

Can Social Constructivism Save Scientific Mysterianism and Nativism from the Charges of Inconsistency?

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, I argue that Colin McGinn provides an unacceptable account of consciousness due to the inconsistencies between (1) the conjunction of the metaphysical assumptions of his nativism and the epistemic assumptions of his mysterianism and (2) his conception of identity. I also maintain that, although John Searle’s social constructivism may provide the most feasible counter-argument to these charges of inconsistency, Searle’s position cannot save McGinn’s account of consciousness due to the inadequacies of Searle’s version of external realism. As I see it, the only means to address the problems in McGinn’s and Searle’s views is by revising their version of external realism. I demonstrate that this is only possible if they adopt an external realist position that dispenses with direct realism and adopts physicalism. I maintain that this is the only means by which we can prove the existence of consciousness while at the same time accommodating its a priori and a posteriori character.

KEY WORDS: Direct realism, external realism, Nicholas Maxwell, Colin McGinn, nativism, physicalism, scientific mysterianism, John Searle, social constructivism.

Introduction

In the initial part of this paper, I argue that Colin McGinn’s account of consciousness is untenable due to the inconsistencies between his mysterianist and nativist views. These inconsistencies can be traced to (1) the conflict in the conjunction of the metaphysical assumptions of his nativism and the epistemic assumptions of his mysterianism and (2) his conception of identity. In the next section, I provide a counter-argument to my position which highlights the role of constitutive rules in science. This counter-argument

attempts to salvage McGinn's position by placing it vis-à-vis John Searle's social constructivism.¹ Consciousness understood as a biological and mental process plays a pivotal role in understanding how collective intentionality brings about institutional facts in Searle's overall philosophy. The possible counter-argument to my position emphasizes that language is both a byproduct of evolutionary processes and collective intentionality. If such is the case, language involves constitutive rules. Our scientific representations of brute reality² are made possible by language. In effect, McGinn's characterization of consciousness as a primitive object can be seen as a byproduct of the constitutive rules in science. Hence, it is reasonable to posit that consciousness exists as a primitive object in our scientific models of physical reality. Though this route seems promising, Searle's (2010) characterization of consciousness and its byproducts is also problematic since his direct realism cannot support his view that external realism should serve as the default background of our epistemic inquiries. I also demonstrate that the same problem ensues from McGinn's adherence to external realism.

Within this context, I conclude my discussion by suggesting a general framework for external realism which does not rely on direct realism. I demonstrate that a cogent form of external realism can be established if we understand it in terms of the methodology of naturalism and its underlying hypothesis regarding the external world, physicalism. At this point, I introduce Nicholas Maxwell's (2011) view that science works on an a priori conjectural assumption regarding the unity of its theories. I maintain that if we follow Maxwell's position, we can provide proof via inference to the best explanation that consciousness exists both as a biological and mental state and that the functions of consciousness provide us evidential grounds to accept its existence.

The aforementioned claims merit an exposition and analysis for at least three reasons. First, it provides an initial attempt to piece together McGinn's (1996, 2017) views about consciousness since *The Character of Mind* until *Philosophical Provocations*. This is of import since McGinn's views regarding consciousness and its objects is considered to be one of the most well-known positions in contemporary philosophy of mind (Van Gulick 2014). Second, majority of the analyses regarding McGinn's position focus on the tenability

¹ I recognize that Searle himself does not label his position as a form of social constructivism. Nevertheless, his explanation of social facts can be considered as a *weak form of social constructivism* since he maintains that, although there is a mind-independent world, we are still involved in the construction of social reality.

² I will be using the terms "brute reality", "physical reality", "concrete reality", and "empirical world", interchangeably in this paper, although McGinn specifically uses the term "concrete reality". Simply put, these terms as they are used in this paper refer to mind-independent reality.

of his scientific mysterianism and/or on the scientific evidence supporting his nativism. This paper, on the other hand, returns to the fundamentals of philosophical analysis by looking at the tenability of the conjunction of the underlying metaphysical and epistemic assumptions of McGinn's views in terms of their consistency with one another. In other words, I am providing an analysis of the foundational assumptions of McGinn's philosophy and along with that the tenability of accounts of consciousness (e.g., Searle's) that rely on direct realism as a premise of external realism. Finally, this paper is of import for it supplies an alternative view on how external realism can still provide a foundation for our accounts of consciousness, by equating it with a version of naturalism that accommodates the a priori/a posteriori distinction. This is important because, in most cases, how we connect the biological processes we associate with consciousness relies on its a priori characterization.

On McGinn's Mysterianism and Nativism

In this section, I will lay down the basic assumptions behind McGinn's account of consciousness. In the process, I will also point out the inconsistencies in his position, these being an inconsistency in the conjunction of his metaphysical and epistemic assumptions (henceforth I1) and an inconsistency in his conception of identity (henceforth I2). Let me begin by laying down the basic assumptions of McGinn's (1996, 2000, 2011, 2015, 2017) mysterianism and nativism. His position can be presented in the following way:

- (P1) Consciousness is a primitive entity that is fully unknowable to us because its essential nature is beyond our full cognitive grasp (Scientific mysterianism).
- (P2) To be a primitive entity is to be a basic entity relative to other objects, wherein such an entity is characterized by its irreducibility to other objects as well as its universality and indispensability in a system.
- (P3) Due to (P1) and (P2), one of the reasons why we cannot have full cognitive access to consciousness is because its individuations can never be based on metaphysical criteria, since identity is not an explanatory relation but merely a logical one.
- (P4) Our genetic makeup has given us an innate sensory system, innate primitive sensory concepts, and innate abstract and empirical knowledge which allows us to access and/or know consciousness and its objects (Nativism).
- (P5) Since consciousness is a byproduct of our genetic makeup, then consciousness along with its objects is not mental but material in nature (Panmaterialism).

- (P6) From (P5), it follows that it shares the properties of other material objects and the primary quality that it shares with other material objects is that it is a form of energy which differs from other forms of matter, for it is of the sentient kind.

The merits of McGinn's position are easy to point out. The combination of (P1), (P4), and (P5) above offers us a very charitable account not only of our faculties but also of the disciplines that we have created to account for how we access and understand ourselves and the external world. It is charitable since it recognizes that even if there are limitations to our cognitive capacities, these limitations still allow us to determine the basic stuff that we are made of. McGinn's position is also attractive for its simplicity. It limits the objects in his system to the bare minimum. That is, everything is reducible to matter. In line with this, he also recognizes the efficacy and predictive accuracy of our current best scientific methods, as well as the utility of our current best scientific representations in helping us to arrive at a philosophical account of consciousness and its objects.

Despite these merits, I maintain that McGinn's position is also fraught with inconsistencies. These can be traced to I1 and I2. Let us begin by demonstrating I1. I1 is a byproduct of the inconsistency between (P2), (P4), (P5), and (P6) above. We can derive McGinn's metaphysical assumptions from (P2), (P5), and (P6). Combined, they lead him to maintain that there is a mind-independent world whose components are all reducible to matter. It also leads him to claim that, although we may not know the exact configurations of matter, there is an initial distinction we can make regarding this substance: It is either of the sentient or insentient kind (McGinn 2011: 178). We know this to be the case since consciousness, which he characterizes as a primitive object, is indispensable to a system. Hence, it is indispensable in the external world itself. It is important to note that how he arrived at the metaphysical assumptions of his panmaterialism is intricately connected to the epistemic assumptions of his nativism and mysterianism (i.e., P1 and P4). His nativism leads him to posit that we have innate knowledge of a priori truths. He maintains, for instance, that a priori knowledge involves knowledge of laws and how they are applied to matter (McGinn 2011, 2017). It is due to this that he claims, "stuff-objects-laws-events" (what he refers to as SOLE) are "the basis of concrete reality" (McGinn 2011: 229). It is also for this reason that he asserts that our knowledge of "[l]aws are *conceptually* anterior to objects and stuff [...] [Hence], [e]ven if we do not know that objects exist, we know that they obey laws [...], [f]or laws are essential to our ideas of objects" (McGinn 2011: 213–215). Combined, these claims lead to I1. Consciousness must exist in order for us to make sense of external reality, yet consciousness as a primitive object can only exist if we have the concep-

tual categories of “laws” and “object”. This is a circular argument. From his standpoint, the existence of consciousness as an object must be presumed to be ontologically basic in external reality, even if its existence as an object can only be conceptually conceived within a schema (i.e., SOLE) which can only be affirmed if we posit the existence of consciousness.

At this point, we can move on to I2. Recall that I2 arises due to the inconsistency in McGinn’s view of identity. This is important because it shows the untenability of (P3) in our formulation of his position. Recall that (P3) maintains that we cannot use metaphysical criteria to determine the existence of consciousness, for it is a primitive object. McGinn (1996) maintains that as a primitive object, it is irreducible to any other object. Metaphysical criteria for its individuation are thereby unnecessary, for there is no need to provide identity conditions for a primitive object. This fits well with his overall philosophy since he does not perceive identity as an explanatory relational concept. For McGinn, identity is only a logical relation. He states:

But what kind of relation is identity, metaphysically speaking? [...] Is it physical or mental? Is it causal or functional? Is it spatial or nonspatial? Where does it fit into our preferred set of allowable categories? Clearly, the answer is that it is none of the above. It is, for want of a better word, a *logical* relation [...]. It is the only relation that has a claim to topic-neutrality, which is to say universality: identity holds of every entity in every possible world, and is part of our very framework of thought [...]. [It is to be understood in terms of these properties] (i) it is unitary, (ii) it is undefinable, (iii) it is fundamental, (iv) it is a genuine relation. (McGinn 2000: 13–14)

At this point I2 arises, since McGinn cannot consistently maintain that identity is only a logical relation if he assents to the view that consciousness as a primitive object is also a form of matter governed by laws whose existence is affirmed in our scientific representations of the external world. That he adopts such a view about scientific representations is already implied in (P1), (P4), (P5), and (P6). After all, these premises are reliant on his form of naturalism which heavily emphasizes the limitations of what we can access in external reality.³ The problem with the conjunction of these premises

³ For McGinn (2011), *matter is the underlying substratum of all our experiences*. His justification for the existence of matter, in this case, appeals to empirical observations and causal laws. Though laws may have a subjective component to them since how we understand them is governed by the intrinsic knowledge that we have as a result of our constitution as a species, laws as he describes them “do not underlie reality, or transcend it, or correspond to it; they are reality” (McGinn 2011: 215). If we follow McGinn’s reasoning, they are “reality” since they are the projections of how our mind makes sense of brute reality. For McGinn, brute reality may be said to be one and the same with SOLE. In this view, scientific representations have a subjective and objective component to them. They are subjective because they are byproducts of how our innate concepts allow us to make sense of the external world, yet they remain ob-

with his conception of identity however, can be seen in how he establishes the “objecthood” of a form of matter. In order to establish the “objecthood” of a form of matter, we must first be privy to the different instantiations of that object. In this case, if consciousness is a form of matter, it is insufficient to state that it is a primitive object by definition. We must first encounter different instantiations of what we refer to as “consciousness” before we can ascertain what it is. As such I2 arises because it is inconsistent for McGinn to characterize identity merely as a logical relation. He must also characterize it as an explanatory relation. It is an explanatory relation, for what explains the identity of an object are the entities or set of entities that makes it the object that it is.⁴

In this section, I laid down the basic assumptions of McGinn’s account of consciousness while in the process showing their inconsistencies through I1 and I2. Recall that I1 maintains that McGinn’s metaphysical and epistemic assumptions lead to a circular account of consciousness, whereas I2 maintains that McGinn’s position is inconsistent since its metaphysical and epistemic assumptions require him to maintain that identity is not merely a logical relation, it is also an explanatory relational concept.

Saving McGinn: An Appeal to John Searle’s Social Constructivism

In what follows, I will attempt to save McGinn’s position from I1 and I2 by placing it side by side with John Searle’s social constructivism. In the process, I will demonstrate that even if Searle’s position cannot save McGinn’s views from one of the charges of inconsistency in the previous section, Searle’s account of consciousness allows us to see that the problem with both their views lies in their adherence to an external realist position that is reliant on direct realism.

As I see it, one of the most feasible means of addressing the inconsistencies in McGinn’s position mentioned in the prior section is by resorting to the role of constitutive rules in the formation of a system. John Searle famously characterizes constitutive rules in the following way:

jective, for they are “structurally isomorphic” to the external world (McGinn 2015: 81–82). It is for this reason that he characterizes physics primarily through its mathematical structure because physics can be seen as the manifestation of how our innate knowledge of a priori laws allows us to represent SOLE.

⁴ It is important to note that I am not attempting to equivocate on the concept of “identity”. I recognize that we are faced with two senses of the concept as we have been using it so far. On the one hand, it is a logical relation and as such it is applicable to the truth-value of propositions. On the other hand, it refers to individuality. What I am concerned here is with the application of identity as an explanatory relation that allows us to determine individuality.

Constitutive rules constitute (and also regulate) an activity, the existence of which is logically dependent on the rules[...]. [T]hey are almost tautological in character, for what the “rule” seems to offer is part of a definition [...]. That such statements can be construed as analytic is a clue to the fact that the rule in question is a constitutive one [...]. Within systems of constitutive rules [...] some will have the form [...] “X counts as Y in context C”. (Searle 1969: 34–35)

If we place McGinn’s position vis-à-vis Searle’s characterization of constitutive rules, then it seems that we can counter my charges of inconsistency to McGinn’s position in the previous section. McGinn’s primitive objects can be seen as a byproduct of a constitutive rule in science. As per Searle’s characterization of a constitutive rule, we can maintain that consciousness, which is a part of SOLE, counts as a primitive object in the context of our scientific representations of the concrete world. In effect, there is no problem if McGinn presupposes that since consciousness is a primitive object then it is ontologically basic prior to a schema and within a schema itself, hence refuting I1. Since Searle maintains that constitutive rules also offer an analytic definition of “Y in context C” then it seems that McGinn’s characterization of a primitive object may also count as an analytic definition within our scientific theories. This is in accordance with McGinn’s characterization of identity as a logical relation, for now what is being emphasized is the analytic nature of the definition of a primitive object. Hence, we have now refuted I2.

Juxtaposing McGinn’s view with Searle’s view of constitutive rules also allows us to highlight one of the important aspects of McGinn’s account of consciousness – namely, that we have evolved in such a way that we have innate knowledge of analytic truths (i.e., P4). Returning to this aspect of McGinn’s philosophy is crucial at this point, for he maintains that our innate knowledge of analytic truths is not just a byproduct of our constitution as a species. We can consistently maintain that as per McGinn’s view, we innately know analytic truths because we are a part of SOLE. In other words, we innately know analytic truths because we are a part of their truth-maker. In this sense, analytic truths are not only true by definition but also because they correspond to concrete reality and we know that such is the case because our faculties allow us to have an actual grasp of their truth-makers. McGinn states:

[O]ur cognitive faculties *fit* the world in its broadest outlines [...]. The world divides into two compartments and our mind divides into two compartments, and the compartments march in parallel: the a priori compartment of the world maps onto the a priori compartment of our mind, and the a posteriori compartment of the world maps onto the a posteriori compartment of our mind [...]. We view the world through the lens provided by our epistemic faculties, but the world invites us to view it that way. (McGinn 2017: 126–127)

Within this context, scientific theories can be understood as corresponding to SOLE because of their structural isomorphism to SOLE. That is, our scientific models of physical reality, due to their a priori character (i.e., they are either formulated in terms of a set-theoretic or mathematical model), are capable of capturing SOLE. In this sense, even if the constitutive rules of science regarding the formation of primitive objects are based on collective intentionality, the a priori character of constitutive rules and their byproducts show how they are formed due to our innate objective access to the physical world (i.e., there is a side to our epistemic subjectivity that can capture and have direct correspondence with physical reality). In this context, consciousness, which is a biological and mental process (and hence a brute fact) counts as a primitive object (and hence a social fact) in science because the methodology used by science (as a discipline concerned with physical facts) is built up on an epistemic framework whose structural isomorphism to concrete reality allows it to capture the a priori aspects of physical reality.

It would not be remiss to associate this with Searle's position, for Searle himself notes the interrelationship of physical and social facts in our scientific theories as he expounds on the relationship of his biological naturalism and social constructivism in the following:

Our task is to give an account of how we live in exactly one world, and how all of these different phenomena, from quarks and gravitational attraction to cocktail parties [...] are part of that one world [...]. [Our account] must respect the basic facts of the structure of the universe. These basic facts are given by physics and chemistry, by evolutionary biology and the other natural sciences. We need to show how all the other parts of reality are dependent on, and in various ways derive from, the basic facts [...]. [T]he two most fundamental sets of basic facts are the atomic theory of matter and the evolutionary theory of biology [...]. Our capacity for consciousness and other mental phenomena is the result of long periods of biological evolution. Collective mental phenomena of the sort we get in organized societies are themselves dependent on and derived from the mental phenomena of individuals. (Searle 2010: 3–4)

In this case, constitutive rules may be seen as operating within our scientific models of brute reality, for our scientific models must presuppose certain ontic assumptions in order for them to begin creating representations of physical reality. In Searle's case, for example, evolutionary biology must presuppose that consciousness exists as a brute fact in order for us to even make sense of the distinction between physical and social reality as well as physical and social facts. We have shown how this is possible earlier when we maintained that the language of science must adhere to a constitutive rule that consciousness counts as a primitive object in our scientific representations of the external world, for these representations cannot be formed unless we presume otherwise.

At this juncture, it is crucial to point out that McGinn's and Searle's views also coalesce because they both adopt external realism. Douglas McDermid provides an instructive Searlian description of external realism as he states:

[It is] [t]he thesis that "there exists a real world that is totally independent of human beings and of what they think or say about it" [43, p.13] or, alternatively, that "there is a way that things are independently of our representations" [43, p.31]. That is, the world is independent of our representations, perceptions, minds, languages, or conceptual schemes [...]. External realism is not a theory [43, p.32] but is instead what he calls a "default position", that is, a fundamental presupposition of inquiry and discourse which we hold prereflectively and which forms part of the so-called "Background" of our thought and language.⁵ (McDermid 2001: 1–2)

That McGinn adopts these views is already evident in (P1), (P4), and (P5) of our formulation of his position as well as in his claim that a priori/a posteriori truths have a mind-independent truth-maker. Setting these aside, what is of import in McDermid's description of Searle's position is that he shows how Searle conceives direct realism as the "default position" of our epistemic inquiries (McDermid 2004: 2). That Searle holds such a view is evident in his biological naturalism. For Searle (2010), consciousness as a neural process allows us to directly perceive the objects in our surroundings. Searle (2010) also maintains that the role of science is only to provide us with the causal link between our neural processes and their depictions of physical reality. That McGinn holds the same view regarding consciousness can also be seen in his claim that regardless if we are unaware of the "inner nature of matter", we are aware of its "outer/functional properties" (McGinn 2011: 70).

Although, at face value, direct realism seems to give us an intuitive account of how we can have background assumptions of the physical world, Searle's description of direct realism cannot be used to support external realism. Direct realism understood as the view that we have direct access to the physical substratum of the mind-independent world is an inconsistent position. At this point, we return to I2. If we wish to establish that we have direct access to a mind-independent world, it can only be done within the context of a theory that uses an empirical methodology, for it is only through empirical means that we can accumulate data that will provide justification for our ability to access a mind-independent world. Searle, like McGinn, cannot conflate metaphysical criteria with epistemic criteria. That is, they cannot use metaphysical criteria as the bases for their epistemic criteria that attempts to demonstrate that there can be a causal link between our minds and the external world. In McGinn's case, as well, we cannot use metaphysical criteria to

⁵ In the quote, "[43]" refers to John Searle's *Mind, Language, and Society: Philosophy in the Real World* (Basic Books, New York, 1998).

elaborate on the functional properties of matter, for we need to accumulate empirical evidence to provide epistemic justification that an object functions in a particular way.

Given that Searle's social constructivism is based on the presumption that direct realism can support external realism, his position cannot save McGinn from I2 since he is now prone to a circular characterization of physical facts and social facts. Physical facts are supposed to have a mind-independent source compared to social facts. Yet, as we have shown, we must use the empirical methodology of science in order to make sense of physical facts. Hence, we are left to ponder whether physical facts are really mind-independent in the sense that Searle needs in order for him to say that they correspond to our prereflective views of the external world.

In this section, I showed that even if Searle's social constructivism can save McGinn's account of consciousness from I1, it cannot save it from I2. I have also shown that Searle's position is liable to I2. In addition, I demonstrated how I2 is a result of McGinn's and Searle's adherence to an external realist position that is reliant on direct realism.

Conclusion: A Reformulation of External Realism

The discussion so far has led us to conclude that the problem with McGinn's and Searle's theories of consciousness is, at bottom, a problem with the underlying framework that they used to ascertain and explain the existence as well as the functions of consciousness. At this point, I will attempt to provide a solution to their predicament by describing a version of external realism that can accommodate the meritorious aspects of both McGinn's and Searle's conception of consciousness without tying external realism to direct realism. However, at the onset, it is important to note that contrary to Searle, I am positing that external realism cannot merely serve as a background assumption that is non-theoretical in character, since if we wish to establish the relationship between physical facts and their truth-makers in the external world, we must have a theory that allows us to determine the correspondence conditions between the two.

An alternative to direct realism is Quinean naturalism, the view that we should look to science to determine what we ought to believe, for so far, it has provided us with the best methodologies and theories that allow us to predict and explain natural phenomena (Quine 1951). Based on this description, naturalism can be understood in terms of its methodology and the objects to which this methodology is applied. Its methodology is that of empiricism and its ontology is that of physicalism. Richard Schuldenfrei (2000) notes that it is crucial to recognize that since empiricism is a tentative finding in science and physicalism is a hypothesis of what exists in Quinean naturalism, both

are prone to falsification depending on the results of scientific developments. At the moment, the methodology and the ontology of Quinean naturalism have yet to be disproved.

However, there is an aspect to the methodology of Quinean naturalism that is prone to difficulties. That is, its denial of the *a priori/a posteriori* distinction. Though the dissolution of this distinction is partly pragmatic in character, Quine's (1951) description of the boundary conditions of science is too rigid to the effect that it removes the theoretical character of the discipline. Jaakko Hintikka offers this observation in the following:

[We need] a finer distinction, viz. a distinction between regular data, boundary conditions, and background theories, not giving up all distinctions. In not distinguishing from each other different applications of a theory, each with different boundary conditions, Quine is at bottom construing science as natural history rather than theoretical natural science. (Hintikka 2000: 420)

If we follow Hintikka's view above regarding the need to introduce finer distinctions in science, we can accommodate an underlying assumption behind physicalism which Quine fails to do. That is, physicalism presupposes that there is an underlying unity in nature. That this presumption is held within science itself is evident in its attempts to create a unified theory.⁶ It is at this juncture that it is helpful to introduce Nicholas Maxwell's view that physicalism works because it is based on an *a priori* conjectural assumption that there is unity in nature. He explains that the unification of theories in science is only possible if we make an *a priori* conjectural assumption that "the universe is such that no disunified theory is true which is not entailed by a true unified theory" (Maxwell 2011: 214). Physicalism, in this sense, is perceived not merely as a hypothesis in science but as the background theory of all scientific inquiries. This is in accordance with external realism's claim that there is a mind-independent world whose facts and/or objects are epistemically accessible to us regardless of our fallibility.

Although what I have offered is a very general account of how we can save external realism while at the same time allowing it to account for the *a priori/a posteriori* character of consciousness, the merits of adopting this view can be seen in the following.⁷ First, it allows us to posit the existence of consciousness not because it is presumed to be a primitive object in our ontic inquiries but also because evolutionary biology has shown us its biological features. Second, it also allows us to use the methodology of empiricism (i.e., to use an inference to the best explanation) to demonstrate that the need for

⁶ For the sake of simplicity, we will focus on the epistemic and ontological character of a unified theory.

⁷ As I see it, the framework that I have offered can only be faulted if reductionism is equated with physicalism. This discussion however is beyond the scope of this paper.

theory unification in science can be traced to how our consciousness directs its unity to its objects to the effect that it compels us to create a unified theory that accounts for the entirety of the external world. Finally, external realism, understood in the backdrop of naturalism and our underlying description of its physicalism, also allows us to incorporate the meritorious aspects of McGinn's and Searle's accounts of consciousness. In the case of McGinn, we can still retain how he considers the a priori/a posteriori aspects of our mind to correspond with the a priori/a posteriori aspects of external reality. In the case of Searle, we can retain the role of intentionality in the construction of social reality. In fact, it would not be remiss to state that via the function of intentionality in the construction of social reality, we can see how our consciousness guides us in creating a unified epistemic and ontic account of external reality. That our consciousness also allows us to access the world via theories structurally isomorphic to it coheres with the view that I am espousing. That is, the a priori aspect of consciousness allows us to create a unified theory of the external world that is isomorphic to that realm. Unity after all is best conceived via set-theoretic or mathematical terms.

In this paper, I demonstrated that Searle's social constructivism cannot save McGinn's scientific mysterianism and nativism from one of my charges of inconsistency (i.e., I2). I concluded that the primary reason for the deficiencies in both theories lies in their adherence to direct realism as the supporting assumption of external realism. I also offered a version of external realism that is founded on physicalism. I maintained that if we wish to provide a cogent account of consciousness and its objects, it is necessary to build upon solid foundations. Ultimately, even if our concerns nowadays are in philosophy of mind, we must establish a cogent epistemological and ontological foundation that can accommodate our findings in evolutionary biology and cognitive science. These foundations should also be in accordance with the underlying assumptions of science as a whole.

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