



McGill  
University

Foundations & Philosophy of Science Unit

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Prof. Theodore H Bullock  
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Dear Dr Bullock

Thank you very much for your interesting letter of the 5th, which I am still in the process of digesting. My preliminary reaction to it is as follows.

1. I do not doubt the value of Eccles' contribution to neurophysiology, although there are neurophysiologists who claim that he is a fine technician rather than a scientist, and also those who cannot forgive him for having clung so dogmatically to the electrical hypothesis of synaptic contact. What I question is his relentless propaganda for obscurantism: PK, the immaterial soul, and the impossibility of investigating mind with scientific means. It is not just that he holds that science will never cover everything: I too believe that there are limits to what man can know. What Eccles claims is that mind, being immaterial and eternal, is not the property of science but that of religion. If this attitude does not slow down the advance of science, what does it do?

2. There is no doubt that social evolution is not identical with biological evolution. Still, there is selection and there has been mental evolution over the past 200,000 years--and this is the point denied by Eccles, who claims that, because the brain size has not increased, there cannot have been any mental evolution--as if the organization or structure of the brain did not matter. To him, as a dualist and a believer in the Catholic doctrine of the unchangeable soul given us at birth, there can be no mental evolution: for, if there were, then the mind could not be immaterial.

3. I grant you that my paper "The psychoneural identity theory" is too schematic. It happens to be an abstract of a book MS titled The Mind-Body Problem, where I motivate my definitions and postulates. I believe the book is less unsatisfactory. Still, I am sure that (a) some of my formulations need reform, in particular my definition of behavior as motion, and (b) there are bound to remain disagreements deriving from philosophical differences. In any event, I am rethinking the statements you have criticized and hope to improve the book. My only excuse for my blunders is that I have had no model to copy, for most psychologists do not care for clear mathematical (let alone axiomatic) formulations. At least, such formulations have the merit that you can see right away where they go wrong.

Thank you again and cordial regards.



Mario Bunge

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