here the focus of the experience is the sensation of the pain in the stomach. The infant owns the sensation. It knows that it is his and not someone else’s. But the experience is non-self-reflective. The pain is, in a sense, understood to be his, but he does not understand himself to be a being who possesses this pain, as opposed to being a being who might not possess it. His ownership is immediate and non-self-reflective, and it will tend not to produce self-reflective experiences, because, we may postulate, it is not yet capable of doing so.

The infant’s experience of pain in its stomach, if I may so speculate, would be represented thus:
In this experience the infant owns his own pain; that is, he knows that the pain he feels is his and not someone else’s. But he does not yet know that it is he that is feeling the pain. There is no genuine self-indicating component of consciousness constituting part of the cognitive component of the experience. This experience would be similar to my experience of hitting my finger with the hammer when I focus on the pain I feel, which can be represented thus:

Cognition: throbbing pain
Affect: interest
Behavior: holding and looking at finger
Sense: pain, finger
Environ: workshop
“I”: ownership

At this point the pain in my finger is focal in consciousness; the knowledge that it is my finger that is pained in such a manner is peripheral. The focus of attention is on the pain in my finger and not the pain in my finger. Hence, the affect that constitutes the experience is one of interest rather than anger. The experience is non-self-reflective in that the focal component is supported by a cognition that does not include a cognitivized “I” just as the infant’s experience lacks a cognitivized “I” in cognition. The difference between the two examples, though, is that I can cognitivize a self-indicating component of consciousness whereas the infant cannot. The fact that it is the infant’s pain is not known to the infant; whereas that the pain belongs to the infant is established in consciousness.

This establishing of ownership of potential self-indicating components of consciousness, or this lack of actual self-indicating components, seems to correspond very well with the object relations’
symbiotic phase of psychological development. In this phase the infant is still enmeshed with its environment. It does not yet recognize itself as a separate being from its environment, but it can recognize that certain phenomena (pain, pleasure, etc) belong to it, though without the “it” being clearly established.

The establishment of the cognitivized “I” seems to take place within the separation-individuation phase of development. This phase is divided into three subphases: 1) hatching (6-10 months), 2) practicing (10-16 months), and 3) rapprochement (16-24 months).

In the hatching subphase the infant looks more alert, persistent, and goal directed (Mahler et al. 1975, p.54). He will push away from his mother’s body, apparently to get a better look at it. (Hamilton 1990). He will explore the mother’s body, “pulling at mother’s hair, ears, or nose, putting food into the mother’s mouth” (Mahler 1975). He will slide down from mother’s lap and play at her feet. These behaviors can be interpreted as signs that the infant is developing a genuine cognitivization of its function of ownership. It is beginning to recognize itself as a being separate from other beings, and other beings as not its own being. It is beginning to understand pre-linguistically that those aspects of itself, like pain and pleasure, are not only owned but owned by itself. It is at this point where owned components of consciousness give way to experience.

The practicing subphase seems to confirm this notion. The child “seems to take delight in exercising autonomous ego functions over and over, as if practicing new skills” (Hamilton, 1990). The interest the child has in its mother spreads to objects that she provides for him. He can manipulate these objects with wide-eyed wonder. He can do the same with his own fingers and toes. In this stage it becomes clearer that the self-indicating components of consciousness co-exist in cognition with the cognitivized “I”. Such a child’s experience may look like this:

Cognition: I want off mother’s lap (understood)

Affect : desire

Behavior: squirming

Sense : mother’s lap, arms, etc.

Environ : mother’s lap, room
Here the child does not just own the affect, but he is aware of himself as wanting or desiring something. Cognitive constituents change from self-indicating components without any attachment to a cognitivized “I” to components attached to a cognitivized “I”. In this example, the self-indicating component is the want or desire and the cognitivized “I” is represented by the “I”. The child not only owns desire but owns itself as owner of desire. It recognizes itself as owner of self-indicating components of consciousness.

This transition from owned-components-of-consciousness to owned-“I”-in-relation-to-components-of-consciousness marks the transition from non-self-reflective experience to self-reflective experience. Inasmuch as non-self-reflective experiences are owned, the experiential structure can be simple, strong, and right. For instance, if in the symbiotic phase of development, the infant owns its own pain, but is not aware of itself as the owner of its own pain, the experiential structure within which the infant participates is a natural, spontaneous reality. He feels (senses) pain and behaves in accordance with his sensation. There is no question as to whether or not the behavior is right or wrong, effective or ineffective, goal directed or directionless; it simply occurs as a natural expression of the infant’s biology in relation to its environment. These natural expressions consist, in part, of a non-reflective rightness. This level of rightness corresponds to the level of self-awareness occurring at the symbiotic phase of development. Just as the self-indicating components of consciousness are not yet connected to a cognitivized “I”, so too is the rightness of this experience not connected to a cognitivized “I”. The self-indicating component, itself, is owned and right.

For instance, the infant who owns his sensation of pain while not owning his cognitivized “I” owns the rightness of that pain. When there is no question of whether or not the pain is right or wrong, it can be assumed to be right. The questioning of its rightness is not a possibility at this point in development. When these experiences within which the infant participates on a non-self-reflective level of consciousness are not responded to in a nurturing manner by objects in its environment (e.g. mother), then the infant will not develop to the point of self-reflection. Object relations theorists maintain that when these nurturing needs aren’t met by the environment, then infant autism or death tend to occur. This is consistent with the notion that the inherent rightness of the experience within which the infant participates is not confirmed by
its environment. And it is the disconfirmation or lack of confirmation of the rightness of experience that initiates the various and sundry ways there are of skewing the consistency of experience over time in more developed children and in causing infant autism and death in early infancy.

In the rapprochement subphase of psychological development (16-24 months) the child will manifest dependency and needs for independence simultaneously. He will recognize that mother does not always want what he wants, and vice-versa. He also experiences increased awareness of separateness, smallness, and loss of omnipotent grandeur that characterized the practicing subphase of development. He also begins to use “I” instead of the precursor, “me” or “baby” in referring to himself through language, thus indicating an increased subject-object differentiation (Hamilton, 1990).

Experientially, the rapprochement subphase opens up the experiential structures within which the child participates to a good deal of confirmation and discomfirmation by the others in his life (e.g. mother and father.) If mother, let’s say, responds to the child’s simple, strong, and right experience consisting, in part, of a behavior that the mother dislikes or disapproves of by not confirming the validity of such an experience or disconfirms the validity of the experience through acts of punishment, then the child’s own experience of the rightness of his experience is contradicted by the older and more powerful parent.

In object relations theory some mothers will reward closeness and punish separation; they will respond to the child’s independent behavior by abandoning them. And when the child “comes docilely to such a mother, she may wrap him in the warm embrace of fusion” (Hamilton, 1990.) Experientially, if we can assume that the independent behavior of the child is a component of a simple, strong and right experience, then the mother’s response may serve as disconfirmation of the validity or rightness of the experience. In such instances, the rightness of the child’s experience contradicts the rightness of mother’s experience as manifested in her abandoning behavior. The psychologically weaker child’s sense of self is challenged by mother’s disconfirmation, and if these disconfirmations persist, then the child’s self development will be skewed in the direction of mother’s value system rather then developing in relation to its own experienced rightness.
Object relations theory maintains, in one form or another, that there exists a self-object duality that forms the actual self. The self cannot exist on its own. It is emotionally related to objects in its environment. It develops because of its various emotional relationships. The child will develop a self-representation and an object-representation simultaneously. As an object in the environment is made into an object-representation in the mind of the child, the child is forming its self-representation that is characterized by separateness from the object-representation. This combination is referred to as an object relations unit. Hence, a child who is capable of understanding his mother to be an important object in his environment is simultaneously capable of understanding himself as an object separate from that of his mother.

So the abandoning and fusing mother is internalized or made into an object-representation while a self-representation is being constructed in relation to the object-representation. The two representations in combination with an affect that connects them (e.g. fear, resentment, hatred) often serve as the type of object relations unit that characterizes borderline personalities. The abandoning mother and the fusing mother become two distinct object-representations in the mind of the child and, if not at some point synthesized into one mother-representation composed of two aspects, the self-representations will also remain split. This would account for the borderline personalities’ tendency to understand people in an all-good or all-bad manner. Their self is split into all-good and all-bad representations.

One problem with this view is that there is no basis upon which a self-representation differs, on the level of identity, from an object-representation. That is, it is the abandoning mother who is internalized at one time and the fusing mother who is internalized at another time. Limiting the object-representations in this manner will automatically limit self-representations. Hence, the borderline personalities are understood as unintegrated personalities. But this is to overlook the level of integration that already exists in borderline personalities. Not all abandoning and rejecting behavior is perceived in an all-bad manner and not all fusing and accepting behavior is perceived in an all-good manner.

Horner (1984) maintains that there are three ego states within the optimal symbiotic phase: 1) the good self-object constellation based upon pleasurable experiences in social interaction, 2) the bad self-object
constellation based upon dysphoric experiences, and 3) the core self-without-object based upon parallel organization of self-experiences. The core self organization is based upon the child’s connections to non-human reality. This would account for the development of the affectionless psychopath who has failed to make human attachments.

But experientially, there already exists a true self in borderline personalities and psychopaths because at least some of the simple, strong, and right experiences characterizing the developmental stages of the child are in tact. Either mother will not respond consistently with abandonment to the child’s separation tendencies and with fusing to his docile tendencies or there will be others within his environment who will respond in a different, if not opposite, manner. Also, there are those aspects of self-expression that are not responded to at all by others in the environment, like when the child is alone. Efforts to comfort or entertain itself are examples of such experiences. It is the rightness of these experiences and those that include others in the environment who in some way confirm that rightness that serve as the true self of the child.

It is this notion of true self built upon these vestiges of experiential rightness that serves as an anchor for those children who develop pathologies during childhood, including schizophrenia (symbiosis phase), bipolar affective disorders (practicing subphase), antisocial, schizotypal, schizoid, borderline, and narcissistic disorders (rapprochement subphase), and obsessive, hysterical, and normal-neurotic disorders (whole object relations).

Object relations theory also holds that the object constancy phase of development (24-36 months and beyond) consists of the development of both cognitive and affective capacities. Piaget’s (1954) work on cognitive development maintains that the child will develop the cognitive capacity to know that an object in its environment does not disappear once it is removed from the child’s field of sensation. This capacity is understood by object relations theorists as a prerequisite for the achievement of emotional object constancy. The child must be able to know that an object (e.g. mother) still exists as it is even when it is removed from its field of sensation before it can know that it’s the same object that is associated with good feelings as well as bad feelings. Being able to retain the object of mother as the object that provides
warmth and love as well as frustration and punishment is the developmental task at this stage of development.

Experientially, the true self is that which develops as simple, strong, and right experiences are confirmed either by oneself or by others. Those experiences that are confirmed by oneself are simply experiences possessing a validity that is not questioned. They are intuitively right. For instance, the child who slides off his mother’s lap during the hatching subphase of development will confirm the rightness of the experience within which he participates simply by freely playing at the feet of his mother and by repeating the process at a later time. That is, the strength of the experience will prompt confirmation experiences of a non-reflective sort. Sliding off mother’s lap will not be “an issue” for this child because the rightness of the experience does not run into any contradictions in future experiences. If, let’s say, every time the child slid off his mother’s lap, he was spanked by mother, then we can maintain that mother’s response contradicted the rightness of the child’s experience. The child may initially respond to mother’s response with frustration, anger, and pain but later, after continuous spankings, the child may learn to repress his urges and become unusually docile. The true self of the child, which is synonymous with his simple, strong, and right experiences, is disconfirmed by his mother repeatedly, and the boy’s self development becomes skewed in the direction of his mother’s values.

But this does not mean that his true self is completely buried or coalesced with the mother-representation. He may be able to slide off of father’s lap and play at his father’s feet, which serves to confirm the rightness of his experience. Such inconsistencies in parenting may result in other problems with self development, but in this case the father’s confirmation of the rightness of the child’s experience evidenced by his allowing the child to separate from him serves to confirm the rightness that the child inherently knows to exist within the experience. There is a true self developing in relation to the father in this area of separation.

Before object constancy is achieved, the greatest emotional danger to the child is object loss, but when object constancy is achieved, the greatest fear becomes the loss of love. This is reflective of the state of self development. Prior to achieving object constancy, the child’s self is developing as the flip side of
object-representation. Object-representation requires the presence of the object (e.g. mother). Therefore, the threat of abandonment at this stage of development is tantamount to a threat of the loss of identity. But after object constancy is achieved, the self reflects the constancy of the object. The object is known to be relatively permanent, whether it is present to the child or not, and so too is the relative permanence of the child’s self in tact. It can now withstand longer periods of separation from the object without becoming anxious or fearful. The threat that becomes primary now is the loss of love from the object. Emotional consistency overrides the mere presence of the nurturing object. This reflects the need for the child to maintain and strengthen its newly acquired self integration.

• Experiential Consistency and the Self

In experientialist terms, emotional consistency means the ability for mother (or various other nurturing people) to confirm the rightness of the experiences within which the child participates. She must be able to confirm the rightness of her own experience while confirming the rightness of the child’s experience, and for mothers who, themselves, have difficulty confirming the rightness of their own experience or who tend to misjudge that rightness of the experiential structures within which they participate and promote the continuation of mixed or complex experiential structures, the task of confirming the rightness of the child’s experiences becomes very difficult, resulting in increased inconsistency within the self of the mother, the self of the child, and the relationship between the mother and child.

At this stage of development, the identity of the child is maintained not only through the consistent confirming responses of the mother but also through the consistent confirmations of the child itself. Again, this consistency can be established via interactions with other caregivers or through the individual confirmations by the child through experience itself. A child may be able to withstand, ward off, or absorb some instances of mother-rejection as long as it has some integrity of self established on its own terms.

It is the rightness of experience that needs to be properly evaluated and confirmed and not the accepting or rejecting responses of the caregivers. The child’s self is not solely reliant upon the responses of the objects in its environment. It is also reliant upon the experiential structure within which it participates. In fact, I would argue that the responses of the caregivers form part of the experiential
structure within which the child’s self develops. This allows the child to “have a self of its own”, over and against that of its parents or caregivers. And it is the consistency and inconsistency between the rightness of the child’s experiential structure and that of the parents or other caregivers, including therapists, that needs to be addressed primarily and only secondarily within the context of achieving and maintaining of object constancy.

5. Experience, Free Will and Determinism

William James pitted rationalism against empiricism and listed traits for each (James, 1981):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Tender Minded (Rationalism)</th>
<th>The Touch Minded (Realism)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rationalistic (going by ‘principles’)</td>
<td>Empiricist (going by ‘facts’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectualistic</td>
<td>Sensationalistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealistic</td>
<td>Materialistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Pessimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Irreligious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free-willist</td>
<td>Fatalistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monistic</td>
<td>Pluralistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogmatic</td>
<td>Skeptical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This division represents types of persons more than they represent ontological stances. Understood experientially, the rationalists refer to those people who are inclined toward primatizing or consistently focalizing the cognitive, affective, and “I” parts of experience, whereas the empiricists refer to those people who are inclined toward primatizing or consistently focalizing the behavioral, sensual, and environmental components of experience. The rationalists feel comfortable in dealing with thinking and feeling in relation to self (relativistic leaning), whereas the empiricist feels comfortable in dealing with sensing and behaving in relation to the physical world. The rationalist looks inward; the empiricist looks outward. Historically, the rationalist, though inherently to some degree relativistic, has tended to be objectivistic. The supernatural rationalists (reified rationalists) offer God as the ultimate reality, whereas the natural
rationalists (Descartes, Kant, Hegel, et al) offer mind and Spirit as ultimate reality. Historically, the empiricist, though inherently to some degree relativistic, has tended to be objectivistic. The materialists (reductive empiricists) offer matter as the ultimate reality, whereas the quantum physicists contend that energy is the ultimate source of reality, and it is not exclusively made of matter, but of a combination of matter and non-matter.

On the issue of explaining human behavior, the free-willists line up with the rationalists, and the determinists (James’s fatalists) line up with the empiricists. The free-willists conceive of human behavior as a “mental” triadic process: desire – free will – behavior, whereas the determinists conceive of it as a “physical” triadic process: environmental stimulus – organismic response – behavior. For the free willists, there exists a metaphysical space between desire and behavior in which we choose what we do. For the determinists, the process is completely physical and the triadic division is merely a conceptual way of explaining the process. The problem with both conceptions, from the experiential point of view, is that they are linear and, hence, reductive and over-simplified. They are both ‘missing the big picture’.

In regard to the free-willist camp, desire is not an independent phenomenon that can be separated from other components of experience in order to account for human behavior. We must cognize some sort of thought in relation to any affect, and the thought is that which ‘gives us direction’ or ‘points us toward’ someone or something so that we might act in that direction. A thought gives of a possible course of action. But any possible course of action is necessarily connected to a particular behavior. We cannot ontologically select a feeling out of an experiential structure and make it the sole influence upon a future behavior. We can only do this conceptually. And this is exactly what religion and science do. They abstract components of experience and objectify them.

One idea that James did not include in his bi-partisan list was “reason”. I think that this quality is not on a bi-partisan list because it is used by both parties. The free-willists, whether of the supernatural or the natural ilk, understand reason to be a faculty or capacity of mind that we humans employ in order to decide between two (or more) possible courses of action. For most rationalist-oriented people, free will is a metaphysical reality that somehow acts or causes physical reality to move. For the determinists, reason is
used illegitimately as a faculty of mind that somehow guides materialistic causal thinking. The materialist position on reason has been so self-contradictory and muddled that it is no wonder rationalist-oriented individuals criticize it so much. If reality is ultimately comprised of matter, and behavior can be explained by how some types of matter cause other types of matter to move (behave), then it seems to follow that reason cannot tell us that this is so or guide us in this activity, because reason is only matter in motion just like everything else. Logic, which is used extensively by scientists and philosophers of science, is nothing more than certain processes of matter in motion and, hence, is part of the cause/effect chain. How can something that is a part of the materialist process be used to guide our thinking about that process? In order for materialism to be consistent with itself, reason must be a type of types of matter in motion, probably brain matter in motion. Once it is so conceived, then materialism will align itself with experientialism.

In order to elucidate the problems with the rationalistic and empirical slants on why human behavior occurs, I will analyze an example of human behavior and the processes that precede it experientially. John and Lana are in a room talking to each other. John desires to kiss Lana. The experiential structure within which John participates might look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal Consciousness</th>
<th>Peripheral Consciousness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognition: kiss her</td>
<td>oriented, familiar with things in room, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect: lust</td>
<td>comfortable in environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior: looking at her lips</td>
<td>breathing harder, slight sexual excitation, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation: her lips</td>
<td>hearing her speak, smelling her perfume, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ: her</td>
<td>in room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”: ownership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SSR

Let’s say that this experience is simple, strong and right (SSR). If it is followed by the behavior of kissing her, the experience may change to:

| Cognition: kissing her | oriented, familiar with things in room                      |
| Affect: satisfaction   | comfortable in environment                                   |
| Behavior: kissing her  | touching her body, heart-rate increasing, etc.               |
Sensation: her lips her body, his heart beating, increase sexual stimulation, etc.
Environ: her lips her body, in room
“I”: ownership

In neither of these experiences does there appear to be anything called reason. There doesn’t appear to be any alternative courses of action being considered. There is only one course of action and that is to kiss her. There isn’t any significant doubt about whether or not this action is morally right, whether or not she will reject his kiss, or whether or not he really wants to kiss her. There is only one course of action that enters his mind, and that is to kiss her. If all human actions were to take place like this, then the idea of reason would not exist. We’d simply have an idea which would be supported by a feeling, a behavior, a set of sensations, and an environment, and unless something occurred to alter this course of action, then the act would occur. There would be no reflection upon it, no hesitation, no conflict.

If there is no conflict in experience, then there is no reasoning. There is simply movement in the direction that experience dictates. Only when a conflict in experience arises can we talk about reasoning.

Let’s revise our lust-experience to look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognition:</td>
<td>kiss her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect:</td>
<td>lust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior:</td>
<td>looking at her lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation:</td>
<td>her lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ:</td>
<td>her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”:</td>
<td>ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

His next experience might look like this:

| Cognition:          | I shouldn’t do this; her lips, oriented, familiar with things in room |
| I’m married         |                                         |
| Affect:             | duty                                   |
|                     | uncomfortable in environment, slight guilt over thought of kissing her |
Behavior: looking away from her hearing the sounds in the room, breathing slows, sexual excitation decreases, etc.

Sensation: the floor hearing sounds, objects in room, pain in stomach

Environ: the room objects in room

“I” ownership

Let’s say that the duty-experience is the same strength as the lust-experience. We’ll assign a number to its strength on a 0-10 scale, 0 representing very weak and 10 representing very strong. The number for the first experience when it obtained is 5. John’s desire to kiss Lara was stronger than his interest in talking to her. Had nothing happened to alter this course of action, he might very well have kissed her. But within John’s peripheral consciousness was the knowledge that he was married. He wasn’t focused on this thought when he thought of kissing her, but it was there. It might very well have been focalized a number of times throughout his interaction with her prior to this point, but it wasn’t accompanied by a set of components strong enough to prompt a change in the course of his behavior. Had the thought of his being married prior to this point been focalized in consciousness, it might have looked like this:

Cognition: watch it, dog, I’m her cleavage, knows where he’s at, married knows what she is saying, wonders if she knows what he’s thinking

Affect: caution becoming slightly uncomfortable with situation

Behavior: looking at her face blinking ‘innocently’ (covering)

Sensation: her face sounds of her talking, objects in room

Environ: his being in the room objects in room, etc. with Lana

“I” ownership

The caution-experience is immediately replaced by this experience:

Cognition: understanding what she’s saying knows where he’s at, believes his brief lusting has gone undetected, etc.

Affect: interest lust, becoming more comfortable
If we say that this caution-experience is weighted as a 2, then it might very well be followed by a continuation of a comfortable conversation between a man and a woman. Gazing at Lana’s cleavage was not enough to prompt an experience that would redirect his course of action, so he continues his conversation. But when he looks at her lips, the experience is followed by the kiss her-experience, which is weighted as a 5. This immediately prompts a duty-experience, which, let’s say is a 5. Now John is in conflict. His conflicting experiences prior to this point (i.e. his cleavage-experiences) were not strong enough to put him in serious conflict with himself, but this kiss her-experience is.

Now John will participate in a series of experiences that we will call reasoning. His kiss her (lust)-experience is followed by a conflicting duty-experience, each possessing equal strength. He cannot suddenly remove himself from the flow of experience and pick one course of action over the other; this is impossible. He cannot remove himself from experience, ‘look at’ the two courses of action, pick one that suits him, and increase its strength so he could act accordingly. Rather, he must participate in a series of experiential structures that will, at some point (we’ll say), render only one course of action. The experiential process that leads to that one course of action is called reasoning. The experience that ends the process of reasoning and establishes one course of action is referred to as a decision.

In all of this there is no evidence of any faculty of reason. Rather, there are conflicting experiences that admit of conflicting courses of action (different cognitions) which work themselves out, with John as an inextricable part of the process. Experientially, ‘reason’ is not a faculty of mind but a series of experiences that are in conflict with each other. No conflict, no reasoning. No reasoning, no faculty of reason to account for it. Reason, as a faculty of mind, is a meta-experiential construct, i.e. an idea or concept that refers to a supposed ontological reality (faculty) that somehow influences or controls experience itself. But when ‘reasoning’ is subject to experiential analysis, the faculty of reason becomes
redundant and distorting of reality. To posit that we ‘have’ this ‘faculty of reason’ is to buy into the distortion that this ‘faculty’ can actually be manipulated or used to produce ‘rational’ thought and behavior.*

Now let’s return to our original example:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Focal Consciousness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognition:</td>
<td>kiss her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect:</td>
<td>lust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior:</td>
<td>looking at her lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation:</td>
<td>her lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ:</td>
<td>her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”:</td>
<td>ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SSR**

Which is replaced by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal Consciousness</th>
<th>Peripheral Consciousness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognition:</td>
<td>kissing her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect:</td>
<td>satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior:</td>
<td>kissing her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation:</td>
<td>her lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ:</td>
<td>her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”:</td>
<td>ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this set of experiences we cannot find anything that resembles free will. And if what I have contended up to this point is true, i.e. that we cannot remove ourselves from experience, then there is nothing “between” or “above” these two experiences that might ‘house’ free will. There is no transcendent ego or self that makes it possible for one experience to shift into the next experience. In this set of experiences there aren’t any conflicting courses of action (cognitions). There’s only one thing to do, i.e.

* I’m using “reason” as it applies to decision-making, not as it applies to logic, etc.
kiss her, and there’s only one thing being done, i.e. kissing her. If there is only one course of action in experience, then there is no free will.

Traditional free will requires that there exist at least two possible courses of action: do X or not do X. Christian ethics holds that we can either act in accordance with our desire or not. Regardless of the desire, we will always have the possibility of not doing X. But in our example, if X is “kiss her”, then what is ‘not X’? John does not entertain the notion of not kissing her at this moment; he only thinks of kissing her. And there is nothing in the experience that supports the idea that John should not or cannot kiss her. The “not” supposedly resides in the metaphysical space between desire and action that traditional theories of free will maintain exists. But if desire (affect) and behavior are co-existent, as experientialism maintains, then there is no metaphysical space between the two. Neither is there any metaphysical space between experiential structures. Neither is there any metaphysical space surrounding the set of experiential structures where we might find optional courses of action. In this set of experiences, there is only one course of action. If there is only one course of action, then there is no decision being made. And if there is no decision being made, then by definition, there is no free will in use.

When conflict is introduced and reasoning takes place, then the conflicting experiential structures within which the person participates will ‘work themselves out’ according to their own structures, in conjunction with the person. For instance, in the set of experiences below,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal Consciousness</th>
<th>Peripheral Consciousness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognition:</td>
<td>kiss her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>oriented, familiar with things in room, I’m married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect:</td>
<td>lust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>comfortable in environment, guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior:</td>
<td>looking at her lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>breathing harder, slight sexual excitation, hesitation, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation:</td>
<td>her lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hearing her speak, smelling her perfume, slight twinge in stomach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ:</td>
<td>her in room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>objects in room, outside of room, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”:</td>
<td>ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which is replaced by:
though John is thinking “kiss her”, he is peripherally aware of his being married. If he did not possess any sexual loyalty to his wife, he may very well have not even been aware that he was married; or if he was so aware, it would probably be for different reasons (e.g. getting caught). So there exists conflict within experience.

The understanding “I’m married” is supported by the affect of guilt, the behavior of hesitation, the sensation of slight twinge in his stomach, and her as slightly shifted out of focus in the room. This combination of components constitutes a peripheral experience that possesses its own structural independence. And this peripheral structure is strong enough to prompt the next experience where John
recognizes he’s gone too far. The fact that he’s married breaks into focal consciousness and is accompanied by increased guilt, a hesitation that has shifted into glancing away, an adrenaline rush, and Lana shifting into the periphery of consciousness.

In the focal kiss her-experience, the “I” is peripheral; John is focused on Lana’s lips. The conflicting peripheral structure is strong enough to prompt its shift into focal consciousness. John does not have the power to choose for this to happen. He cannot suddenly remove himself from the flow of experience, consider the focal kiss her-experience and the peripheral I’m married-experience, strengthen the I’m married-experience, insert himself back into experience and feel a full-blown guilt. This is impossible. He cannot control the weight or strength of the peripheral and focal structures. “He” is not somehow detached from experience (e.g. transcendental ego) and capable of manipulating experience as he sees fit. Rather, he is an integral part of experience. He is an inextricable part of the experiential flow.

One problem with the traditional notion of free will is that it allots more power to the person than is the case. Once experience can be analyzed into its components, we can see that free will as a faculty or power evaporates. But this does not mean that determinism is in position to ‘win the day’. Even if all of these experiential components are correlated with biological events in the body (which I suspect they are), the materialistic triad of environment – bodily response – behavior is too simplistic to capture the dynamic interdependence of the mind-matter synthesis (components of experience).
PART 3: Experientialism and Materialism

1. Materialism and Determinism

Materialistic determinism assumes that the environment is not only separate from the mind but that the mind and the environment are constituted by the same stuff: matter. Matter is all there really is, so if we are to understand our behavior, we need to understand the causal links between the environment and our bodies. Historically, science has gone about this task in a simple linear fashion. But with the advent and development of neuroscience, science is realizing that this linear causal analysis is too simple, that the brain is divided into integrated, overlapping areas that reflect the components of experience that have been delineated in this work (e.g. cognitive, affective, motor, and sensory areas). But the reductive tendencies of science are still very strong. They are reflected in the development of the philosophy of science that assumes that the world is ultimately made of matter and that the environment is ontologically separate from the body (which contains the “mind”).

But as I’ve already argued, if the environment were removed from consciousness, then all objects outside of us, all space, and our own body, inasmuch as we could be aware of it, would be gone. If consciousness were still to exist, how would we characterize it? What would we be conscious of? Our own thoughts? If we were conscious of our own thoughts, then how would we characterize them? Since there is nothing outside of our own thoughts, except perhaps ‘us’, then what would we be thinking? Memories of past objects of sensation? But these wouldn’t exist because there would have been nothing for us to have sensed. Imaginary objects? Images of what?

Bickle argues that the direct stimulation of the brain using electrodes to produce “personal experiences” sidesteps sensory input and virtually eliminates the environment as a causal factor of phenomenological data (Bickle, 2003). This argument makes sense only within the confines of the framework of reductive materialism. If one targets matter as ontological, then scrutinizing material things in this fashion is quite reasonable. The neuroscientist virtually disregards the experiential structure within which he (let’s say) participates and concentrates his attention, literally, on the matter before him. Penfield
and Newsome focused on brains, electrodes, monitors, and behavior of subjects; they concerned themselves
with themselves only inasmuch as they described their behavior and their thinking in regard to the matter
before them. Such descriptions were “used” to get to the reality of matter.

If experience is understood as componential, then the environmental component within which
Penfield participated would consist focally of brains, electrodes, monitors, and behavior in front of him and
peripherally of objects in the laboratory within which he worked, the walls and windows of the lab, all
sights, sounds and smells in the room and outside the room that impinged upon his senses, and his own
body. This accounting would include the entire environment within which Penfield operated that was
reachable through sensation. Experientially, if Penfield were to understand his own research, he would not
only have had to understand the entire environment within which he operated, but he would have had to
recognize that that environment was integral to his research. That is, he could not isolate an aspect of the
environment (e.g. brains, electrodes and monitors) and expect this to be a sufficient rendering of his
research environment.

The same holds true for the people with whom he interacted. For instance, a subject who agrees to
have electrodes implanted in her (let’s say) brain for research purposes and is conscious throughout the
experiment participates in a set of experiential structures that include many but not all the contents
constituting the researcher’s environmental component of experience (i.e. objects in room, walls, the
researcher’s body, and her own body). The two will possess different contents within their respective
experiences also (i.e. the subject might not see the electrode being implanted in her brain, etc.)

So when Bickle implies that sensory input is sidestepped and environmental objects are eliminated
as relevant factors in the research (or bypassed), he is referring only to those factors that constitute the
focus of attention of the researcher. The researcher “flips the switch” (let’s say) and sends an electrical
current into a part of the subject’s brain and then he watches what the subject does or records what the
subject says. Since there is no object in the environment to produce what the person experiences, Bickle
assumes that the environment has been eliminated in the causal accounting of the behavior of the patient.
But this seems to be far from the case. Without the environment, there would not be anyone doing of any
research upon anyone else. To eliminate the environment from any causal accounting of anyone’s (or anything’s) behavior would be tantamount to eliminating reality.

Simply because an electrical current passes through a part of the organism’s brain does not mean that the cause of the organism’s behavior is simply the electrical current. The current would not have stimulated that area of the brain had not the neuroscientist administered it. We cannot remove the cause of the current from the environment when accounting for the behavior (or “personal experience” of the subject); the “cause”, in good part, is the neuroscientist. After all, a similar current (not an identical current) could stimulate the organism’s brain which was “caused” by an appropriate object or event in the environment. Simply because the object in the environment is the neuroscientist and the electricity is administered through an electrode does not mean that the “cause” of the organism’s behavior has suddenly disappeared from the environment. All the neuroscientist does is replace one environmental “cause” (normally occurring object or event) with another (himself). Experientially, the electrical current is primarily instrumental, and only secondarily “causal”.  

1 It is that which is used by the scientist to produce a behavioral response. It is causal only within the framework of the materialist, who tends to abstract himself from his own work.

Reductive materialists are leaning toward the cellular biology of the brain upon which to found ultimate material components. They are altering genetic material so as to determine what genetic basis there is for cognitive and emotive phenomena. For example, a neuroscientist might clone a mouse and tamper with its DNA, thus producing a mouse that does not possess long-term potentiation (LTP), which normal mice possess (Bickle, forthcoming). When the tampered mouse shows behavioral evidence of impaired long-term potentiation, the neuroscientist concludes that that area of the DNA is responsible for long-term potentiation.

1 I use quotes around the term “cause” because, experientially, an object or event in the environment is not understood to be a stimulus that causes electricity in the brain, as it is understood in linear descriptions, but rather as an integral part of a whole experiential structure; it cannot be detached from experience. Hence, our understanding of “causation” will be re-framed (transformed) within experientialist theory. A subject that cannot be dealt with here. Suffice it to say that our linear understanding of “cause” will be transformed into a systems understanding of “prompt”, where specific neural networks (e.g. cognitive) will interact with other networks (e.g. affective) within an interactive, interdependent whole system of networks.
If we analyze the experiential structures within which the neuroscientist is participating, we might find something like this:

Cognition: I’m altering the mouse’s DNA at point X
Affect: intense interest
Behavior: using technique to alter DNA
Sensation: mouse’s DNA
Environ: laboratory
“I”: ownership

Which is eventually ‘joined’ by:

Cognition: mouse doesn’t show signs of long-term memory
Affect: excitement
Sensation: mouse behaving in a way that negates its possessing long-term memory
Environ: mouse in lab
“I”: ownership

Which is replaced by:

Cognition: long-term memory can be affected by gene manipulation!
Affect: elation
Sensation: objects in lab
Behavior: extending arms in air (or however this researcher would behave)
Environ: lab
“I”: ownership

In none of these experiences does the researcher transcend or remove himself from the structure of experience to prove his contention. “Long-term memory can be affected by gene manipulation” is ontologically a thought or an idea and not a reality-beyond-experience or a condition-of-experience. The neuroscientist cannot get beyond experience to make good his claim. He can only alter experiential contents. No matter how many times he conducts the experiment, he does not get beyond the structure of experience. He only ‘believes’ or ‘thinks’ (assumes) that he does. But such a belief must be false, and
such knowledge must be a distortion of reality. For if we cannot get beyond experience to determine ‘reality’, then experience ‘is’ reality. And to posit conditions that make experience itself possible, without realizing that the positing of those conditions is actually components of experience, is to create a meta-experiential construct, i.e. to distort reality.

Bickle argues that “behavioral data is fully explained by the dynamics of interactions at the lowest level at which we can intervene directly at any given time to generate behavioral outcomes, along with the known anatomical connectivities throughout neural circuits leading ultimately to effects on muscle tissue attached to skeletal frames” (Bickle, forthcoming). Simply put, tampered mice exhibit behavioral evidence of long-term memory loss; monkeys exhibit arm raising after an electrical impulse is discharged into its brain, etc. Let’s assume an experientialist position and agree with the neuroscientist. “Electricity administered to the brain causes behavior in an organism.” As a cognitive component of experience, this conclusion is perfectly valid. But when the scientist abstracts himself from the environment within which that conclusion is conceived, then he distorts reality.

2. Materialism Made Experiential

If we analyze the experiential structures within which the researcher participates, we will see something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal Consciousness</th>
<th>Peripheral Consciousness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognition: ‘flipping switch at time T’</td>
<td>belief that apparatus is working properly and that electrical current is passing into monkey’s brain; objects in room, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect: confidence</td>
<td>possibly a little excitement or fear (which alters belief slightly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior: ‘flipping switch’</td>
<td>sitting, hunching back, blinking eyelids, heart beating, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation: ‘switch’</td>
<td>objects in room, sounds and smells, pressure against finger, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environ: ‘switch’</td>
<td>objects in room, sounds and smells, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I”: ownership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which later changes to:
When we analyze the experiences, we do not find any electricity at all in the environmental component of experience. We do find it as an idea in the cognitive component of each experience. This shows that the researcher has not got ‘outside’ of the experiences within which he participates. Rather, at most, he ‘believes’ or ‘assumes’ or ‘is certain’ that electricity-beyond-his-experience caused the monkey to raise its arm without recognizing (owning) that that knowledge lies within experience. He, in effect, disowns his own experience by asserting the objectivity of the electricity and its causal properties in relation to the monkey over and above the experience within which he participates.

I’ll argue that any attempts he makes to transcend the experiential structures within which he participates will land him back in experience. The only time he gets “outside” the experiential structure is when he “thinks” he is outside of it. At these times, if he doesn’t own his own objective reality (i.e. the content of consciousness) he is creating a meta-experiential construct, i.e. a “dis-owned” objective reality.

From the experientialist perspective, objective reality is integral to experience, where experience is defined as a necessary combination of cognition, affect, behavior, sensation, environment, and the “I” (ownership). We hold electrical currents (and anything else we sense in our environment) as real-beyond-experience because we experience them to be so. But experiencing them to be so does not mean that they “are” objective-beyond-experience. We cannot “get” beyond experience to determine this “fact”. The best we can do is experience it to be so. Whether there “actually is” an electrical current “out there” beyond our
experience of it being there is inconsequential. To use a pun: it doesn’t matter. What matters is that we assume, are certain, or believe that it does exist out there.

The problem that the experientialist has with the materialist is not that the materialist assumes, is certain of, or believes that the electrical current (or anything else) is actually objective and independent of his own personal experience (this everybody does); the problem is when he doesn’t own his own objective experience, when he doesn’t realize that the objectivity lies in experience as a whole and not simply in ‘the environment’. Experientially, the environment cannot be abstracted from experience, and still have experience. The “environment” of the materialist is an experiential construction, and when it is not recognized as such, it is a meta-experiential construct.
References


