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## On the Possibility of a Dual-Natured Self

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**Abstract.** In this paper I examine compatibilism and incompatibilism about whether the self can be both a subject and an object in the same awareness at the same time. While this is an old debate that many traditions of philosophy have contributed to, my point of departure is the work of A.C. Mukerji (an Indian philosopher of the modern era) who worked on the possibility of self-awareness by articulating, what he called, the paradox of ego-centricity. I also consider Patañjali (an Indian philosopher of the classical era), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (a phenomenologist), and Arindam Chakrabarti (a contemporary Indian and Analytic philosopher) on the debate over compatibilism. First, I present Mukerji's paradox, then I critically examine Patañjali and Merleau-Ponty's arguments against incompatibilism. I move on to bring Mukerji's paradox into contact with Chakrabarti's arguments in favor of compatibilism. I critically examine Chakrabarti's arguments in favor of compatibilism and against incompatibilism. While insightful and powerful, I argue that they can be resisted; and should be considered alongside Mukerji's paradox. I close by offering an argument for compatibilism based on an analogy with particle-wave duality in quantum physics and the relation between conceivability and metaphysical modality.

**Keywords:** self-awareness, Mukerji's paradox, Arindam Chakrabarti, compatibilism, incompatibilism, the paradox of the knower

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### 1. A weak premise in the paradox of ego-centricity

In my [1], *the Paradox of Ego-centricity*, I was inspired by the work of Bhushan and Garfield's [2], *Minds without Fear*, to examine in more detail A. C. Mukerji's paradox of ego-centricity. One can formulate the paradox as follows.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In my [1] I work out a more elaborate version of the paradox. For the purposes of this investigation I have offered a distinct version. While Bhushan and Garfield's [2] has a formulation that is also good, it leaves open the question of why (N) is true, which was the subject of my [1].

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- I. It is impossible for the self to be both a subject and an object at the same time.
- N. Self-knowledge is a necessary condition for all knowledge.
- S. We have self-knowledge, where the self is the subject of our knowledge.

Using Zeno's paradox of motion as a model, we can note that a paradox has at least two parts. First, each of the claims should appear intuitively true. Second, when put together the claims should be jointly inconsistent. In my [1], I investigated (N), and left aside (I) and (S). The reason why is that while (S) is intuitively true, and (I) is arguably true, (N) appears to be the hardest claim to provide an argument for. In fact, for many, it is intuitive to say the exact opposite of (N). It seems that one can know, for example, that there is a table in front them without knowing anything about them self. Does knowledge of the external world, really presuppose and require knowledge of self-knowledge?

But this criticism of (N) reveals a simple misunderstanding over what the paradox is about. Mukerji was not exploring *attribute* self-knowledge, such as whether one knows that they are hungry now or that they see a certain color now. For that kind of self-knowledge is not a necessary condition for knowledge of the external world. Rather, he was interested in *substantial* self-knowledge, where the knowledge is about *what self I am* amongst the varieties of things in my ego-centric space. Arguably, knowledge of the external world, by a specific agent, requires that the agent knows that it is their knowledge of a rock before them as opposed to someone else's. That is, they require a some kind ownership self-knowledge. And that self-knowledge, like their other-directed worldly knowledge, has to come to them through an approved knowledge source, such as perception, introspection, or inference.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, *substantial* self-knowledge is distinct from *attribute* self-knowledge in that they are independent from one another. For one can know that they are hungry now without knowing which object they are in the array of objects in their ego-centric space. Imagine a person who is hungry in a total sensory deprivation chamber.<sup>3</sup> They could be aware of their own mental state through introspection without knowing which object in their ego-centric space they are — for arguably they have no grasp of their embodied self, even via proprioception or interoception.<sup>4</sup> And if a total sensory deprivation chamber is not convincing

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<sup>2</sup> Mukerji does not draw a distinction between *attribute* and *substantial* self-knowledge. I draw this distinction in my [1] in order to make clear that one can be interested in two distinct kinds of self-knowledge. One that has to do with a state of the self, and another that has to do with the self as a substantial entity who has states.

<sup>3</sup> By 'total sensory deprivation chamber' I do not mean what is commonly called a *float tank*, which is used for relaxation. Rather, I mean a sensory deprivation chamber that makes one lose sense of all resistance and pressure from their surrounding environment.

<sup>4</sup> I would like to thank Ana Laura Funes-Maderey for bringing the mechanisms of proprioception and interoception to my attention. It seems far more obvious that one cannot gain knowledge of their body in a sensory deprivation chamber through visual or tactile perception than it does through proprioception or interoception. On my view, proprioception can give us location of our limbs, but this is far more difficult in a deprivation chamber. And while interoception can give us access to

consider *Avicenna's flying man thought experiment*,<sup>5</sup> in which we are asked to consider a man that is created all at once and perfect but his sight is veiled from seeing external things, and he is created floating in the air or in a void so that the resistance of the air does not hit him, for were the air to hit him, he would sense it. In addition, his limbs are separated from each other so that they do not meet or touch each other. Would such a person be able to affirm that they are hungry without being able to affirm their bodily existence even when they cannot sense internal organs, such as their intestines?

Now that we have brought into focus that Mukerji was interested in substantial self-knowledge, one might still wonder about (N). That is, one might wonder why or how self-knowledge is a necessary condition for knowledge in general. For example, does one really need to know which object they are in their ego-centric space in order to know that there is a table in front of them? Consider a partial sensory deprivation chamber. One might be allowed to look out a small window where the only object in their visual field is a ball against a black background. Does it follow that they can also determine which object they are? Perhaps they can say, "I am not that", deploying a perceptual demonstrative to secure reference. But is that enough for substantial self-knowledge? Or, to adapt an example from Gareth Evans' [3], consider an astronaut out in space, who has come untethered from their spacecraft. Floating out in blackness with no object in view in any direction. Surely, the astronaut can say, "I am here now", and, according to David Kaplan [4], would say something that is *a priori* true, since every subject is where they are at when they utter, "I am here now". However, would they really have substantial self-knowledge of where they are?<sup>6</sup> Without pressing into an extended examination of these question, I will let them sit, since my focus here is on (I). One way to understand this paradox more carefully is to create three separate arguments, where each argument uses two claims as a way to construct an argument against a third claim. Consider the following three arguments.

If we hold that there is self-knowledge, where the self is the subject of the knowledge, and it is necessary for all knowledge, then it follows that the subject of an episode of knowledge can also be the object of knowledge. (I) is false.

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internal organs, it is not clear that access to internal organs is sufficient for knowledge of a *substantial* self. Nevertheless, it is important to consider what knowledge mechanisms could give us access to a *substantial* self in a sensory deprivation chamber.

Ana Funes also notes that while it might be impossible to have *substantial* self-knowledge with respect to the sensory deprivation chamber when we are considering *the* body, it is not impossible to have self-knowledge with respect to the question: who is breathing? If one can know that they are breathing, in the way in which their knowledge isn't just of breathing going on here, but that they are the one breathing, then this could be a kind of *substantial* self-knowledge. But a question remains: does *substantial* self-knowledge reduce to breathe and consciousness of one's breathing or is it the case that in *the* deprivation chamber, knowledge of one's own breathing is the only kind of substantial self-knowledge that is available?

<sup>5</sup> One can find a discussion of the flying man in Jonardon Ganeri's [5: 58]. *The Self: Naturalism, Consciousness, and the First-Person Stance*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>6</sup> I have borrowed and adapted the example of the astronaut from the work of Gareth Evans' [3], and David Kaplan's [4].

But, if we are convinced that the subject of knowledge cannot be the object of knowledge, and that we have self-knowledge, where the self is the subject of the knowledge, we have to deny that self-knowledge is a necessary condition for all knowledge. (N) is false.

And, if we think that self-knowledge is a necessary condition for all knowledge, and the subject of an episode of knowledge cannot be the object of knowledge, then we have to give up on the idea that we have self-knowledge, where the self is the subject of the knowledge. (S) is false.

The point of looking at all three versions is that it allows us to select out which argument is the best of the three. In other words, which argument has the set of premises that we are most confident of. Since I have already explored how to defend (N), and (S), while clearly something one can object to, is more intuitive than (I) or (N), I will now turn to (I).

In a well-argued and insightful chapter of his [6], Arindam Chakrabarti takes on the question: does self-awareness turn the self into an object? Although he is exploring self-awareness and not knowledge, his reflections are relevant to Mukerji's paradox. For although awareness and knowledge are different mental states, both are factive mental states. If you are aware of  $p$ ,  $p$  is true, and if you know that  $p$ , then  $p$  is true. As a consequence of the factivity of both of these mental states, I will now speak only of self-awareness so as to bring Mukerji's paradox into alignment with Chakrabarti's question and investigation. He maintains that:

[P]hilosophers of many diverse traditions and times have claimed that there is some sort of a contradiction in making an object out of the subject—that no agent can loop back and act upon itself, and that the knower, literally and directly, cannot be known. [6. P. 138]

Here he makes clear why many philosophers have thought that (I) is true upon reflection. His project is to defend the opposite view. Following his own terminology, let me define two positions that are the focus of the debate enshrined in the question: can the self be both a subject and an object at the same time?

*Compatibilism:* It is **possible** for the self to be both a subject and an object in the same awareness state at the same time.

*Incompatibilism:* It is **impossible** for the self to be both a subject and an object in the same awareness state at the same time.

In the rest of this essay I want to examine Chakrabarti's arguments with the aim of defending the incompatibilist position. For were his arguments sound, Mukerji's paradox wouldn't be very plausible. Before I look at his arguments I want to explore two ways in which one might try to defend compatibilism that Chakrabarti does not consider. In **2** I construct a general argument about the relation between language and reality, inspired by Ashton's [7] on *prakṛti*. In **3**, I want to present some potential limitations to an approach inspired by Merleau-Ponty & Patañjali. In **4** I consider Chakrabarti's argument for compatibilism. In **5—7**, his

response to several incompatibilists. Finally, in **8** I offer an alternative approach to defending compatibilism based on inconceivability as a guide to impossibility.

## 2. The Grammatical Solution to Compatibilism

One way to approach the debate over incompatibilism is to make a kind of linguistic assent. Instead of asking whether the self can be both a subject and an object in the same awareness, we move to asking a linguistic question: does language *L* have a grammar that allows for constructions using the personal pronoun, such as “I” in English, to occur in both subject and object position while obeying the grammar of *L*? Using linguistic assent one can argue as follows for compatibilism or incompatibilism.

1. If language *L* allows for “I”, and thus its referent, to occur both in subject and object position, then according to *L* the referent of “I” can be both a subject and an object in the same awareness.
2. If language *L* does not allow for “I”. and thus its referent, to occur both in subject and object that position, then according to *L* the referent of “I” cannot be both a subject and an object in the same awareness.
3. Some language *L* does allow for “I” to occupy both roles.
4. Some language *L* does not allow “I” to occupy both roles.
5. So, whether or not the self can be both a subject and an object in the same awareness depends simply on whether the relevant personal pronoun for the language *L*, and rules of *L*, in question, allows it.

The point of the linguistic argument is to drive out the view that we can simply solve the debate over compatibilism by looking at languages.

On the one hand, examining the grammar of various languages is essential to a careful examination of the question. Language serves as our medium for communicating about reality. As a consequence, those that do not pay attention to how their own language might force certain questions based on the limits of what can be constructed in the language are failing to be sufficiently self-reflective about the role of language in philosophical investigation. We don’t want to create a debate where the terms are on holiday — not playing the role they regularly play.

On the other hand, holding to the view that language is all that matters in a philosophical investigation would be blinding. While we use language to communicate about the world, it does not follow that our questions should be resolved completely by investigating language alone. While some languages might permit for constructions where “I” can be in both subject and object position at the same time, it does not follow that those constructions are the final answer to the language transcendent question. Consider the sentence, “nothing moves”. On a superficial analysis of the sentence one might think that ‘nothing’ sitting in subject position, means that there is something that answers to ‘nothing’, that is something is the referent of ‘nothing’, but as Russell showed us in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, confusion about ontology can arise from misunderstanding the relation between surface grammar and deep grammar. Sure, ‘nothing’ is the grammatical

subject of the sentence, but on Russell's analysis, it turns out to be logical predicate, and the logical subject, which is the grammatical predicate, is simply the function ( $x$ : is moving). Russell shows us that 'nothing moves' is really to be analyzed as, "the logical function ( $x$ :  $x$  is moving) is never true". So, while we should interrogate representational systems when we inquire about the world, we should not hold that linguistic analysis is always sufficient for arriving at a philosophical conclusion.

### 3. Merleau-Ponty and Patañjali against the universality of the subject-object dichotomy

Consider the following argument about the nature of awareness.

1. Every episode of awareness is a conscious episode.
2. All conscious episodes have a subject-object structure.
3. So, all episodes of awareness have a subject-object structure.

Suppose further that one wanted to reach the incompatibilist conclusion.

6. The self can never be both a subject and an object in the same awareness.

One could not reach this conclusion simply by adding (4) to (1)—(3).

4. The self is that which is aware.

Because compatibilism could be true. That is, something can be both the subject and object of the same awareness. Thus, to reach (6) we need to add the incompatibilist premise (5), and then move from (1)—(4) and (5) to (6).

5. Nothing can be both a subject and an object in the same awareness.

(5) is the central issue at debate between compatibilists and incompatibilists that Chakrabarti is focused on.

However, there is another way of exposing how the self could be a subject and an object in the same awareness. This alternative way comes from denying the argument for (3) by denying (2) — that all conscious episodes have a subject-object structure. The idea is that on some occasions the body of a subject, perhaps the house of the self in an intimate sense, can be both a subject and an object at the same time because it is neither *only* a subject nor *only* an object when it interacts with itself. It has a special status because, although it shows up in the realm of ordinary things, it has the capacity to be both a subject and an object. Consider Merleau-Ponty's discussion of one's right hand touching their left hand.

If my left hand is touching my right hand, and if I wish to suddenly apprehend with my right hand the work of my left hand as it touches, this reflection of the body upon itself always miscarries at the last moment: the moment I feel my left hand with my right hand, I correspondingly cease touching my right hand with my left hand. [8. VI 9, cf. to P. 108].

On one interpretation of the passage, Merleau Ponty is arguing that the body is uniquely situated to be both a perceiving subject and the object of perception

because there is a constant oscillation with itself when it is in contact with itself. But, how should we understand the constant oscillation?

On the one hand, it can be taken to support incompatibilism. Whenever the right hand is the subject, the left hand is the object, and whenever the left hand is the subject, the right hand is the object. But it is never the case that the right hand and the left hand are both subject and object at the same time.

On the other hand, it can be taken to support compatibilism. Because the right hand and the left hand are of the same body, when they touch each other and the constant oscillation occurs, the body is both subject and object at the same time. So, if the body can be taken to be the self, one could argue that compatibilism is true because one is aware of oneself through a constant oscillation between subject and object. Notice this does not occur when one touches any other ordinary object, such as a cup. In the case of a cup, when one touches it, the subject-object structure of the conscious state does not switch.

While Merleau-Ponty offers us one way to see how to deny (2). There is another that is familiar to those that study *asamprajnata samādhi* within the context of Patañjali's [9]. The strategy here is to restrict the scope of awareness to what occurs in meditation and what happens outside of it. We can distinguish between two kinds of awareness.

- (i) Awareness that is only realizable in meditation.
- (ii) Awareness that is only realizable outside of meditation.

In the case of (ii) one might reasonably hold that all awareness takes the form of a subject — object dichotomy because the kind of awareness in question is conscious where one is aware of the relevant sensory data that plays a role in the subject's possession of the awareness. However, (i) is much more difficult. Arguably, the culminating point of meditation in *asamprajnata samādhi* is that there is a collapse of the subject-object dichotomy. If there is a collapse of the subject-object dichotomy, then there are two available options. Either there is no awareness that one can have in such a situation, since awareness requires the dichotomy or there is awareness, since not all awareness requires the subject-object dichotomy.

The upshot is that there is a way to defend compatibilism by looking at the views of Merleau-Ponty and Patañjali. The Merleau-Ponty inspired move would be to take the self as the body, and then argue that the self can be both a subject and an object at the same time, because strictly speaking it doesn't neatly fall into either category anyway. The Patañjali inspired move would take the self to be both a subject and an object at the same time because in certain kinds of states of awareness, *asamprajnata samādhi*, the distinction is not applicable.

However, neither of these moves works *completely* for the kind of awareness that Mukerji is talking about in the paradox of ego-centricity. For Mukerji is interested in substantial self-awareness. As a consequence, it would seem that meditative awareness where the subject and the object collapse might not be as

relevant *unless* it can be shown that the collapse of the subject-object dichotomy is not limited only to meditative states of mind. For example, taking inspiration from the work of phenomenologists and psychologists, such as Hubert Dreyfus [10] and Mihály Csíkszentmihályi [11], one could argue that in *flow experiences* there is a collapse of the subject-object dichotomy, but one could go on to question whether there is substantial self-awareness in those situations. Finally, it seems that if the self is partly constituted by the body, then some self-awareness is possible, but not all self-awareness is possible. Arguably, the scope of what Mukerji is looking for goes beyond what Merleau-Ponty and Patañjali offer, although much of what they offer constitutes important kinds of self-awareness: that of the body and the true self. The considerations here are not meant to suggest that neither strategy nor a combined strategy could not be made to work. Rather, what is being put forward here are considerations that speak against the view that these views are complete with respect to the kind of phenomenon of substantial self-awareness that is involved in Mukerji's paradox. For the ubiquity of external world knowledge requires that if self-knowledge is a necessary condition for it, then it should be easily available to all the kinds of knowledge we have.

#### 4. Chakrabarti's Argument for Compatibilism

From ancient times, the idea of knowing the knower has been compared to a knife slicing its own edge, a finger-tip touching itself, a rider riding on her own shoulder, and other such impossibilities. [6: P. 141]

Nevertheless, Chakrabarti finds compatibilism plausible and defensible. And his attempt to unravel the appearance of impossibility should be lauded. His strategy is to first offer his own argument for compatibilism, and then to consider the arguments against it. Let me first examine his main argument in favor of compatibilism. Importantly, his argument is a modal argument. A modal argument is one that has either premises or a conclusion that use some notion of modality, such as possibility or impossibility. In section 7 I will turn to another way in which modal arguments can be used to defend compatibilism, which is distinct from the way in which Chakrabarti proceeds.

##### *Chakrabarti's Argument for Compatibilism*

1. If it is impossible to be directly acquainted with A, then I cannot perceive that, wonder whether, mistakenly feel that, or come to realize that I did not notice that A is *f*, when "A" is a directly referential singular term.
2. I can perceive that, wonder whether, mistakenly feel that, or come to realize that I did not notice that I am jealous or I am pleased.
3. "I" is a directly referential singular term, albeit one which has some unique features and constraints.
4. Therefore, it must be possible for me to be directly acquainted with the referent of "I".

He recognizes that (3) is controversial. So, I will deny (4) as a consequence of (1)—(3) by examining (1) and (2), rather than (3).



Chakrabarti maintains that if direct acquaintance with A is impossible, then it is also impossible to wonder whether A is *f*, when “A” is a directly referential term. Suppose, as Chakrabarti does, that “I” is directly referential. It follows that if direct acquaintance with the referent of “I” is impossible, then it is also impossible to wonder whether I am, for example, jealous. But since I can wonder whether I am jealous, it must be possible to be acquainted directly with the referent of “I”. But how does the possibility of being directly acquainted with the referent of “I” resolve the issue of something being both the subject and the object of the same awareness?

The connection is straightforward. When I wonder whether I am jealous, I am taking myself as an object and because “I” is directly referential, it follows that I am acquainted with myself in my wondering whether I am jealous. So, if it is possible for one to be directly acquainted with the referent of “I”, it follows that it is possible for the referent of “I” to be both a subject and an object at the same time.

The first thing to note about the argument is that it moves from a point about the semantics of an indexical expression, “I”, to an epistemic point about acquaintance and awareness. A term is *directly referential* when the term successfully refers to its actual referent without the use of definite descriptions or identifying descriptions available to the person using the term. Let me exhibit this point by talking about proper names under the view that they are also directly referential.

Suppose Matthew knows nothing about Joan of Arc and believes very little about her because he dozed off in class. Perhaps all he can recall is that he heard the name in his French History class. Now suppose that Manju asks him, “what did you learn in French History today?” And he says, “I learned about Joan of Arc”. When Matthew uses “Joan of Arc” does he refer to Joan of Arc even though he is aware of virtually nothing about her? According to direct reference theories, the answer is yes. As long as his use of ‘Joan of Arc’ sits on an intention preserving link (he intends to use it the way his teacher did, and the teacher is using it the way he was taught, all the way down to Joan herself), Matthew’s use will terminate on Joan of Arc. Matthew successfully refers to Joan of Arc, although, he isn’t aware of anything about her. If this story is plausible for proper names (even ones that are partially descriptive, such as ‘Joan of Arc’), why should it not be the case with “I”? That is: *why couldn’t we each successfully refer to ourselves, and thereby be directly acquainted with ourselves, without being aware of anything about ourselves*. In other words, why can’t we be directly acquainted, yet self-ignorant? The fact that we are directly acquainted with ourselves could simply be epistemically weak, while what is required for self-awareness is something more substantial.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Importantly, Ana Funes raises the following question: why can’t one have *substantial* self-awareness when they say, “I am aware that I am breathing”, while at the same time being self-ignorant with respect to the question: is my breathing deep? The model of using breathe as a way to ground self-awareness of the *substantial* self is strong, and it would additionally allow for self-

There is an additional pressure point for Chakrabarti's argument. It is possible to accept that we are in fact acquainted with ourselves when we ask the aforementioned question, while denying that we are acquainted completely with ourselves. In particular, it does not follow from the fact that "I" is a directly referential pure indexical that what we are thereby acquainted with is the referent of "I" as a whole. I can use the term 'big thing' to refer to a very large object, only part of which I can see and will ever see. Does it follow that I refer to the whole of big thing when I am not even aware of what it is? Suppose I can only ever be aware of the part that is before me, why would I succeed in referring, simply through 'big thing', to all of it. It is impossible for me to discover any more of it?

The incompatibilist thesis has two interpretations. On the *broad* reading the incompatibility is about the fact that *no part* of the self can be both subject and object in the same awareness. This position is questionable. When one says that a knife cannot cut itself one is primarily thinking about the blade cutting itself the way it cuts other things. However, it is clear that a knife can cut itself, if we are to think about the knife as having other parts that are accessible to it. For example, a butterfly knife is such that the blade can clearly cut into the handle were one to put it in a position to do so. So, the *broad* reading falls to the *narrow* reading. On the *narrow* reading the incompatibility is about the fact that while the self can be both a subject and an object in the same awareness, the *complete* subject cannot be both a subject and an object, just as the whole knife can at best only cut a part of itself.

The *narrow* reading gives us a way to defend incompatibilism while preserving an insight from Chakrabarti's argument. Surely, I can wonder whether I am jealous. In doing so I am directly acquainted with myself. But I am not directly acquainted with my complete self. The reason why is that my mental state of *wondering* is not part of the self that I wonder about. Suppose I am wondering whether I am jealous. The content of the state is what I am wondering about. The person I am wondering about, while me, is not my complete self, it does not include all of my mental states, in particular it does not involve my occurrent wondering. I am not wondering about my own wondering, I am wondering only about whether I am jealous. While the mental attitude of wondering is part of me, it is the part through which I wonder about the rest of me.

Incompatibilism read in the *narrow* way aims to reveal that while we can have attribute self-knowledge that involves being directly acquainted with ourselves, it does not follow that we are directly acquainted with our complete self. Rather, *qua* thinker that wonders whether they are jealous — we are not directly acquainted with our wondering, we are directly acquainted with the referent of "I" *sans* our occurrent wondering. Let me now put this back into the context of the debate over compatibilism.

The compatibilist wants to say that there is nothing about the categories 'subject' and 'object' that makes it impossible for something to be both a subject

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ignorance. The remaining question is: would *substantial* self-awareness with respect to breathing be exhaustive of the kind of *substantial* self-awareness needed to resolve Mukerji's paradox.

and an object in the same awareness. An incompatibilist can accept this point by noting that as long as we are talking about objects and their parts it makes sense. A part  $p$  of object  $o$  can be both a subject and an object at the same time just as part of a knife can cut another part of the knife, perhaps by twisting onto itself. What the incompatibilist wants to preserve is the idea that when one is trying to take their whole self as a subject and an object in the same awareness they run into a problem. The very mental state by which they do that, for example *wondering whether*, must take on a special role — it must take on the role of mediating between the occurrent thinker and the thinker *qua* object. But just as something cannot be both active and passive at the same time, the occurrent thinker *qua* their active mental state of wondering *can only* take their passive self that is not wondering, but who is wondered about, as an object. There is, following Mukerji's phrase, a kind of slippage; a slippage that Merleau-Ponty observes as well with the right-hand touching the left-hand. Whenever one tries to capture the whole self as both subject and object, one is put in the position of needing a ground to stand on to hold the rest of the self in thought. The mental state of wondering whether plays the role of isolating out a bit of the self that is not what one is directly acquainted with via the deployment of "I". The  $I_1$  that wonders whether  $I_2$  is jealous are not completely identical. Rather, " $I_1$ " and " $I_2$ " can refer, in "I am wondering whether I am jealous", to parts of the same self where there is a causal and rational connection between the referents of those two occurrences of "I" because there is a causal and rational connection between the two parts of the self. The self that wonders about the self puts part of itself in a unique position, so as to take account of the rest of the self, much as a dancer might stand on her toes to support the rest of herself using her toes in the unique role of doing the support rather than being supported.

Summing up: I have argued here that there are two places where an incompatibilist can press into Chakrabarti's argument. The first is to challenge the relation between linguistic reference in the case of "I" being directly referential, and the epistemological standing one holds with respect to the referent of "I". The second is to challenge the metaphysics of what is referred to by "I". Is it part of the self or is it the whole self? If the self is something that continues over time, endures as a three dimensional entity, why couldn't certain acts force a bifurcation of the self into parts, so that at a given time part of the self  $s_2$  is referring back to another part of the self  $s_1$  where there is a causal and rational link between  $s_2$  and  $s_1$ , without both being temporal stages of the same entity  $S$ , which exists only when there is no  $s_i$  that continues the series starting at  $s_1$ ?

Nevertheless, the arguments against compatibilism offered here are not sufficient for a defense of incompatibilism, since, as I noted at the outset, Chakrabarti further defends compatibilism by exposing weaknesses in the arguments for incompatibilism. He considers arguments offered by Śāṅkara, Sydney Shoemaker, and David Armstrong. I now turn to an examination of his arguments against incompatibilism. My aim is to show some weaknesses in the arguments against incompatibilism.

## 5. Reconsidering Shoemaker

On Chakrabarti's reading, Shoemaker offers the following argument.

1. If self-awareness were a form of perception of non-self-intimating cognitive states, then there would have to be some non-self-intimating cognitive states of the self.
2. If cognitive states of the self were non-intimating, then self-blindness must be possible; that is, it must be possible that someone should believe, feel, perceive, and think, but be incapable of being directly aware that they believe, feel, perceive, or think.
3. But self-blindness is in principle impossible, for it would make rational action on the basis of our perceptions impossible.
4. Therefore, self-awareness is not a form of perception and the self cannot be an object of the inner sense.

Shoemaker argues that a self-intimating state is one that presents itself, and a non-self-intimating state is one where, so to speak, a light has yet to be shined on it for us to be aware of it. He then argues that were self-awareness a form of perception, like looking at a chair, self-blindness would be possible. But since self-blindness is impossible, it cannot be that self-awareness is a form of perception of something that is not self-intimating. How does Shoemaker's argument against self-awareness as a form of perception or the self as an object of the inner sense relate to the thesis of incompatibilism? Using (4) from Shoemaker's argument, we can extend his argument out to address compatibilism as follows.

- (i) If there is self-awareness, it either comes via a form of perception or via an inner sense, and in either case the self is an object of an awareness acquisition mechanism.
- (ii) Self-awareness cannot be a form of perception, from (4).
- (iii) The self cannot be an object of the inner sense, from (4).
- (iv) So, there is no self-awareness.

In other words, were there to be self-awareness it would take on a form where the self is an object of perception or the inner sense in the way in which a chair is an object of perception. Supposedly, that is absurd, since Shoemaker thinks it is not an object of perception and there is no inner sense.

Chakrabarti argues that Shoemaker's (2) is weak because it does not distinguish between self-obliviousness, self-blindness, and self-ignorance. Self-blindness occurs when one *cannot* access themselves. Self-ignorance, by contrast, occurs when an individual is simply ignorant of themselves, for example, because they have not reflected on themselves in the right way or long enough. On Chakrabarti's view the only consequence that follows from the hypothesis that cognitive states of the self are non-self-intimating is that self-ignorance is possible, but not that self-blindness is possible. As Chakrabarti correctly points out, it does not follow from the fact that cognitive states of the self fail to present themselves to us that we cannot be aware of ourselves. What follows is that we could be

unaware of ourselves. Chakrabarti's critique of Shoemaker's epistemological argument is correct. But if it is correct, why doesn't it, as I earlier argued, also show that we can be directly acquainted with our substantial self through the use of "I", which is directly referential, yet fail to have substantial self-awareness? Why can't we be self-ignorant with respect to our substantial self, yet successfully refer to ourselves? In other words, the argument against Shoemaker also provides a question for Chakrabarti's argument for compatibilism.

## 6. Reconsidering Śāṅkara

Śāṅkara's argument for incompatibilism might be the strongest argument for it. I offer the following interpretation of Chakrabarti's recounting of the argument.

1. Whenever an object *o* is the subject of something *s* there is a change in *o* relative to *s*. For example, when a pot is the object illuminated by a lamp, there is a change in the pot relative to the lamp, the pot is now illuminated.
2. So, object-hood relative to subject-hood requires that there is change in the object relative to the subject.
3. However, when the subject and the object are the same, there can be no change in the object relative to the subject.
4. So, nothing can be both a subject and an object in the same awareness. For example, the lamp cannot be an object of its own illumination, since there is no change in the lamp were it to take itself as an object.

This argument is clearly seductive. And it is powerful. The potent analogy of the lamp that illuminates itself is analyzed deeper by Śāṅkara so as to show the incoherence of how it could illuminate itself. The lamp, contrary to how things first appear, couldn't play the dual role of illuminator and illuminated. The light itself does not change. And since being an object requires a change relative to the subject, there is no lamp that is both subject and object at once. And, thus, by analogy with the lamp, no self that is both subject and object at once. As Chakrabarti notes: self-objectification is made impossible.

Nevertheless, he carefully shows that this argument is open to a weakness. The weakness flows from the fact that while it first appears that there are only two things in the analogy, there are actually three things. Let us look at the analogical structure of the argument.

1. The self is like a lamp.
2. A lamp cannot illuminate itself, since (per the argument above) the criterion for being an object requires a change relative to the subject acting on the object.
3. So, the self cannot be aware of itself by taking itself to be both subject and object in the same awareness.

Chakrabarti interrogates the analogical argument by questioning whether the self is *really* like the lamp. In the argument that yields the criterion for objecthood there are three things: (a) the lamp, (b) the pot, and (c) the viewer. When the analogy

is taken to be such that the lamp is like the self and there is no viewer, the analogy looks strong, since there are only two things. There is the lamp and the pot, and there is the self and qualities of the mind. But when one takes note of the fact that to make sense of the lamp illuminating the pot *vs.* illuminating itself there has to be a viewer, the analogy can be questioned. For who is the viewer in the case of the self? If there is no viewer, then the analogy falls apart, since there is a viewer in the case of the lamp illuminating the pot. The lamp, as Chakrabarti points out, is not the *agent* of illumination, it is the *instrument* of illumination. Now in the case of the self, if the self is the agent of illumination, it is not like the lamp. And if the self is the viewer, then we can ask: what is the instrument of illumination. Chakrabarti holds that it is the inner sense which can either be operative or non-operative in connection with the self. If it is not connected, then it will not access qualities of the self, such as one's current emotional state. Chakrabarti's analysis is insightful. And yields a powerful way to understand the lamp analogy in relation to the self. What does it mean for compatibilism?

Oddly, it appears as if it *might* fail to support the kind of compatibilism that is at issue. Recall, the distinction between *attribute* self-awareness and *substantial* self-awareness. It appears that Chakrabarti's argument supports the possibility of *attribute self-awareness*. For Chakrabarti even says, "[E]ven if the self is always present to the self, if the inner sense is not in operative attentive connection with the self, the self does not perceive its own qualities or mental states" [6: P. 144]. But what we are looking for is an argument that shows us that even if the self is always present to the self it can take its whole self as both a subject and object in the same awareness. The conclusion above falls short, since what we arrive at is that were the inner sense to be in operative connection with the self, it would perceive its own qualities or mental states. That leads to the conclusion that the self can take a mental state of itself as an object. In other words, the self can self-objectify a part of itself, one of its mental states.

For the argument to engage *substantial self-awareness*, where the whole self is both subject and object in the same awareness, something further would have to hold. For instance, there would need to be a further connection drawn between the two kinds of *self-awareness*. Consider the following conditional:

(ATS) If compatibilism about *attribute* self-awareness is true, then compatibilism about *substantial* self-awareness is true.

Although I have argued that (ATS) is false, through the example of one's own awareness that they are hungry while in a total sensory deprivation chamber where they cannot take their whole self as an object, since they have no ability to be aware of their whole body, a defense of (ATS) is still possible. One final consideration over (ATS) is that one could argue that *substantial* self-awareness is a precondition for *attribute* self-awareness. So, that it is impossible for one to have *attribute* self-awareness without having any awareness what so ever of their *substantial* self. Nevertheless, arguing down this path still requires that one engage the core

question: in *substantial* self-awareness is the self both a subject and an object in the same awareness. The fact that *substantial* self-awareness is a precondition for *attribute* self-awareness does not show how *substantial* self-awareness is possible, where the self is both subject and object in the same awareness.<sup>8</sup> The possibility of *substantial* self-awareness needs to be established independently from that of *attribute* self-awareness. While one could offer a transcendental argument for *substantial* self-awareness, by showing that *attribute* self-awareness is real, and the former is a necessary condition for the later, the burden of justification for defending compatibilism through a completely conceptual and analytical approach would further require showing how the possibility is coherent. In **8** I offer an approach goes beyond the conceptual-analytical approach, and thus forgoes this additional requirement to show *how* the self is both subject and object at the same time.

## 7. Reconsidering Armstrong

The final argument for incompatibilism that Chakrabarti considers is Armstrong's distinct existence argument against reflexive-awareness. Here is a version of the argument.

1. A necessary condition on *S* perceiving *o* is that *o* plays a contributing causal role in the perception of *o* by *S*.
2. Nothing can be its own cause.
3. So, *S* cannot perceive itself.

Chakrabarti concedes that Armstrong is right when the argument is taken to apply to a first-order perception, such as seeing a cup. However, he denies that the argument applies to the self. The fundamental problem is that there is an incompatibility between *x* being both an *instrument* and an *object* at the same time. However, there is no incompatibility between the self being an *agent* with respect to itself. If the self is not the *instrument* by which the self is known, but rather is only the agent, and there is an internal sense organ, then there is no problem with the view that the self can be both a subject and an object in the same awareness. The inconsistency between *instrument* and *object* does not apply, since the self is not the *instrument* by which the self is aware of itself. It is only the *agent*.

Nevertheless, it seems as though there are two different theses at play. On the one hand, the fact that the self is an *agent* with respect to itself and not the *instrument*, does not show that the self as an agent can be both a subject and an

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<sup>8</sup> I would like to thank Ana Funes for bringing this point to my attention. It could be that within the traditions of Phenomenology and Yoga one can argue for bodily-based self-awareness in a way that allows for *substantial* self-awareness to be a precondition for *attribute* self-awareness. For example, it could be argued, following many classical Indian traditions, that consciousness is not an all or nothing state, rather it comes in degrees. As a consequence, one can show that the self is always something that we are aware of at some level of consciousness, perhaps it is in the background of our consciousness, but it is not in the foreground of our consciousness, or we have subtle awareness as opposed to gross awareness.

object in the same awareness. It shows that arguments for incompatibilism that make this confusion cannot be successful. On the other hand, unlocking the confusion appears to lend support to incompatibilism. Because the self is the *agent* with respect to itself, one might argue, it cannot thus be the thing *acted* upon. Recall, the knife that can only cut a part of itself, but not the part it is cutting with. The self can take an attribute of itself as an object, but can it take the whole self as an object? Can it completely self-objectify? What would it stand on in order to hold its whole self in thought?

Finally, Chakrabarti concedes that some might find the idea of an internal sense organ (*manas*), which his arguments rely on, problematic, and so his proposed solution awaits a defense of the existence of an internal sense organ. Something Chakrabarti offers, and which I am not opposed to. Nevertheless, I believe a defense of the inner sense organ requires more than conceptual argumentation. I am a proponent of the *ACE* methodology, [12], *analytic, cross-cultural, empirical*. In this philosophical method one must consider *not* only the analytical and cross-cultural dimensions of a phenomenon, such as self-knowledge, but also the experimental and empirical dimensions of the phenomenon. Thus, a defense of the inner sense requires empirical investigation. So, is there a way to investigate incompatibilism that yields to empirical investigation? In the final section, I will set up an analogical strategy that leads to a defense of compatibilism that rests on empirical investigation while at the same time blocking purely conceptual arguments for and against compatibilism. This approach takes seriously the fact that debating whether the self *can* be both a subject and an object at the same time requires debating in what sense it is possible for the self to both a subject and an object at the same time.

## 8. A modal approach to the debate over compatibilism

As I noted earlier, modal arguments contain either a modal premise or a modal conclusion. Valid modal arguments typically have at least one modal premise when there is also a modal conclusion. Can a modal argument be used as a guide to discovering whether or not the self can be both a subject and an object in the same awareness? Consider the following argument.

1. If it is inconceivable that *p*, then it is impossible that *p*.
2. It is inconceivable that the self is both a subject and an object in the same awareness.
3. So, it is impossible that the self is both a subject and an object in the same awareness.

Without making this modal argument explicit, Chakrabarti, actually engages it. Prior to articulating the debate over incompatibilism, he says, “I will examine whether there is any conceptual impossibility or incoherence in the idea of the self being an object. [6: P. 141]” And importantly he points out that the kind of possibility he is interested in investigating is *conceptual impossibility* and *incoherence*. The strategy he deploys, as I noted earlier, is one of unhinging the



arguments of Śāṅkara, Shoemaker, and Armstrong. The strategy is powerful because, were it successful, it would show that the arguments in favor of conceptual impossibility are not persuasive. The pendulum would swing in favor of the conceptual possibility of compatibilism. My strategy has been to engage his rebuttal to those arguments and to point out potential gaps.

However, there is another move that is available, which Chakrabarti does not explore. Rather than attempting to show that the arguments in favor of the conceptual impossibility of compatibilism fail, one can simply question the significance of conceptual impossibility in relation to what is actually true about the complete self being both a subject and an object in the same awareness. The approach can be drawn out and made clear by making a connection between conceptual impossibility and other varieties of impossibility, such as physical and metaphysical impossibility. Consider the following links.

- (a) If it is conceptually impossible that  $p$ , it is metaphysically impossible that  $p$ .
- (b) If it is conceptually impossible that  $p$ , it is nomologically impossible that  $p$ .

By denying (a) one could argue that the conceptual impossibility of the self being both a subject and an object in the same awareness doesn't show that it is metaphysically impossible for the self, in a state of self-awareness, to be both a subject and an object at the same time. By denying (b) one could argue that the conceptual impossibility does not show that it is nomologically impossible for the self to be both a subject and an object in the same awareness at the same time. Let us consider each move.

Metaphysical modality is spooky to some. Would Śāṅkara have accepted such a notion? Arguably not, for he would not have even understood the notion, if it is distinct from conceptual modality. Shoemaker [13] has already argued that metaphysical modality just collapses into physical modality. So, denying (a) is not the best way to set up the debate between compatibilism and incompatibilism. Can one make good on denying (b)?

One way to do so is to show that outside of the case of compatibilism about the self being both a subject and an object in the same awareness state, one can find ways to refute (a) that are methodologically interesting for the debate over compatibilism. I will use the following claim, which embeds a fact from quantum mechanics.

- (c) It is conceptually impossible that light is both a particle and a wave at the same time. Nevertheless, because it is actual that light is both a particle and wave at the same time, and what is actual is possible, it is possible that light is both a particle and a wave at the same time.

The example immediately provokes the skeptical question: in what sense is it *conceptually impossible* for light to be both a particle and a wave at the same time? The skeptic might argue as follows. Look! It is actual that light is both a particle and wave at the same time, and you agree with physicists when they tell you that

that is how things are, so how can it be conceptually impossible? But this is no response at all. The fact that something is actually true does not tell us that it isn't conceptually impossible. We would need a theory that relates our concepts and understanding to reality. Rather, it suggests that there is a tension between what our concepts are, the background logic that we accept when investigating conceptual compatibility, and the structure of scientific theories, evidence, and confirmation. The sense in which it is conceptually impossible is the sense in which we simply don't understand how something can have opposing natures at the same time. While we can assert it based on evidence, and say that must be how things are, it does not follow that we conceptually understand it.

However, the last response might not satisfy a skeptic that is an advocate of dialethism<sup>9</sup>, either in the mode of a logical monist, who holds that only dialethism is the correct logic, or a logical pluralist, who thinks that dialethism is one of a plurality of true logics. But, the skeptics advance via dialethism cannot work either.

The dialetheist will argue that there are true contradictions and that *explosion* is false — it isn't true that everything follows from a contradiction. However, the claim that there are true contradictions and explosion is false is insufficient for explaining the view that *we can conceptually understand* how light is both a particle and a wave at the same time. If we grant that light being both a particle and a wave at the same time is a true contradiction, it might only follow that it is nomologically possible for light to exhibit such a nature, not that we conceptually understand it. What can be conceded to the dialetheist is that within dialethism there is a model under which we can ground the nomological possibility of light being both a particle and wave at the same time. What need not be conceded to the dialetheist is that the model also shows that it is conceptually possible. While we have empirical evidence and scientific theories that require us to hold to the dual nature of light, those do not show us that we conceptually understand the claim. Dialethism is a kind of logic, and it plays a role in how we talk about logical impossibility, so we can say that the dual nature of light is logically possible within a dialethic logic because there are true contradictions. However, that fall short of showing that we conceptually understand the claim so as to ground the conceptual possibility of the dual nature of light. That is, dialethism does not have authority over conceptual possibility.

The upshot of this is that there is a way to vindicate the compatibilist position that Chakrabarti admirably aims to defend. The approach simply attempts to show two things through an analytical and empirical strategy that is informed by cross-cultural philosophy. At least one advantage of this approach is that it allows for an abductive argument to be made on the basis of conceptual, analytical, and empirical arguments. The base of the abduction is the total set of phenomena that needs to be explained, and the conclusion is that compatibilism, although we don't conceptually understand it, is the best explanation. Here are the two central claims.

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<sup>9</sup> See [14] for an introduction to, and discussion, of dialethism.

- (i) “The self is both a subject and an object at the same time” is conceptually impossible because like a knife that cannot cut itself, the self cannot act (as an agent) upon itself where it plays the dual role of simultaneously being completely a subject and an object at the same time.
- (ii) Nevertheless, because it is actual that we have self-awareness, and what is actual is possible, it is nomologically possible for the self to be both a subject and an object in the same awareness at the same time.

On this approach one aims to show that there is a distinctive kind of self-awareness that we have. In this self-awareness we are both subject and object at the same time. The evidence for this would have to be empirical as opposed to merely conceptual in the way in which physicists tell us we know that light is both a particle and wave at the same time.

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## О возможности двойственной природы «Я»

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**Аннотация.** В статье исследуется компатибилизм и инкомпатибилизм в отношении вопроса о том, может ли «я» одновременно быть и субъектом, и объектом в одном и том же осознании в одно и то же время. Дискуссии на эту тему ведутся очень давно, свой вклад в рассмотрение данной проблемы внесли многие традиции философии; моей отправной точкой в данном случае выступает работа А.К. Мукерджи (современного индийского философа), который работал над возможностью самосознания, сформулировав парадокс эгоцентричности. В рамках рассмотрения дискуссии о компатибилизме я также обращаюсь к Патанджали (индийскому философу классической эпохи), Морису Мерло-Понти (представителю феноменологии) и Ариндаме Чакрабарти (современному индийскому аналитическому философу). Вначале представлен парадокс Мукерджи, затем я критически анализирую аргументы Патанджали и Мерло-Понти против инкомпатибилизма. Далее парадокс Мукерджи сопоставляется с аргументами Чакрабарти в пользу компатибилизма. Представлен авторский критический обзор аргументов Чакрабарти в пользу компатибилизма и против инкомпатибилизма: несмотря на пронизательность и силу данных аргументов, все же, рассматривая их наряду с парадоксом Мукерджи, я предлагаю противопоставить им свой аргумент в защиту компатибилизма. Данный аргумент основан на аналогии с принципом корпускулярно-волнового дуализма в квантовой физике, и связи между мыслимостью и метафизической модальностью.

**Ключевые слова:** самосознание, парадокс Мукерджи, Ариндам Чакрабарти, компатибилизм, инкомпатибилизм, парадокс знающего

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