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A Possibilist Metaphysical Reconsideration of the Identity of Indiscernibles and Free Will

ABSTRACT.

I. If we consider any two entities, such as the two spheres in Max Black's thought-experiment, as possibilities, pure or actual, they cannot be considered indiscernible at all. Since allegedly indiscernible possibilities are necessarily one and the same possibility, any numerically distinct (at least two) possibilities must be discernible, independently of their properties, "monadic" or relational. Hence, any distinct possibility is also discernible. Metaphysically-ontologically, the identity of indiscernibles as possibilities is thus necessary, however epistemic discernibility is still lacking or does not exist. Since any actuality is of a single pure possibility, the identity also holds for actual indiscernibles. The metaphysical or ontological necessity of the identity of indiscernibles renders, I believe, any opposition to it entirely groundless.

II. Like pain, the experience or feeling of free will is subjective yet infallible and authoritative from intersubjective or objective perspective as well. Whether the grounds for being in pain are known or not, being in pain is infallible. The same holds for our experience of free will. As much as no illusion of pain is possible, no experience of free will is possibly an illusion. As much as the experience of pain constitutes the reality of pain, the experience of free will constitutes its reality. In both cases *percipi* is *esse*. The freedom of will is thus immune against illusion or self-deception, whether the will is motivated or not, determined or not, and whether the reasons or causes for its determinacy or indeterminacy are known or not. The unintelligibility or the mystery of free will does not cast any doubt on its reality as a well-established fact.

(I) The Identity of Indiscernibles Reconsidered

The principle of the identity of indiscernibles has been supported and also strongly attacked.¹ Max Black's attack (1952) on it deserves special attention.² As I will show below, the identity of indiscernibles can

¹ Leibniz, Russell, Whitehead, F. H. Bradley, and McTaggart supported it, whereas Wittgenstein (the *locus classicus* is *Tractatus* 5.5302, criticizing Russell and arguing that two distinct objects may have all their properties in common), C. S. Peirce, G. E. Moore, C. D. Broad, and Max Black are among its strong opponents. The support may adopt an idealistic stance, while the opposition is clearly anti-idealistic or empiricist.

be secured on a metaphysical basis regardless of any form of the principle of sufficient reason or any other Leibnizian consideration.

Black suggests the following counter-example to the identity of indiscernibles:

Isn't it logically possible that the universe should have contained nothing but two exactly similar spheres? ... every quality and relational characteristic of the one would also be a property of the other. Now if what I am describing is logically possible, it is not impossible for two things to have all their properties in common. This seems to me to *refute* the Principle. (ibid., p. 156)

This counter-example consists of a possible world (“universe”) in which no observer is present and exact duplicates, exactly similar objects, identical twins, and the like, all of which are indiscernible but not identical, may exist (ibid., pp. 160-62). I will show why on metaphysical-possibilist grounds no such possible world could exist.³ Thus, independently of the question of common properties, relational or not, of bundles of properties as universals, or of “predicative functions” (the term that Russell and Whitehead’s theory of types employs), I will show why indiscernibles (or indistinguishables) that are not identical are metaphysically impossible. Even if Black’s aforementioned possible world is logically possible, it is nonetheless metaphysically or ontologically impossible.

Let us begin with the definitions of some terms that I will use in this paper. Regardless or independently of any actuality or actualization, all possibilities are pure. By “possibilities” I have no possible worlds in mind but individual possibilities (or possible individuals) instead. My possibilist stance is entirely independent of any conception or semantics of possible worlds. Possibilism is an ontological or metaphysical view according to which pure possibilities do exist. In contrast, actualism is the view that only actualities exist, and possibilities are merely the ways in which such

² Black’s arguments have been discussed by Hacking (1975), Adams (1979), Casullo (1982), Denkel (1991), Landini and Foster (1991), French (1995), Cross (1995), O’Leary-Hawthorne (1995), Vallicella (1997), Zimmerman (1998), and Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004). Nevertheless, there is still room enough for alternative treatments of it on quite different grounds (especially different from those of fictionalism, the bundle theory, or haecceitism).

³ The possibilist metaphysics to which I refer in this paper is entitled “panenmentalism.” I introduced it in Gilead, 1999 and elaborated it in Gilead, 2003.

actualities might have existed. Possible worlds have been considered among such ways. Hence, actualism is compatible with some conceptions of possible worlds but not with any ontological standing of pure possibilities (possibilities *de re*). When we apply “existence” to pure possibilities, the term serves us in a non-actualist sense. Since pure possibilities are individuals and not universals or bundles of universals, there are no instances of them. Against many current views (such as Rescher’s 1999 and 2003), we are capable of identifying and quantifying or enumerating individual pure possibilities (Williamson 1998, 1999, and 2000, discussing individual “mere” or “bare” possibilities; Gilead, 2004b). Furthermore, we can rely upon individual pure possibilities as the identities of actualities. If each actuality is an actualization of an individual pure possibility and of no other possibility, the pure possibility serves as the identity of the actuality in question. As pure, such possibility-identity is not spatiotemporally or causally conditioned, whereas any actuality is inescapably so conditioned. Actualities are accessible by empirical means, whereas pure possibilities—logical, mathematical, metaphysical, or otherwise—are accessible to our thinking and imagination. As thus accessible, pure possibilities are discoverable as much as actualities are (think of the discoveries of mathematical or logical possibilities, which are not empirical at all), but this must remain beyond the present paper (see Gilead, 2004b). As I will argue below, when it comes to individual possibilities, any distinction makes a qualitative difference.

To return to Black’s thought-experiment, first we need a criterion of identification to denote or name something. To defend the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, I assume a criterion of identification of pure possibilities that does not rely upon relational properties and spatiotemporal distinctions. Were such properties and distinctions inescapably required to establish the principle, Black’s view would have appeared to be more sound. Is Black right in stating that mere thinking is not enough to identify or name a thing (*ibid.*, p. 157)? Black assumes that to identify or name anything we need a denotation of an actual object or a unique description of it (*ibid.*). Such need not be the case at all. Think, for instance, of *eka*-elements in the periodic table. Each such element is not actual but is a predicted pure possibility (Gilead, 2003, pp. 65-70). Many mathematical theories, let alone all the pure possibilities which they comprise, were discovered only by creative thinking or imagination, while identifying, naming, and describing any of these possibilities have been

quite practical with no recourse to actualities. Indeed, to discover, refer to, identify, or name pure possibilities, thinking or imagination is more than enough. We are certainly capable of denoting pure possibilities, each of which is uniquely describable, for, as I will argue below, no two pure possibilities can be indiscernible. Second, pure possibilities-identities are necessary for identifying, denoting, searching for, detecting, and describing the relevant actualities, although we also need empirical means to do so.

There are two ways to interpret Black's thought-experiment, which is a counter-example to the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. First, the two spheres are merely pure possibilities.⁴ Second, the two spheres are actualities. In the second case, they must be subject to spatiotemporal and causal conditions, as no actuality is exempt from them. In the first case, they are exempt from such conditions altogether, for no pure possibility can be subjected to them. In both cases, the spheres are possible, for any actual thing is possible too. This means that in both cases we have two possible spheres with the following difference: in the first case, the possibilities in question are pure, whereas in the second—they are actual.

What is precisely the distinction between *b* as a pure possibility and *b* as an actual possibility? The pure possibility in question comprises all the pure possibilities that are open to *b* under one and the same identity, whereas *b* as an actual possibility comprises only some of them, namely, only those that have been actualized. The actualization of any of these possibilities does not change the pure possibility-identity of *b*, which is one and the same possibility despite any change that *b* as an actuality may undergo. For instance, James Joyce could have not written *Finnegans Wake* and yet he would have been the same James Joyce under one and the same pure possibility-identity (namely, the only possible author of *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*, *Finnegan Wake*, or other masterpieces). Note that *b* as an actual possibility and *b* as an actuality are one and the same *b*, both comprised in one and the same pure possibility-identity. All these distinctions are within one and the same pure possibility-identity, which

⁴ Pure possibilities are exempt from any spatiotemporality. Can a sphere as a pure possibility be exempt from space? Yes, it can. Think of any figure, such as sphere, in the analytical geometry, which transforms any spatial distinction to algebraic properties. In Kantian terms, even algebraic properties are subject to temporality, since the arithmetic series is subject to it. But my view is by no means Kantian, especially concerning spatiotemporality and the identity of indiscernibles. As a result, as pure possibilities, the two spheres are entirely exempt from spatiotemporality.

does not render it into separate individuals. In other words, *b* as actual and changeable or *b* as an actual possibility, which is neither changeable nor spatiotemporally and causally conditioned, takes part in one and the same pure possibility-identity. As actual, *b* is the spatiotemporally and causally conditioned part of *b* as a pure possibility. No actual individual exhausts all the possibilities that are open to it; it might always have been actually different and yet necessarily remaining one and the same individual under (“comprised in”) one and the same pure identity-possibility. This possibilism *de re* requires no transworld identity, possible worlds, possible counterparts, or any haecceity (qualitative or nonqualitative “thisness,” such as Adams’s), each of which appears to give rise to further problems and vagueness instead of providing us with some clear answers.

No two pure possibilities might be indiscernible and yet not identical. Independently of any properties, “monadic” or relational, any allegedly “two” indiscernible pure possibilities, discoverable by means of our imagination or thinking, are indeed one and the same possibility. To think about or to imagine two pure possibilities necessarily means to distinguish between them, to discern the one from the other, with no recourse to spatiotemporal distinctions at all. Any pure possibility is exempt from any spatiotemporal or causal conditions. Hence, no pure possibility is spatiotemporally located. If, nevertheless, there are really two of them, they are distinct because they are qualitatively different, not because they are in different places at the same time. They relate one *to* the other because they are different one *from* the other, not the other way round. Since any actuality is of a single pure possibility-identity, necessarily, according to such metaphysics, no indiscernible yet non-identical pure or actual possibilities exist.

Could any actualist counter argue that s/he had not the slightest idea of how could one have any access to the pure possibilities-identities of the two exactly similar spheres in one of the above possible interpretations of Black’s thought-experiment? No, for all we need is something like such a thought-experiment to have access to the pure possibilities-identities of these two spheres. Indeed, Black unknowingly “provides” these possibilities in his imaginary experiment or logically possible universe, which is not confined to the actual one. All we need is our imagination, within the domain of logical possibilities (as Black assumes on p. 156) or without it, to be acquainted with pure possibilities such as these two. Even

if no such spheres existed in our actual universe, Black could suggest his aforementioned thought-experiment because he, like any person who is endowed with imagination, has access to the realm of the purely possible. What makes such an experiment possible is simply our accessibility to that realm by means of our imagination, logic, mathematics, metaphysics, and other ways of thinking, all of which should not be confined to the actual. My interpretation that the two spheres can be either pure possibilities or actualities that actualized these pure possibilities holds true for Black's thought-experiment. Black would certainly agree that no two possibilities whatever can be identical, for "two" identical possibilities are really one and the same possibility.

The question is: are these two spheres, as pure or actual possibilities alike, not only non-identical but also indiscernible? Like "two" identical possibilities, "two" indiscernible possibilities are simply one and the same. There are not two of them at all. It is easier to realize that in the case of pure possibilities discernibility must be obvious. For in that case we have no recourse to actualities or to any of their conditions or terms. Can you think of, or imagine, two pure possibilities without discerning one from the other? No, since there are no two indiscernible pure possibilities. Indiscernibility of pure possibilities, if possible at all, would necessarily imply that there were no pure possibilities but only one. As far as pure possibilities are concerned, indiscernibility implies identity. If the two aforementioned spheres are pure possibilities, they must be discernible as well as not identical.

As we shall realize, the same holds true for the two spheres as actual possibilities. As far as actual possibilities are concerned, they too are necessarily discernible as well as not identical. Otherwise, the two spheres, as actual possibilities, would not have been considered two actual possibilities but only one.

Yet Black could answer back on another basis. He would restate his claim that there is no way of telling the spheres apart (*ibid.*, p. 156), which implies, to return to my view, that even if we have access enough to the pure possibilities-identities of the spheres, how can we ascribe possibility *b*, for instance, to one of the spheres, given that we are entirely incapable of telling the spheres apart? In other words, how can I identify one of the spheres as an actuality of possibility *b* rather than of possibility *c*? In this

case, my accessibility to the pure possibilities-identities of the spheres appears not to be helping me to identify any of the actual spheres. Which is which if there is no difference to tell? Yet this would not help Black at all. For the problem of identification or recognition of actualities is epistemological and empirical, not ontological-metaphysical. We have to distinguish between identity, which is ontic, and identification, which is epistemic. We have also to distinguish between identification of pure possibilities, which requires no empirical means, and that of actualities, which requires such means in addition to the identification of the relevant pure possibilities-identities. Suppose that I cannot know which actual sphere is which, I still know for sure that either sphere must be ontologically-metaphysically discernible, for each is an actuality of a different possibility-identity, whether I can tell the difference between the actual spheres or not.

If the spheres in question are actual, they must be different one from the other, for no two actualities can be of one and the same pure possibility-identity. Elsewhere I have shown that multiple actualization or “realization” of any pure possibility should be excluded (Gilead, 1999, pp. 10, 28; Gilead, 2003, p. 94). Apart from this, since any actuality is also a possibility (but not the other way round), and since any indiscernible or non-distinct possibilities are identical, and are one and the same possibility, any two—namely, at least numerically distinct—possibilities cannot be identical and are discernible on ontological-metaphysical grounds. The epistemological discernibility must follow the ontological-metaphysical discernibility of possibilities, pure or actual, not the other way round.

On the grounds of possibilities alone the identity of indiscernibles is metaphysically secured beyond any possible doubt. Even regardless of their properties, “predicative functions,” and relationality, absolutely, no two possibilities can be metaphysically indiscernible, otherwise they would have been merely one and the same possibility. Hence, with possibilities, pure or actual, numerical distinctness and qualitative difference are entirely compatible. No spatiotemporality, any other possible principle of individuation, or property is needed for the discernibility of any possibility. No two possibilities can be indiscernible, let alone identical, whatever are their properties, relational or not. The identity of each actuality is necessarily determined by its pure possibility-identity alone. No two actualities can share one and the same possibility-identity.

Note that my possibilist view does not acknowledge any spatiotemporal principle of individuation. All those classical empiricists or Kant (according to whom space and time are the forms of intuition or the only factors of individuation), who endorse spatiotemporal principle of individuation (*principium individuationis*) challenge the principle of the identity of indiscernibles in general or Leibniz's principle in particular. For they all assume the irreducibility of spatiotemporal differences to more fundamental or "primitive" factors of individuation. In this respect, Kant challenges that principle. According to him, like Locke, indiscernibles all of whose properties are common are not identical, for they exist in different places at the same time. Hence, this is sufficient to make indiscernibles numerically distinct. In contrast, my view, like Leibniz's, is that numerical distinctness of actualities indicates qualitative difference. Since actualities differ qualitatively, they are numerically different, not the other way round.

Black's possible world in which indiscernibles—duplicated particulars or worlds—are not identical is a narcissistic nightmare: "A kind of cosmic mirror producing real images... except that there wouldn't be any mirror" (ibid., p. 160). For a possible world in which "everything that happened at any place would be exactly duplicated at a place an equal distance on the opposite side of the center of symmetry" (ibid., p. 161) is a world in which no difference exists between an object and its mirror image. Suppose now that on epistemic grounds we cannot distinguish between two poles of a gravitational or magnetic field, two electrons, and the like (Black's examples on p. 162). If Black's possible world is a cosmic mirror, it is inferior to any world in which mirrors exist and in which we can distinguish between any object and its mirror image. Only due to some brain damage do adults become incapable of distinguishing between themselves and their mirror images or of recognizing such images as theirs. Notwithstanding, suppose that we know for sure that two things (two poles, two electrons, an object and its mirror image, and the like) exist in Black's possible world although there is no way to realize any difference between them, such indiscernibility carries no ontological commitment whatever. All we can say is that we do not detect any difference, which is an epistemological question, but we are absolutely not entitled to conclude that no such difference *exists* at all. Unlike Black's examples, in which the presence of an observer changes the possible universe (ibid., which follows

quantum mechanics), pure possibilities-identities are discoverable by us yet their existence and the differences they “make” or bear are entirely independent of our knowledge. Think again of eka-elements, mathematical pure possibilities, and the like; these were all discovered, not invented.

The two exactly similar or duplicated spheres that “exist” in Black’s possible world are not identical only because, contrary to his argument, they are discernible. For, first, if they are merely pure possibilities, they are necessarily discernible, as no two (“numerically distinct”) pure possibilities can be indiscernible. And, secondly, if the spheres are actual, either must be an actuality of a different pure possibility-identity, no matter what relations, spatiotemporal or otherwise, exist between the spheres or between any of them and any possible observer. Thus, contrary to Black’s view (*ibid.*, p. 163), there is always a way in which any thing, purely possible or actual, is different from any other. On these grounds, Black’s arguments should not convince the readers at all, contrary to the ending of the article (*ibid.*, p. 163), in which interlocutor *A* in Black’s imaginary dialogue declares himself not convinced by *B* (Black)’s argument, while *B* responds, “Well, then, you ought to be” (*ibid.*). This is an excellent example for an “overwhelming” argument, which *A* is unable to refute and which, yet, is entirely blind to an illuminating insight about the ontological-metaphysical necessity or indispensability of the identity of indiscernibles.⁵ I strongly recommend following that insight, which may open one’s eyes to realize why that identity is a metaphysical necessity. In this paper I have attempted to support this insight with a possibilist argument.

But suppose that Black rejects any possibilist view. Suppose that he argues against me that pure possibilities are merely nonsense (or that they are only *de dicto*, never *de re*), that only actual things can exist, and that his possible world or thought-experiment is not about pure possibilities but about actualities in the very actual world in which we live. Nevertheless, I could answer him again that since any actual thing is possible too, and since two possibilities that no difference exists between them are merely one possibility, the identity of indiscernibles is well secured. In other

⁵ For some other instructive examples of blind arguments versus illuminating insights see Gilead, 2004a.

words, merely on modal grounds, actualist or otherwise, Black's view against the identity of indiscernibles holds no water. On the other hand, if he will not take modality seriously, and if the possible, pure or actual, implied no ontological commitment whatever, Black could defend his view at some unbearable cost, that is, rendering modality and especially possibility ontologically insignificant.

To attempt to persuade the actualist who does not accept any possibilist assumption or principle, the argument that the two spheres are actual possibilities should be good enough. If the term "pure possibilities-identities" do not make sense for actualists, they, nevertheless, must consider the two spheres either as actual possibilities or as the possible modes ("ways") in which the actual spheres might have existed. In either case, those spheres are possibilities too, and no two indiscernible *possibilities* that are not identical can make sense for actualist or possibilist metaphysicians alike.

Let us reconsider the case of two actual "indiscernible" spheres from the aspect of spatiotemporality. In Euclidean space the case appears to be to some opponents of the identity of discernibles, from Kant on, that indiscernibles are not identical, for, sharing all their qualities, they are still "spatially dispersed, spatially distant from one another" (Adams, 1979, p. 14), which makes them numerically distinct. Surely, as far as the space in Black's possible world is Euclidean, there are two spheres although no difference between them is discerned. Consider now these two actual spheres as actually possible, namely, as two actual *possibilities*. As possibilities, they are not spatially or temporally dispersed (at most they are spatially or temporally *dispersible*), for no possibility, pure or actual, is spatially or temporally locatable. As actually possible, the spheres are two, not because they are spatially or temporally dispersed but rather because they are two qualitatively different possibilities and, *hence*, numerically distinct. Temporally dispersed actualities (namely, events) must be first and foremost qualitatively different because their ontological grounds or "primitives"—their possibilities—are qualitatively different. The *possibility* of being spatially or temporally dispersed, which is not spatiotemporally conditioned, is metaphysically prior to any actual spatial or temporal dispersal. In the final account, the pure possibilities-identities, which are absolutely exempt from any spatiotemporality, are the metaphysical-ontological grounds of the qualitative difference as well as

the numerical distinctness of any individual actuality. In any case, were the two spheres not actually possible in the first place, they could not be two actual spheres spatially distant from one another. They would have been then one and the same sphere, namely, identical to itself. In this way too the identity of indiscernibles is *necessarily* maintained. Individual distinctness, such as numerical distinctness, is intelligible only dependently of qualitative difference (contrary to Adams, 1979, p. 17). Black's counterexample to the identity of indiscernibles is thus refuted even when actual spheres in Euclidean space are concerned.

As for a non-Euclidean space or curved time, it has already been shown that on the grounds of spatial or temporal dispersal two indiscernible actualities can be identical.⁶ In such space or time, one and the same object may be spatially or temporally distant from itself. Yet, the point is not to show that the identity of indiscernibles is possible but rather that on metaphysical grounds it is necessary, to show that there is no possible single example in which indiscernibles are not identical. Bearing in mind my arguments so far, I have shown that there is no such example and that no such example can be found. As a result, the identity of indiscernibles is necessary, not only possible.

The apparent advantage of my possibilist treatment of the question of the identity of indiscernibles is, I think, that it equally holds for pure possibilities and actualities and, hence, clearly demonstrates that it is impossible for indiscernibles not to be identical. Both Leibniz's illustration of the discernibility of each leaf of an actual tree and, considering all the differences, C. S. Peirce's "no doubt, all things differ; but there is no logical necessity for it"⁷ are aimed at actual things. What I have shown above is that there is a metaphysical or ontological necessity for the identity of indiscernibles, which, I believe, renders any opposition to it entirely groundless. For those who oppose this identity and who also assume that metaphysical and logical necessity are one and the same, the case appears that I have also proven that the identity of indiscernibles is logically necessary. In sum, my arguments, possibilist or otherwise, clearly

⁶ Consult Adams (1979, pp. 13-17), following Black (1952, p. 161) and Hacking (1975). Cf., however, Denkel (1991, pp. 214-15, footnote 3), Landini and Foster (1991, pp. 55-60), and French (1995, pp. 461-466).

⁷ As quoted in Black (1952, p. 163); cf. Casullo (1982, p. 595-596), Landini and Foster (1991, pp. 54-55, 58-60).

show that the non-identity of indiscernibles is merely impossible, logically, ontologically, and metaphysically alike.

Finally, it is because any pure possibility is discernible from any other that the possibilities in question do not share all their properties, relational or otherwise, and not the other way round. Because any two pure possibilities are discernible, they must differ in their properties too. Because any two pure possibilities are necessarily distinct and different one *from* the other, they necessarily relate one *to* the other, not the other way round. Hence, Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles should be modified on that possibilist basis. Every thing must be distinct and different from any other thing, not just because they do not share all their properties, but primarily because their pure possibilities-identities necessarily differ one from the other. Because of this difference, they cannot also share all their properties.

(II) *Is Illusion of Free Will Possible at All?*

Not a few philosophers have been convinced that free will is merely an illusion (for a recent example consider Smilansky, 2000). The most notable is Spinoza, especially in the *Ethics*, according to which the fiction or illusion of free will is a result of ignorance or an error.⁸ In this paper I will make a metaphysical comment challenging the possibility of such an illusion altogether and explaining why we should be ontologically committed to free will.

Some mental states—such as being in pain, feeling well or unwell, comfortable or uncomfortable, stressed or relieved, calm or agitated, and experiencing one's will as free or one's desire as compelled—cannot be illusions. To experience any of these states is what its reality is all about; all its *esse* is simply *percipi*. The experience alone is sufficient to constitute the state of one's mental, subjective reality. The reality that such experience constitutes is one and the same with the experience itself and it must

⁸ *Ethics* 1App, Spinoza, 1985, p. 440:17 ff.; *ibid.*, 2p35s, p. 473; 2p48 and s; 2p49s, pp. 484-491; 3p2s, pp. 496:13-497:30; and 4p1s, pp. 547-548. The first number in each reference refers to the number of the part; "App" designates appendix; "p" proposition; "s" scholium or note; "d" demonstration; "p." or "pp." stands for the pagination of Curley's translation, while the numbers after the colon designate the lines.

not rely upon anything else. Such is not the case of any illusion. Illusion is mentally, subjectively real as far as the mental state of the person under it is concerned, but it inescapably refers to something else that is not the experience in question. This involves two things: (1) the existence of the illusion and (2) its referred object (which may not exist). The illusion must be about something else, distinct from the illusion itself. In contrast, to experience one's will as free is a state of one's mental, subjective reality, and it does not refer to any other fact, mental or otherwise, existent or nonexistent. The experience and the fact are one and the same. The *percipi* of free will alone makes all there is about it, its *esse* as a whole. Equally, to experience any pain is *to be in* pain. The *percipi* of any pain alone is its *esse*. No other *esse*, alleged or real, must be involved with the experience of free will or with that of pain. To experience or feel one's will as free must not refer to something else but only to the experience itself. To experience it is not a reflection about something, as much as pain is not a reflection about something. Neither involves any introspection. Above all, no room is left for illusion or mistake about such mental states as such, for none of them is a belief or knowledge, which are fallible and may turn to be illusions. Finally, none of them is a representation of a mental state; it is rather the mental state itself. One's experience of free will does not represent free will as a mental fact; it is rather one's mental fact itself. Equally, one's experience of pain does not represent any pain as a mental fact; it is rather the reality of one's pain. To experience free will makes a mental reality of free will.

In contrast, quite different mental states, whose *esse* is not simply *percipi*, are both subjective and cognitive. To experience or have such states does not constitute any mental reality or fact to which the experience refers. Thus, each of such states is fallible and can be merely an illusion. If James believes himself to be omniscient or omnipotent, this does not make any fact about his real capability or about his mental reality to which this illusion refers and which is different from the illusion. If, actually, he is absolutely incapable of writing an excellent paper in philosophy, for instance, even though he considers himself capable of doing so, his belief is by no means sufficient to render him capable of achieving that. All the mental states of this kind are subjective, cognitive, and absolutely fallible. All of them refer to some mental fact or reality that is beyond them. In fact, each of the aforementioned examples is merely an illusion about one's mental state or capability. As such, they erroneously represent such state or capa-

bility to which they refer. The *percipi* of the illusion does not constitute the *esse* of the referent, of the mental capability or any other capability of the person under that illusion despite his or her strong belief, “knowledge,” conviction, or self-consideration. In contrast, the case of the experience or feeling of free will or of pain is entirely different. No fallibility has any room in any of such states. As I will argue below, their subjectivity bears intersubjective and objective veridical standing or truth, and it is absolutely impossible for any of them to result in illusion or self-deception.

Galen Strawson rightly rejects any possibility that pain is illusion or mere seeming, for “the seeming is itself and ineliminably a real thing” (1994, p. 51), and argues that to consider pain as illusion is simply irrational (ibid., p. 53). Indeed, as he shows elsewhere (1986, pp. 222-225), the *esse* of pain is *percipi* or “pain just *is* pain-experience.” Nevertheless, for reasons that will be further explicated below, I do not see how such an understanding of pain is compatible with the assumption that “there is no such thing as free will” (ibid., p. v).

No one, however capable or knowledgeable, is entitled to deny any of your pains. Such denials should be considered totally irrational or groundless. Furthermore, absolutely no one is entitled to argue that the pain in question is merely illusion. We are entitled to disbelieve or discredit one’s *complaints* or *claims* about one’s pain, since his or her behavior, reaction, appearance, and the like indicate, to our best judgement, that this person is not in pain. Nevertheless, no one is entitled to disavow the *reality* of pain or being in pain, even if its reflection on the relevant objective or intersubjective reality is not recognized. Even if an able physician finds no grounds for the patient’s complaint about pain, she is entirely incapable of denying the reality of that pain or of diagnosing it as a mere illusion. The patient may be in pain even if no external, objective or intersubjective, indications or grounds for it are recognized at all.

The reality, the very existence, of pains or other subjective states must not depend or supervene on objective-impersonal or intersubjective-interpersonal reality. Subjective experiences, such as being in pain, do not require any use of language, for language rests upon intersubjective reality. There is no private or objective language; only intersubjective languages exist. We need knowledge and language, both of which are intersubjective, to name, define, or describe our mental states; but to experience or realize

them no language or other intersubjective devices are needed. Infants are subject to pains, stress, pleasure, relief, and the like very early in their life, well before any command of language. Equally, we must not rely upon language, knowledge, belief, or any other intersubjective means to feel free, coerced, relieved, and the like. One's experience of free will requires no knowledge, belief, or language.

What is it like to experience or feel free will? Whenever, under no compulsion or force, I follow my volition, I feel or experience the freedom of my will, entirely exempt from any coercion or constraint. I feel "like it," I *freely* want it as it is, and I fully ("integratively") stand by my will. Under compulsive or addictive desires, no one can feel one's will as free. One feels whether or not any coercion, compulsion, or addiction is involved in whatsoever way with one's volition, and one can certainly distinguish between free will and coerced or compelled desire. To experience or feel free will does *not* mean to have or consider it unmotivated, undetermined, or uncaused. Having free will is entirely compatible with being determined or motivated, whereas coercion or compulsion is incompatible with free will. I will return to this point below.

Under hypnosis, patients may experience their will as free. Could this serve as a counterexample to the argument that the experience of free will must be exempt from any illusion? No, for hypnosis consists of *self-suggestion* in which the patients help themselves to be exempt from their inhibitions, to be relieved from some constraints. In fact, the patient's self-suggestion mobilizes or utilizes the aid of the hypnotist to get such a desirable affect. No one can be hypnotized against one's free will. Experience or feeling of free will under hypnosis is as real as in normal life except for the capability of hypnosis or self-suggestion to relieve the patients from some inhibitions that constrain their experience of free will. This experience in itself cannot be unconscious just as no unconscious pain exists. Hence, inhibitions or constraints may eradicate or suppress, not repress, one's experience of free will. In conclusion, under hypnosis too, the patients' experience of free will, like the patients' experience of pain, cannot be illusion.

What about unconscious grounds which if one was conscious of, one would have not felt one's will as free? In such case, is not one under an illusion of free will? As far as effectiveness is concerned, there is no differ-

ence between conscious and unconscious grounds. In either case, the effect, namely, experiencing one's will as either free or coerced, must be conscious or felt. Consequently, if one feels one's will as free, no grounds, conscious or unconscious, exist for him to feel otherwise. The same holds for one's feeling oneself under coerced desire. Hence, rendering any unconscious grounds conscious, would not change even slightly one's feeling of free will or that of being under compelled desire. In conclusion, whenever one feels one's will as free, no illusion about it due to unconscious grounds can take place.

To feel exempt from any coercion or addiction is as infallible as being exempt from any pain or being in pain. Everybody can simply recognize the infallible distinction between being in pain and being exempt from any pain, of being coerced and of being exempt from any coercion, of having free will. One is certainly capable of *taking* one's will as free, whereas no one is capable of *mistaking* one's will as free, just as one cannot mistake oneself as being in pain or as being exempt or relieved from any pain. Whenever you feel yourselves as having free will, there is absolutely no mistake or doubt about it.

Nevertheless, I may be mistaken about some of my emotions and misidentify them. For instance, I may feel angry about something or somebody, although what I really, truly have "deep down" is quite another emotion, say, fear or jealousy. To recognize that, my experience is not sufficient and introspection as well as knowledge or other intersubjective means are required. Similarly, could I have a strong sense of free will although "deep down" I might unconsciously have something very different? Could not my sense of inner freedom be then merely an illusion? Indeed, fear, jealousy, and the like may *appear or be experienced* as anger, and in a sense I may be under the illusion or self-deception of being angry. Unlike being in pain or having free will, emotions can be unconscious (Gilead, 2003, pp. 160-162), and the *percipi* of any emotion can be different from its *esse*. Hence, we may be wrong about the unconscious emotions behind our feelings but not about the feelings or experiences themselves, all of which are conscious. Having free will cannot appear, be experienced, or felt as a different mental state, just as pains cannot appear or be experienced as other feelings or sensations, for the *esse* of pain or of free will is *percipi*. Consequently, unlike some of my emotions, I could not misidentify or be mistaken about my free will.

While in pain, you are incapable of mistaking your pains for other pains, sensations, or feelings, and certainly you are not self-deceived or under illusion. Some of your “physical” pains may have no physical grounds whatsoever, and an expert may suggest that you experience distress or some mental stress as if it were a physical pain, although no physical grounds for this pain exist. Nevertheless, you undeniably experience “physical” pains then (since any pain is mental, I use “physical” qualifiedly), and there is no illusion about that experience. No painful situation is an illusion or mere appearance (whereas being angry may be merely the appearance or experience of another emotion); its *esse* is *percipi*. You are capable of mistaking or misidentifying the significance or the causes of your pain, not its nature or identity. Such is also the case of phantom pains, which are unmistakably pains. Being in phantom pain, a person believes it to indicate or signify some occurrence in a nonexistent, amputated limb. Nevertheless, the pain as such involves no illusion; only the belief or judgment as to the origin, causes, or significance of the pain is fallible. No one, however omniscient or omnipotent, can challenge the reality of one’s pain, phantom or not.

Equally real is the infallible experience that some of our volitions are entirely free or that our will is free in such cases. As Richard Griffith puts it, we “cannot do away with the compelling reality of the experience of free will” (1962, p. 232, nevertheless, we should do away with both his “as-if” and “no metaphysics” concerning free will). However motivated, determined, conditioned, manipulated, or coerced persons may be, their feeling or experience of free will should be unquestionable, no matter to what extent they are hetero-determined or self-determined. However compelling, forcing, or constraining the circumstances under which they are acting, feeling, or thinking, whenever they feel free to choose or decide, such inner experience of freedom is infallible. No introspection or self-knowledge is required to experience or identify such freedom, however determined or motivated, just as no introspection or self-knowledge is needed to be in pain, namely, to experience pain, regardless of the grounds that determine it. Suppose that some chemical factors are the grounds for our feeling free or experiencing free will. Whether we know of such grounds and of their impact on us or not, the feeling or experience of such freedom is infallible and should not be considered as illusion at all. Equally, feeling well, comfortable, relaxed, and the like by virtue of such chemical factors

should not be considered illusion at all. The feeling or experience is certainly real and it is not about another reality except for that of the feeling or experience itself.

Hence, contrary to Spinoza and others, we should not ascribe the alleged “illusion” of free will to our ignorance of the causes that actually have necessarily determined our volitions and thus allegedly made them not free at all. Spinoza’s view on the illusion—“fiction” and “error” in his explicit terms—of free will deserves special attention. If we consider carefully the main arguments in the *Ethics* according to which free will is merely a fiction or an error based upon the ignorance of the causes that determine our volitions,⁹ we can realize that the reality of free will should not be deemed an error provided that we do not also follow Spinoza’s actualism and psychophysical stance. Illusion or error consists of considering a fragment of reality as if it were a reality *in se est*, a complete piece of reality, which is not the case at all. For example, if we perceive a stick as broken once it is put into the water, we make no error in perceiving it as broken. But if we jump into the conclusion that the stick *in se est*, namely, as it is in itself, is broken, we certainly err. The sun appears to us as small as our hand, and no error occurs when we see it as such as long as we do not believe the sun *in se est* to be as small as our hand. Thus, such subjective experiences are emendable fragments of reality under Spinoza’s meticulous examination. The illusion, fiction, or error enters the scene whenever we ignore the limited, dependent, and conditioned nature of that experience as such a fragment.

Under Spinoza’s examination no isolated fragment of reality exists, for any detail or fragment of reality inseparably pertains to the reality as a whole. Each such detail or fragment is simply a link in a total causal chain or unbroken series, which is nature as a whole under this or that Attribute. Each causal link is thus necessarily, inseparably connected to all the others. While under ignorance, illusion, or error, we are not aware of such a necessary inseparable connection and we refer to the fragment of reality as if it were a discrete, unconditioned, or isolated part of it, as an island existing for its own, which Spinoza regards as sheer absurd. According to him, nothing except total reality is entitled to be considered unconditioned.

⁹ See Note 8 above.

Whenever we realize that our subjective experience, such as that of free will, is not an isolated, independent, or unconditioned piece of reality, we cannot err about it and we know for certainty that no volition can be uncaused. Each volition is simply a link in a necessary causal chain, all of whose links are subject to strict determinism. Once we realize the causes of our volitions, we cannot err about their nature as necessarily determined. Spinoza assumes that this makes our volition not free. In any event, such error is emendable, as in the complete context of the total reality no room exists for error or illusion. As long as we do not consider the part as if it were a whole, no error or illusion can take place. Indeed, each of our mistakes, errors, and illusions is necessarily caused, and each necessarily takes part in nature, in the reality of things. It ceases to be an error or illusion once we realize its partiality and the causal connections that link it to the whole of nature.

Now, unlike illusion or error, ignorance of the causes in the case of free will or pain does not lead to any illusion or error as to the reality of pain or of free will. Whether I know what are the causes of my pain or not, its reality is undeniable. When I am entirely ignorant of the causes of my pain, I am still undeniably in pain. From the total view, in which no error has any room, *sub specie aeternitatis*—from the point of view of the infinite intellect—any *such* experience, despite its undeniable subjectivity, is a necessarily real piece of reality. Which means that even from a point of view that conceives all the relevant reasons for and causes of such experiences, such experiences remain true with no change as to their epistemic status. Such mental states enjoy the status of adequacy, in which the same truth is equally valid for the parts and the whole, which is the case of any adequate or rational knowledge in Spinoza's view. According to such view yet contrary to Spinoza's explicit conclusion, free will¹⁰ is real as well as being subject to adequate knowledge. As *adequate* parts of reality, mental states such as being in pain and of free will are not mistaken at all and they should not be considered errors, fictions, or illusions. Spinoza could not argue that pain is an error, fiction, or illusion, even to the extent that we do

¹⁰ More precisely, free volition, for, according to Spinoza, will, especially free will, is merely an illegitimate abstraction or universal pertaining to the first kind of knowledge, *imaginatio*. Yet, since I use “will” as the common *property* of all volitions, I use it as an adequate term in the second kind of knowledge—*ratio*—legitimately referring to the common properties of entities.

not know the causes of it. I venture to argue that the same holds for the experience of free will. As much as the experience of pain is being in pain, which Spinoza would not deny, the experience of free will is an adequate mental reality, which he *should* not deny or deem as an illusion. Pain is not an illusion believed to be an unconditioned, discrete, or isolated part of reality; it is necessarily connected to the whole of it. We are in pain inescapably under some circumstances as much as we feel ourselves as having free will under some circumstances. The experience of pain enjoys a secure adequacy in the reality as a whole, and from no point of view or perspective can it be doubted as if it were an error, fiction, or illusion. The same should hold for our experience of free will as a mental reality. Thus, Spinoza's analogies to the alleged "illusion" of the stone as to its "free" fall and to alleged "free" desire of the baby to be breast-fed are not valid for the experience as well as the reality of free will.

Furthermore, as much as being in pain is not subject to the Spinozistic emendation, which requires a knowledge of the causes of a fragment of reality, the experience of free will is not subject to any emendation that could turn it from illusion or error into true knowledge. After all, just like being in pain, the experience of free will is infallible. Hence, becoming aware of the comprehensive, complete causal context of any such experience does not affect the infallibility of any of them. The explication of the relevant causes of both experiences does not change the nature of the experience itself, which need no emendation, for from the outset it has been fallible and could not be an error, fiction, or illusion. The causal context does not change the epistemic status—the veridicality or the adequacy—of such an experience even slightly. Unlike the optical illusions of the broken stick, the smaller or the nearer sun, no fragmentation or imaginative isolation is involved in the nature of the experience of pain or of free will. Most significantly, being in pain and the experience of free will should not pertain to the first kind of knowledge—*imaginatio*—which Spinoza deems as the origin of any error or illusion. They pertain instead to the adequate kinds of knowledge, namely, *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*.

Once we conceive the possibility that freedom of will and determinism, causal or otherwise, are compatible, nothing about free will remains under illusion or error. Given that nothing in reality is without cause, and even the reality as a whole, as a totality, is caused (in this case, it is the cause of itself, *causa sui*), each volition or the will in general is causally

determined. Nevertheless, contrary to Spinoza, this in itself does not make the will not free. One of the reasons that Spinoza could not reach such a bold conclusion lies in the fact that he was a confirmed actualist. Hence, pure possibilities do not exist in his ontology. If alternatives to any of our decisions are pure possibilities, no such alternative can exist in Spinoza's world, which entails that none of our decisions can be free in his view.

The question of the relevant causes, grounds, and reasons to the determination or motivation of the will is entirely irrelevant to the question of whether its freedom is real or merely illusion. The experience or feeling of inner freedom, of the freedom of our will, is absolutely not subject to any illusion, self-deception, or fallibility, just as being in pain is not subject to any of these, no matter what are the reasons or grounds for such experiences. Suppose that, like phantom pains, "phantom experiences" of free will exist, which means that such experiences have no grounds in external, intersubjective or objective, reality. Nevertheless, such experiences are as real as any experience of free will that has grounds enough in external reality and that is not considered "phantom" at all. Like pain, the experience or feeling of free will *is* an inner, mental reality and it is not about external reality.

"Inner reality" involves no "ghost in the machine" or anything of a similar fallacy. By "inner" I mean something mental or subjective, which is irreducible to any other kind of reality. Once you acknowledge mental reality, you have to acknowledge subjectivity too. Thomas Nagel has contributed greatly to our understanding of that (especially in 1986). But, again, I do not see why the case of pain and pleasure (*ibid.*, pp. 156-162), in which "no objective view we can attain could possibly overrule our subjective authority in such cases" (*ibid.*, p. 158), should not equally hold for our experience of free will. Be that as it may, without subjects and subjectivity, no mental reality exists at all. I use "reality" in the irreducible sense of the term, which means that mental-inner-subjective-personal reality should be accepted as real from any possible perspective: personal-subjective, interpersonal-intersubjective, or impersonal-objective. Intersubjective reality is the social, communal, national, political, linguistic, or communicative life (or "form of life") that one shares with others. Objective reality, including one's body, is the physical reality in which one exists. As a person, one is a mental being, actualized as a body, which takes part in the physical, objective reality.

The later psychophysical assumption should not be considered dualistic; it simply commits itself to a psychophysical irreducibility. Note especially that any psychophysical distinction, which is entailed by the psychophysical irreducibility, does not lead to psychophysical separation. As much as the mind is irreducible to the body and vice versa, subjective, mental reality is irreducible to objective or intersubjective reality. The reality of pains, volitions, emotions, feelings, and other mental states is, inescapably and irreducibly, subjective; yet it bears intersubjective or objective significance, which is as real as the subjective.

Feeling myself mentally free is as real and infallible as feeling myself well, unwell, in pain, relaxed, calm, peaceful, comfortable, uncomfortable, excited, tense, strained, and the like. Any adult is capable of infallibly distinguishing between such states of mind. Who on earth can repudiate my answers to the questions—“How do you feel?,” “Do you feel free to decide...?,” “Did you do it out of your free will?,” and the like—whenever there is no suspicion that I do not inform about my feeling bona fide? The experience of inner freedom must be infallible, whatever are the grounds, causes, or reasons for it, and nothing can disavow it as real. Unlike illusion, delusion, or hallucination, such experience is both real and infallible intersubjectively or objectively. As far as experience such as having free will or being in pain is concerned, the only authority is the person who has it. No intersubjective or objective authority can overrule it.

Is not James, whose cerebral damage has permanently paralyzed his left hand, under an illusion or self-deception whenever he feels free to raise it? He is certainly under an illusion as to his physical capability. Yet, despite his physical state that does not allow him to raise his left hand, James’s free volition or decision to raise it (or his attempt to do so) is by no means an illusion. Such a wish or decision is a “phantom” experience taking part in his mental, inner reality and, as such, it is absolutely real, not for James alone, but also for anybody else, since James’s mental reality as subjective should be intersubjectively and objectively acknowledged (as in the case of phantom pain). Nobody can rationally or intelligibly challenge the reality or infallibility of such an experience. James certainly disavows his *physical* state, which is quite common in some cases of cerebral damage, but surely he does not deny or disavow his conscious volition or decision whose reality is of mental freedom. James’s awareness of this inner free-

dom is infallible. Were he coerced to want or to decide to raise his left hand, he would have been aware or conscious of such coercion. He has no illusion about his will as mentally real and free.

I deem that all those who have considered freedom of will merely illusion or non-reality, have, in fact, referred to belief or knowledge about our will. But this must not be the case. First and foremost, freedom of will is an experience in which the perceived reality and the perception of it are one and the same. The experience of free will is not any kind of knowledge. The question, "How do you know that your will or choice is free?" is as absurd as the question, "How do you know that you are in pain?" The experience of either pain or free will does not depend on any knowledge. It is subjective, personal, and private. Knowledge, by contrast, is an intersubjective or objective matter. Hence, since my experience or feeling of free will reflects on the intersubjective and objective reality that we share, the intersubjective or objective bearing or significance of my experience is subject to knowledge. Since no knowledge is infallible or beyond any possible doubt, one can be mistaken about the meaning or significance of one's feelings or experience, as far as intersubjective and objective reality is concerned. But such fallibility, such capability of mistaking, does not hold for the subjective reality, yet reality by all means, of one's experience or feeling of free will. As with phantom pain, persons may mistake and be wrong as to the objective or intersubjective *significance* of their truthful experience or feeling. The objective significance is about one's physical state and behavior; the intersubjective significance is about one's attitude, language, expressions, and relationships. In intersubjective or objective reality some persons may not appear free at all despite their feeling or experience. But, just like their sense of pain, their sense of inner freedom, unlike their sense of objective or intersubjective reality, is free from any illusion or self-deception.

In conclusion, from any of the aforementioned possible perspectives (subjective, intersubjective, or objective), each person is the only authority as to her or his sense of free will. The significance of such authority is certainly intersubjective and objective. Whenever persons experience or feel themselves as having free will, no one, however capable or knowledgeable, can disavow such feeling or experience and consider it merely an illusion or self-deception.

That our experience of free will is not an illusion does not deem our will unmotivated or undetermined. How to render determinism, responsibility, and the necessary connection between a person and her or his volitions or decisions coherent or compatible with free will is one of the most intricate philosophical problems, if solvable at all (Kane, 2002, pp. 3-41). Peter van Inwagen, for one, highlights the unsolvable or dissolvable mystery of free will (1993, pp. 184-199, and in Kane, 2002, pp. 158-177). He concludes that free will remains a mystery: though it “undeniably exists, ... there is a strong and unanswered *prima facie* case for its impossibility” (ibid., p. 159), given that free will is considered incompatible with determinism and indeterminism alike. But the philosophers’ incapability of adequately solving such intricate problems, if solvable at all, does not repudiate or disavow the reality of free will. We are still lacking greatly in understanding the phenomenon of pain, but this should not make any of us question the reality of pain. Analogously, the assumed failure or inadequacy of any known explanation to the reality of free will does not repudiate this reality at all. Undoubtedly, there are reasons or grounds for the motivation and determination of any responsible person’s will, yet it is undeniable that the will is *both* free and motivated, even necessarily or inescapably motivated. If no philosophy can explain this, at all or adequately enough, the reality of free will is, nevertheless, undoubtedly there, simply in the heart of the mental life of each of us. Elsewhere, I have suggested a novel possibilist solution to that problem (Gilead, 2003, pp. 131-156), but even if no solution existed, the reality of free will should not be questioned, let alone repudiated or disavowed.

My view on the reality of free will opposes any “free will subjectivism,” such as Richard Double’s (in 1991 and in Kane, 2002, pp. 506-528). Given that mental, subjective *reality* is irreducible, and given that it has room enough side by side to intersubjective or objective reality, free will is undeniably real. This means that, metaphysically or ontologically speaking, *in fact* persons *really* have free will, and the reality of their free will should be acknowledged from any possible perspective, despite the difficulties or unsolved problems it may raise for philosophical or scientific thinking. In other words, to consider free will as an illusion, mistake, or self-deception is itself an illusion, self-deception, or mistake, for the fully-fledged reality of free will is an undeniable fact about persons or mental beings, equal to pain and other mental, subjective states. As much as the reality of pain is essential to our survival, the reality of free will, not an illusion of free will,

is essential to our human reality and life as well as morality. The reality of free will is independent of the perspectives in which it may be captured. We should be ontologically committed altogether to this reality. Furthermore, in the case of free will or pain, objective or intersubjective reality supervenes on subjective reality, for the latter is the ultimate authority as far as the reality of free will and pains is concerned. Being real from the subjective or personal perspective, they should be treated as real from the other perspectives, for no illusion of pain or free will is possible. They exist side by side to intersubjective and objective reality, independently of the standing of our knowledge or beliefs.

In sum, any denial of the reality of free will is as irrational or groundless as any denial of the reality of pain. The experience of free will is by no means an illusion. Such an illusion is merely impossible.

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