Current discussions of mind-body materialism, intricate and subtle though they often are, frequently leave one with the impression that the central issues have been left untouched. Perhaps the principal cause of the ineffectiveness of such discussions has been the tendency, on both sides of the debate, to neglect the question of how to give a correct characterization of the mental. So, even when materialist arguments succeed in showing that some particular phenomena are physical, they often leave us unpersuaded that the phenomena shown to be physical are, actually, mental phenomena. Antimaterialist arguments, on the other side, frequently appeal to questionable characterizations of the mental, such as being private and not being spatially locatable; such characterizations, though they often derive from familiar theories about the mind, are not part of what reflective people generally have in mind when they talk about the mental. The failure to deal explicitly with the question of the nature of mentality lends false encouragement to materialists and antimaterialists alike. For it persuades antimaterialists that arguments in support of materialism illicitly rely on overly weak conceptions of the mental. And it leads materialists to suppose that the plausibility of immaterialism derives solely from dubious and, perhaps, question-begging characterizations of the mind.

This tendency to avoid the question of how to characterize the mental may result, in part, from a particular complication in theorizing about mental phenomena which has arisen since the seventeenth century. The development of post-Galilean science has seen increasingly impressive success in expressing regularities and laws of nature in mathematical terms. Progress in this direction, however, has led to the problem of what to do about those properties of natural objects which prove particularly recalcitrant to being treated in mathematical terms. Color and sound are two fairly clear cases of this sort of difficulty; however sophisticated the physicist’s wave-mechanical descriptions of these phenomena may be, these accounts do not capture the color and sound themselves. The solution usually favored has
been to regard such qualities as mere appearances and therefore to relocate those qualities as contents of the mind. Since these mental contents are appearances, it seems intuitively compelling to see ourselves as having unmediated access to them; for our access to them could only be mediated by another layer of appearances, and it is unclear what an appearance of an appearance could be.

But the concept of mind that results from this familiar line of thought is, notoriously, problematic. For, on this conception, the mental is in large part simply a repository for many of the common-sense features of physical things which a mathematically aided science has banished. Since many of the contents of the mind are, in effect, refugees from the nonmental world, considerable difficulties result from trying to develop a clear and coherent account of their nature. And since so many common-sense features of physical objects are relocated in the mental realm, it becomes tempting to think of the difference between the mental and the physical along the lines of the difference between common-sense properties of things and scientifically admissible properties of things. This way of conceiving of the contrast between mental and physical encourages, in turn, such familiar claims as that we cannot compare the mental and the physical without running afoul of category mistakes or that laws linking mental with physical phenomena are impossible or, most starkly, that being mental simply implies being nonphysical. Such views tend to impede efforts to understand the nature of mental phenomena. For they lead us to see the mental as something beyond the reach of scientific understanding and, perhaps, even outside the realm of natural phenomena. And since the view of the mind as a repository of scientifically recalcitrant qualities implies that mental phenomena are a kind of ontological singularity, it is easy to see why a tendency should have arisen to avoid trying to give an adequate characterization of their nature.

Against this background, the eliminative-materialist positions of Richard Rorty and Paul Feyerabend are a natural culmination of the repository view of mind. Once we have come to regard the mind as the repository of properties that are irrelevant to a scientific account of the world, it is but a small step to the conclusion that we can in principle dispose of the repository together with all its contents. Indeed, if the gulf between the mental and the physical is as unbridgeable as the repository picture seems to imply, it may well be that the only scientifically sound position one could take is that the mental is in principle eliminable. But the idea that such a gulf separates the mental from the physical also underlies most antimaterialist arguments, with their appeal to properties of the mental that exclude being physical. So the eliminative materialist, by countenancing the existence of that gulf but urging that the mental is in principle eliminable, combines an antimaterialist view of mental phenomena with an overall materialist outlook.

Despite the great influence the repository picture has had in our thinking about the mental, we need not regard mental phenomena as simply those which a mathematically oriented science cannot accommodate. For the concept of mind did not originate with the repository view's attempt to meet the needs of modern science; rather, the repository view of mind was constructed on the basis of a prior,
common-sense conception of mind as the vehicle of our psychological lives. And if we reject the repository picture, it will be open for us to reevaluate the question of whether a dramatic gulf does separate the mental from the physical. In what follows, I argue in favor of an account of the contrast between mental and physical which, unlike the account suggested by the repository view, does not automatically rule out noneliminative materialism. I develop this account against the background of a detailed examination of a recent defense, by Rorty, of an eliminative version of materialism. It is particularly useful to consider Rorty's discussion in this context because it vividly exemplifies the sort of view outlined above. Rorty clearly spells out the way in which his defense of eliminative materialism relies on the account he gives of the nature of the mental. Moreover, he argues for that account on the basis of its being, on his view, the best explanation of the incompatibility of being mental with being physical. Rorty traces his view of the mental to the traditional Cartesian view of mind and not specifically to the repository picture sketched above. Nonetheless, his defense of the incompatibility of being mental with being physical strongly suggests the influence of some such picture.

In section I, I state, as forcefully as possible, Rorty's arguments for eliminative materialism. In section II, then, I argue that Rorty's characterization of the mental exhibits an unwarranted bias in favor of immaterialism. Moreover, I argue that Rorty's modification of the traditional Cartesian picture, on which his view of mentality is based, makes his own account too weak to capture our intuitive notion of the mental. In the third and final section, I discuss, in more general terms, the implications for materialism of endorsing different marks of the mental. In particular, I consider the implications of regarding consciousness as being what is essential to mentality. And, having rejected that view, I suggest how a more satisfactory account of the mental might be developed which would be compatible with standard, noneliminative materialism. So, although Rorty's treatment of these issues dominates much of my discussion, my principal concern is to clarify the relationship between materialism and different views about the nature of mental phenomena.

Much of the recent literature on mind-body materialism has focused on whether the existence of distinctively mental properties of mental events is compatible with the truth of materialism. Since J. J. C. Smart's classic article, "Sensations and Brain Processes," the usual materialist strategy for dealing with this problem has been to argue that predicates that attribute such properties can be translated into topic-neutral language, that is, language which is neutral as to whether the properties in question are physical or nonphysical. Much of the attention that materialists and their critics alike have devoted to the mental properties of mental events, as against the events themselves, is probably due to a shared belief that property identity, unlike event identity, is a matter of the synonymy of corresponding predicates. For it may seem that mental properties can only be kinds of physical property if it is analytic that they are. The mere possibility of consistently denying that they are
physical will then rule out not only its being analytic that they are physical but also its being true at all.

There is, however, another factor that has led some to focus on the mental properties of mental events. According to most noneliminative materialists, it is possible that we shall discover that mental events are identical with a particular range of physical events, say, certain neural events. But whatever force materialist arguments may have, a pronounced tendency does exist to contrast what is mental with what is physical. Because of this, the idea that mental phenomena are simply kinds of physical phenomena has an air of being irretrievably counterintuitive. So if one accepts, perhaps just for the sake of argument, that mental events may be kinds of neural events, one will be led to look elsewhere for that aspect of the mental by virtue of which it contrasts with the physical. And unless we are willing to return to the dualist hypothesis of a distinct mental substance, it will seem that the only way to retain the contrast between the mental and the physical is by appealing to distinctively mental properties of mental events or to mental predicates that are true of those events. Feyerabend bases a criticism of standard materialism on just such reasoning, writing that the claim that mental events are particular neural events backfires. It not only implies, as it is intended to imply, that mental events have physical features; it also seems to imply . . . that some physical events, viz. central processes, have nonphysical features. It thereby replaces a dualism of events by a dualism of features.

Feyerabend is supposing that if the contrast between mental and physical does not obtain at the level of events, then it must be located instead at the level of their properties. But he is assuming also that the mental properties of mental events will have to be nonphysical properties. The reasoning seems to be this: If mental events are particular neural events whose distinctive mental character results from their having mental properties, then the only way to explain the contrast between the mental and the physical will be for those mental properties to be nonphysical as well. In general, if our account of distinctively mental phenomena is to reflect faithfully the mental-physical contrast, and not undermine it instead, something about the mental must be nonphysical.

If this is so, only two strategies remain open to one with materialist sympathies. The first is to accept that, at best, a qualified materialism is defensible and to seek to locate the ineliminably nonphysical aspect of mental phenomena in whatever way minimizes its impact and best serves one's theoretical goals. If, for example, one's view of theoretical reduction required identifying just the events of one theory with those of another, and not the properties as well, then when theoretical reduction were in question it would be useful to try to confine the nonphysical aspect of the mental to the properties of mental events. A second strategy, however, may seem to yield even less ground to the antimaterialist, namely, the eliminative materialism championed by Rorty and Feyerabend. This approach also concedes the irreducibly nonphysical character of the mental, but argues that the very sorts of empirical discoveries that the noneliminative materialist envisages would warrant
our dispensing altogether with reference to anything mental. The common-sense contrast between mental and physical is thereby circumvented and its antimaterialist force disarmed. Seen in this way, the objection that mental properties are irreducibly nonphysical is simply a special case of the more general claim that phenomena correctly characterized as mental must, in some respect, be nonphysical. If it is not because they are states of a nonphysical substance or because the events involved are nonphysical, then at least some of the properties of those events must be nonphysical. So the only satisfactory reply to this objection is that of eliminative materialism, that a complete and adequate account of people and their behavior need make reference to nothing mental.

Rorty's recent defense of this position is based on these very considerations. According to him, the contrast between the mental and the physical results from the very meaning of 'mental'; he writes, "it is part of the sense of 'mental' that being mental is incompatible with being physical, and no explication of this sense which denies this incompatibility can be satisfactory" (402). If Rorty is right, then every mental property is automatically nonphysical, and the antimaterialist objection that mental events have irreducibly nonphysical properties is a trivial corollary. Equally, it will be a mistake to grant, as most proponents of that objection do, that mental events might be kinds of neural events; for, according to Rorty, "mentalistic concepts . . . are such that it is wildly paradoxical to say that a mental event might turn out to be a physical event." It follows also, as Rorty points out, that topic-neutral translations cannot be used to defend materialism, because precisely in allowing that what they apply to might be physical, "topic-neutral construals of what it is to be mental lose the mental-physical contrast" (402; see 402-6 and "More on Incorrigibility," p. 195). Nor will this shortcoming be unique to topic-neutral accounts of the mental; Rorty will find no account acceptable unless it implies that the mental is nonphysical. Moreover, it is not simply that, to preserve the mental-physical contrast, at least one aspect of the mental must be nonphysical; on Rorty's view, every distinctively mental aspect must be nonphysical.

Rorty recognizes that, whatever is true about an event's being both mental and physical, there is no inconsistency in an event's being physical and also having some phenomenal quality or intentional character. These properties are not, therefore, "nonphysical properties, any more than the spin of an electron is a nonphysical property" (412). Rorty therefore denies "that the notions of [intentional or phenomenal] states 'about p or 'of-red' give us the notion of something mental, something categorically distinct from everything else" (413). Using the same argument to dismiss a number of other proposed accounts of what it is to be mental, Rorty concludes that what makes an event mental is simply that it can be the subject of incorrigible reports.

Mental events are unlike any other events in that certain knowledge claims about them cannot be overridden. We have no criteria for setting aside as mistaken first-person contemporaneous reports of thoughts and sensations, whereas we do have criteria for setting aside all reports about everything else (413).
And because all that is involved in Rorty's saying "that contemporaneous beliefs about our own mental states are incorrigible, is that there is no assured way to go about correcting them if they should be in error" (417), familiar arguments against the incorrigibility of the mental fail to apply here. An incorrigible belief is not, for Rorty, a "belief that implies its own truth" (417).

Predicates that ascribe phenomenal or intentional properties to particular events or states, therefore, are mental predicates on this view only because they are governed by a "linguistic practice, which dictates that first-person contemporaneous reports of such states are the last word on their existence and features" (414). But we can imagine truly and coherently describing things as having phenomenal qualities or propositional content without there being any such practice. Although phenomenal and intentional properties would still exist, Rorty would not count them as mental, nor would he regard the phenomenal and intentional predicates used to ascribe them nonincorrigibly as mental predicates. What makes these predicates mental predicates is only their being capable of use in incorrigible reports, and not that their meaning involves the attribution of phenomenal quality or propositional content. Rorty therefore endorses, in effect, the specific goal of Smart's and D. M. Armstrong's program of topic-neutral translation, for the aim of that program was simply to show that having phenomenal or intentional properties is, as such, "neutral as between materialist and nonmaterialist theories of the mind." But since Rorty holds that being mental implies being nonphysical, materialism still cannot be vindicated unless suitable empirical discoveries could prompt the decision to abandon the linguistic practice that makes us regard some events as mental and, hence, nonphysical.

Rorty sees two ways in which this could occur. The first involves our regarding the meanings of the predicates 'is a thought' and 'is a sensation', and of specific intentional and phenomenal predicates, as dictating that they can be used incorrigibly. To abandon the linguistic practice of incorrigibility, then, would require abandoning reference to intentional and phenomenal entities. The view that this can happen, say, because of a belief that behavior can be explained "at least as well by reference to brain states as by reference to beliefs, desires, thoughts, and sensations" (421), amounts to that version of eliminative materialism which Rorty espouses in his earlier "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories." But Rorty now recommends that we regard the linguistic practice as being due not to the meanings of those predicates but rather to a belief that thoughts and sensations are simply the sorts of things that can be incorrigibly reported. If we follow this recommendation, then abandoning the practice would involve, instead, merely changing our minds about that much of the nature of those events. The same predicates would continue to describe intentional and phenomenal events, but not incorrigibly. Since those very events would therefore no longer count as mental, this possibility too supports an eliminative version of materialism. Although the two cases differ with respect to what shift in linguistic practice occurs and for what reason, in each case empirical discoveries simultaneously induce the abandonment of incorrigibility and of reference to the mental.
Although only Rorty and Feyerabend explicitly adopt an eliminative-materialist strategy for dealing with the mind-body problem, the line separating that strategy from other approaches is a fine one. Daniel C. Dennett, for example, recommend[s] giving up incorrigibility with regard to pain altogether, in fact giving up all "essential" features of pain, and letting pain states be whatever "natural kind" states the brain scientists find (if they ever do find any) that normally produce all the normal effects . . . . Of our intuitions about pain is that whether or not one is in pain is a brute fact, not a matter of decision to serve the convenience of the theorist. I recommend against trying to preserve that intuition . . . .

It is not entirely clear, in such passages as this (cf., e.g., Dennett, Brainstorms, pp. 187-8), whether Dennett is urging us to replace a problematic view of mental entities with an unproblematic, scientific view or to recognize that what genuinely exists are not the traditional, problematic entities of common sense but only unproblematic entities subject to scientific treatment. Nor is it entirely clear what difference there is between these two proposals.

The 'mental'-'physical' incompatibility that Rorty advocates does not entail the incorrigibility of the mental, any more than the empirical discoveries that both Rorty and noneliminative materialists envisage would necessitate our abandoning the linguistic practice of incorrigibility. What Rorty maintains, rather, is that if all and only mental events are incorrigibly reportable, then the incompatibility of 'mental' and 'physical' can be preserved, and no other extensionally adequate mark of the mental has been proposed which will do that. So the inference to incorrigibility is, in effect, an inference to the best available explanation of the 'mental'-'physical' incompatibility. Rorty does urge that, since "we are never going to identify the property of being the subject of an incorrigible or near-incorrigible report with any neurological property" (422), no theoretical reduction of the mental to the neural is possible. But he does not deploy his linguistic version of incorrigibility to refute standard materialism; the 'mental'-'physical' incompatibility automatically does that, by itself. Rather, the incorrigibility of the mental, by being a matter of changeable linguistic practice, is what opens the way for Rorty's eliminative-materialist strategy.

Rorty's argument requires, however, that particular types of events can be mental at one time and nonmental at another, and he recognizes that this may seem, at best, paradoxical. But he urges that this air of inconsistency will be dispelled once we realize that such a change is no more problematic than what would occur if, owing to new legislation, actions that had been punishable by death were no longer. Just as one convinced of the rectitude of the death penalty might maintain that, new legislation notwithstanding, some actions were still really capital crimes, so we, habituated to accept the linguistic practice of incorrigibility, can envisage ourselves insisting that some events really are incorrigibly reportable, even in a society in which any report of such an event can be overridden. Similarly, being convinced of the obliquity of the death penalty or the groundlessness of incorrigibility
might prompt future generations to regard our beliefs in capital crimes and mental events as simply the results, respectively, of our less advanced social practices and scientific theories. To endorse any of these views amounts to taking the question of whether something is a capital crime, or a mental event, to be straightforwardly a matter of fact.

A more modest stance, however, is usual in the case of capital crimes; we say that they exist just when the law provides for the death penalty. Similarly, one can see incorrigibility, as Rorty urges, as being simply the result of a linguistic practice. These accounts treat the existence of capital crimes and mental events as matters not of fact but of convention. Rorty maintains that, in these cases at least, "nothing much turns on this fact-convention distinction" ("More on Incorrigibility," p. 195); the difference between the alternative accounts is largely a matter of the attitudes being expressed. Since 'mental' is tied to incorrigibility, it resembles 'capital crime' in these respects, and not terms like 'red' and 'square', about which such interchangeable accounts are highly implausible if possible at all. So if Rorty is right about these things, to regard the existence and incorrigibility of mental events as a matter of convention is simply to recognize that different conclusions about these matters can be embedded in convincing ways of talking about things. To regard these questions as matters of fact, then, is to adopt the stance of one such way of thinking, and it will only seem paradoxical that a particular event or type of event can be mental now and not at another time from the point of view of one or another such stance. Rorty's eliminative-materialist purposes, moreover, do not require the endorsement of any particular stance; it is enough that the requisite empirical discoveries would warrant one to conclude that no mental events exist. But Rorty takes the 'mental'-'physical' incompatibility to be common to all possible stances. So the idea that mental events might not be incorrigibly reportable will be, from whatever stance, simply a disguised and paradoxical way of expressing a negative attitude toward the possible practice of permitting all reports of thoughts and sensations to be overridden.17

II

Rorty's argument that eliminative materialism can succeed where standard materialism must fail relies, therefore, on two premises: first, that being mental entails being nonphysical and, second, that only the mental is incorrigibly reportable in the way Rorty describes. But neither premise will withstand scrutiny. Rorty maintains that unless 'mental' and 'physical' are incompatible terms, it will not be possible to explain why, and in what way, being mental contrasts with being physical. He thereby construes the mental-physical contrast as equivalent to the contrast between the mental and the nonmental.

But Rorty overlooks that the mental-physical contrast is just one of a number of cases in which we contrast a range of phenomena with what is physical, and so he misinterprets what the mental-physical contrast involves. In the context of chemistry, for example, one isolates properties that are special to chemical com-
pounds and processes as such, counting those properties as chemical in contrast with physical properties. But we also contrast the properties and processes that are special to life forms with physical properties and processes and, in that case, the physical includes the chemical as well. And, as Rorty's own usage illustrates, the biological itself counts as physical when we contrast the physical with the mental. Not only does the range of what is physical vary, but it also encompasses, in each successive case, what was previously contrasted with the physical. In general, contrasting a range of phenomena with the physical does not provide a characterization of those phenomena; rather, it amounts simply to the claim that some distinguishing characterization exists that sets apart those phenomena from all others. Such contrasts, far from being informative about what is set in contrast with the physical, serve instead to fix what counts as physical in particular contexts: the physical is whatever, by being at a lower level of organization, lacks the distinctive features of the phenomena under consideration, whatever those features may be. Physics, proper, studies those phenomena which we cannot contrast in this way with others at an even lower level of complexity. These kinds of contrast, by focusing on an already delineated range of phenomena, suggest the possibility of relatively autonomous theories about them. Unresolved problems may exist about whether chemical, biological, or mental phenomena are really distinctive in the ways they seem to be and about whether they can be theoretically reduced to other phenomena. But the existence of such questions does not presuppose that the phenomena under discussion are nonphysical in any way beyond simply being distinctive; nor does the contrast of particular phenomena with the physical bear on whether they can be theoretically reduced to others. So when Rorty writes that an acceptable mark of the mental must "provide a means for giving the notion of 'physical' a sense by contrasting it with something else" (412), he is entirely correct. But what we must give sense to is only the notion of being physical that figures in the idiomatic contrast between mental and physical, and not any notion of being physical that bears on the issue of mind-body materialism.

It may be thought, however, that the mental-physical contrast is significantly less similar to the contrasts between the biological and physical, and the chemical and physical, than has just been suggested. For whereas we have a relatively clear conception of what would be involved in a reduction of biological or chemical phenomena to phenomena at a level of less complexity, we seem to have no clear idea about what a reduction of mental to physical phenomena would be like. But this disanalogy between the mental-physical contrast and the other two is relatively superficial. For one thing, we are still vastly more ignorant about the nature of mental phenomena than we are about life forms and about chemical interactions and compounds. So it is natural that we should feel we understand far better what would be involved in the reduction of biological and chemical phenomena to simpler terms than we now understand what a reduction of mental to nonmenfal phenomena would be like. But there is another, somewhat subtler source of our difficulty in envisaging a reduction of mental to physical phenomena. We usually tend to think of such a reduction as if it might go straight from the mental to the phenomena of
physics, without first passing through any intermediate reductions at the levels of biology and chemistry. And the leap from the mental all the way to physics does, indeed, seem less than fully intelligible. By contrast, much of the intuitive difficulty we have in thinking of physical systems' having mental states seems to be relieved if we first think of those systems as living things. This suggests that part of our problem in intuitively comprehending how systems of particles, for example, can have mental states is due to a prior difficulty in even getting a clear, intuitive grasp of how such systems can be living things. And this analogy between the two difficulties lends support to the comparison, suggested above, of the mental-physical contrast with the contrast between living things and merely physical objects.

In more speculative contexts, 'physical' follows a similar pattern of usage. We can understand the physical as being, among other things, whatever is extended or natural or subject to causal laws or susceptible of satisfactory explanation. Here, too, what counts as physical is a matter of a contrast with a particular range of phenomena, a contrast with what is unextended, uncaused, supernatural, divine, or unexplained. But in these cases the boundary drawn is of interest because of some belief or theory about things in general, whereas in the previous cases the boundary is of interest because of a concern to understand the particular range of distinctive phenomena set in contrast with the physical. Perhaps because of this, the hierarchical arrangement of the various contexts exhibited in the previous kind of case is absent here. But in both kinds of case what is physical in one context may well not be in another. So although what counts as physical in a particular context is commonly clear enough, it seems unlikely that there is anything that is meant by calling something "physical," as such and independent of one of these specialized contexts. Unlike the mental and the biological, which remain relatively fixed and specific independent of context, what counts as physical and nonphysical does not.

The foregoing considerations, however, may not wholly dispel our inclination to regard the mental-physical contrast as special and revealing in a way that other contrasts with the physical are not. For whatever else may count as physical in some context or other, we do not contrast anything with the physical in a way that leads us to count the mental itself as physical. This is not because we can delineate the mental independently of theory, since nothing beyond common sense is needed to distinguish living from nonliving things, either. Nor is it a result of our special concern with the mental, so exploited by Cartesian epistemology; for emphasis on what is special to life forms can also lead to a degree of reluctance to regard biological phenomena as simply physical, without qualification. Rather, the reason there is no clear and intuitive context in which we count the mental as physical, along with the chemical and biological, is simply that there is no well-entrenched habit of contrasting with the physical some range of phenomena at a yet higher level of complexity than the mental. There is, moreover, no reason to think that the absence of such a contrast tells us anything about the nature of the mental itself. Instead, it is very likely that that absence merely reflects the implicit assumption that no areas of study exist that both are concerned with phenomena at levels of organization higher than the mental and, also, provide us with bodies of
knowledge nearly as self-contained and autonomous as are psychology, biology, and chemistry. No counterexample to this seems to be forthcoming from the social sciences, and it is difficult to see where else a counterexample could arise.

Simply to contrast a range of phenomena with the physical, therefore, leaves open for investigation and theory what the nature of those phenomena might be; it does not settle it in advance. And this is so with the mental no less than with the biological and chemical. Independent of such contrasts, a particular form of vitalism might hypothesize that the biological is, in its very nature, nonphysical, just as some theories of the mind have said that about the mental. Perhaps supernaturally inclined theoretical alchemists once so speculated about particular chemical substances. Such theories may have seemed compelling because, in each case, the subject matter under scrutiny is said to contrast with the physical. But for these theories to have content, some particular sense must be assigned to 'physical' and, if it is the sense in which the physical is said to contrast with the subject matter under consideration, the theory will reduce to mere tautology. If, however, some other sense is intended, the resulting theory will not be analytic or inconsistent, but it also will neither be implied nor undermined by the contrast with the physical. To refute standard, noneliminative materialism, however, we need more than a mere contrast between mental phenomena and phenomena that lack the distinctive features of the mental. Rorty has mistaken the use of the mental-physical contrast to focus on what is distinctive about mental phenomena for the idea that what is distinctive about them is that they are not physical.

Rorty maintains "that it is the notion [of the mental] held by Cartesian philosophers that we must explicate if we are to make sense of materialism" (406). And he urges that we are being false to that notion "as long as we give an analysis of the mental that [merely] leaves it open that mental events are 'taking place in an immaterial stuff'" (402). But Rorty's argument for this is unconvincing. For he claims that "'immaterial' gets its sense from its connection with 'mental' " (402) and that Descartes and Aristotle were driven to the mental to find an example of something immaterial. As a result, he concludes, "'[m]aterial' and 'physical' would be vacuous notions without the contrast with 'mental' " (405). But a variety of other contrasts also give content to the notion of being physical, and the different notion of something's being a material thing gets content from a concern with what things are made of and not from excluding the mental. Moreover, it is hardly true, as Rorty claims, that "the notions of 'ghostly stuff' and 'immaterial substance' would never have become current if Descartes had not been able to use cogitationes as an example of what he intended" (402); for, Berkeleian idealism aside, supernatural and divine beings are usually thought of as things that are neither physical nor mental. And although it is difficult to give any nontrivial, informative account of what kind of stuff such beings might consist of, this does not make either notion unintelligible; it is far from obvious that any informative, nontrivial account can be given of what fundamental quantum or wave mechanical entities consist of, either.

What is needed to make sense of materialism and immaterialism alike is, instead, simply an account of what is distinctive about mental phenomena, together
with a specific sense to be assigned to ‘physical’. But these two matters are independent, and only if one conflates them will it seem plausible that ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ are incompatible terms and, therefore, that immaterialism is true a priori. The difference between materialism and immaterialism is not, as Rorty suggests, that immaterialism correctly captures the distinctive character of the mental, whereas materialism simply denies or dispenses with it. It is rather than the immaterialist claims that the mental, independently characterized as such, is nonphysical in some particular way, and the materialist denies this. A variety of nontrivial, if controversial, possibilities are available to explain what being nonphysical amounts to, from being a state of an unextended substance to having no causal connections with nonmental, paradigmatically physical things. Or one might simply have in mind the way in which distinctively biological and chemical phenomena are physical without, however, presupposing any particular account of what that way is. All that the colloquial contrast between mental and physical can contribute is the distinctiveness of the mental. Indeed, were Rorty right about the nature of materialism and immaterialism, it would be remarkable that it had gone unnoticed for so long.

Whatever is found to be the underlying nature of mental states and events, whether physical or not, the discovery is almost certain to leave the commonplace contrast between mental and physical wholly unaffected. For the habit of contrasting the two will persist as long as we are able to distinguish mental events as a distinctive kind of event and develop relatively autonomous theories about them. So even if Rorty is mistaken in claiming that the distinctiveness of mental events lies in their being nonphysical, he is entirely correct in insisting that the mental-physical contrast implies that mental events are distinctive in some way or other. But Rorty’s argument that being incorrigibly reportable is the best way to capture what is characteristic of the mental rests on the premise that incorrigibility best explains the incompatibility of ‘mental’ and ‘physical’, and without that incompatibility Rorty’s argument loses all force. So even if Rorty is right about mental events’ being incorrigibly reportable, unless being incorrigibly reportable is essential to such events, it may be reasonable to prefer, instead, some other property as a mark of the mental.

The most inviting alternative candidate for such a mark that Rorty considers is that the mental consists of inner episodes with intentional or phenomenal properties, together with dispositions for those episodes to occur. Rorty dismisses this view in part because it does not explain the alleged ‘mental’-‘physical’ incompatibility but also because, although thoughts have intentional properties and sensations phenomenal properties, this account provides no single mark that all mental events and states share (412; see also 409). But unless one’s goal is to give an analysis of the meaning of ‘mental’ which meets fairly particular standards, it is hard to see why a single, uniform mark is required. We do not fault an account of what is distinctive of life forms for proceeding, disjunctively, in terms of the respective distinguishing marks of plant and animal life, though the two differ dramatically. Moreover, it is reasonable to try, in turn, to give an account of an event’s having phenomenal or intentional properties by reference to the causal relations the event has
to behavior, sensory stimulations, and other phenomenal and intentional events.\textsuperscript{21} If this succeeded, the totality of such clusters of causal relations would be extensionally adequate to determine the mental and would very likely point the way to a more illuminating mark. Rorty himself seems to subscribe to the possibility of some such account of phenomenal and intentional properties (411-12). And, in a subsequent article, he allows that being incorrigibly reportable and having particular causal connections with behavior and stimuli are distinct, and potentially competing, criteria for determining whether something has mental states.\textsuperscript{22}

Rorty offers the incompatibility of 'mental' and 'physical' as a reason for rejecting standard, noneliminative materialism. Perhaps, however, a different argument is available that does not require such incompatibility but instead relies simply on mental events' being incorrigibly reportable. For whatever empirical discoveries could convince us that thoughts and sensations are, say, neural events would perhaps at the same time also convince us that no reports of them are incorrigible. Yet if everything mental is incorrigibly reportable, as Rorty believes, we would still not have shown that mental events are physical events, but rather that thoughts and sensations are not mental and, indeed, that nothing mental exists.

Rorty's treatment of these matters, however, involves a double standard. Being able to be the subject of incorrigible reports, he claims, can be viewed in two distinct ways, either as the result of a general belief about the nature of thoughts and sensations or as due to the meanings of the terms 'thought' and 'sensation'. If we see a connection of meaning between being a thought or sensation and being incorrigibly reportable, the discovery that nothing is incorrigibly reportable would take the form, as in Rorty's earlier "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories," of a discovery that no thoughts or sensations exist. If we see no such connection of meaning, we can envisage discovering simply that thoughts and sensations are not incorrigibly reportable. Rorty regards it as dogmatic to believe that thoughts and sensations are incorrigibly reportable because of what 'thought' and 'sensation' mean (415-16).

But even when Rorty concedes that causal connections with behavior provide a potentially competing criterion of the mental, he still insists that 'mental' just means "the sort of state people are incorrigible about" ("Functionalism, Machines, and Incorrigibility," p. 215, fn. 16). This conviction is based on Rorty's belief that incorrigibility best explains the 'mental'-'physical' incompatibility. But without that incompatibility, it is no less dogmatic to see being incorrigibly reportable as part of the meaning of 'mental' than to see it as part of the meanings of 'thought' and 'sensation'.\textsuperscript{23} Empirical discoveries might well lead us to believe that all reports of thoughts and sensations can be overridden. But coming to believe this would not force us also to conclude that thoughts and sensations are not mental; rather, it would merely amount to the discovery that our privileged access to our own mental states is not "the last word on their existence and features" (414). And with characterizations of mental events available in terms of phenomenal and intentional properties and causal ties with stimuli and behavior, this discovery would no more undermine the colloquial contrast of mental and physical than
would the discovery, considered above, that the mental is, in some specific way, nonphysical. For all that that contrast requires is a set of relatively autonomous descriptions that apply solely to the mental. Rorty may be right that “nothing would count as finding a neurological property that was the property of being the subject of incorrigible reports” (422). But this could concern no materialist who did not believe, with Rorty, that ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ are incompatible terms and, therefore, that being incorrigibly reportable is part of the meaning of ‘mental’.

Moreover, it is far from obvious that Rorty’s permissive attitude about construing statements as reflecting meanings or beliefs is sound. If we accept that no nonarbitrary distinction is possible between matters of meaning and matters of fact (e.g., 415), it will be reasonable to regard all statements as expressing factual beliefs and none as solely matters of meaning. Perhaps one might even maintain that the rejection of a nonarbitrary fact-meaning distinction entitles us to take all assertions as only reflecting meanings, as some of the more extreme claims of the hermeneutical tradition seem to suggest. But it does not follow from the absence of a principled fact-meaning distinction that we are at liberty to construe some statements as matters of meaning and other, related statements as expressions of belief; adopting one construal for some assertions can affect what construal it is reasonable to adopt for others. Indeed, much of the unintuitive character of Rorty’s argument seems to stem from his at once taking it to be a factual question whether thoughts and sensations are mental while insisting that it is a matter of meaning that nothing mental is physical.

The discovery that no reports of thoughts and sensations are incorrigible, therefore, would not by itself vindicate eliminative materialism. Nor does something’s not being incorrigibly reportable clearly imply that it is physical. Nonetheless, it is probable that whatever could persuade us that something is not incorrigibly reportable would equally persuade us that it is physical, at least in whatever way distinctively chemical and biological phenomena both are. And this, in turn, would support any reasonable version of noneliminative materialism. But Rorty must believe that an even stronger connection holds between being physical and being incorrigibly reportable. For since he regards ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ as incompatible terms and believes that ‘mental’ entails being incorrigibly reportable, he is committed to its being a matter of meaning that nothing physical is incorrigibly reportable. And if the meaning of ‘physical’ is tied to incorrigible reportability no less than is the meaning of ‘mental’, then ‘physical’, too, will have to resemble ‘capital crime’, and so what is physical now may cease to be later. This feature of that notion of the physical which concerns Rorty, however, shows decisively that that notion is not relevant to the issue between materialism and immaterialism. For, given that notion, it cannot be completely certain that even neural or other somatic states and events will always count as physical. (Carter, “On Incorrigibility and Eliminative Materialism,” p. 120, makes a similar point.)

It is commonly recognized that we are able to report our own thoughts and sensations without relying at all on observation or inference, at least in any obvious way. Less often noticed is that there is also a range of nonmental events, such as
veins' throbbing and bodily movements, which we also seem able to report independently of observation and inference. Rorty envisages our coming to regard reports of thoughts and sensations as capable of being overridden by observation, inference, or well-confirmed empirical theory, just as we now regard all reports of bodily movements. But we do not now know whether discoveries are possible that would enable this change to take place on a rational basis. If none are, this might well lead us to conclude that mental events are nonphysical in some nontrivial way. But then, at least insofar as incorrigibility is concerned, materialism and immaterialism alike must wait the outcome of future investigation.

Moreover, putting the question of incorrigibility to one side, introspection, itself, need cause no difficulty for materialism. Rorty is right in noting that we count only our direct access to our own thoughts and sensations, and not to physical events such as veins' throbbing, as cases of introspection. But this is not, as he claims, because events like veins' throbbing are physical and thoughts and sensations are not (409); rather, it is because thoughts and sensations are mental and the throbbing of veins is not. Nor is Rorty right that “we cannot explain what introspection is except by reference to an antecedently understood notion of what is mental” (409). For our noninferential access to mental events is nontrivially distinctive in not relying on any of the bodily senses, whereas we learn about bodily movements by way of our proprioceptive sense and about veins' throbbing through our sense of touch. It may also be that our noninferential awareness of these events appears to be nonobservational because there is no perceived spatial separation between the event and the relevant sense organ. And apart from a claim of 'mental'- 'physical' incompatibility, there is no reason to maintain, with Rorty, that introspection is definitionally nonphysical (409) or incorrigible (“Dennett on Awareness,” p. 155). Introspection is simply our noninferential and nonsensory access to inner events. Indeed, our having such access only to phenomenal and intentional events is very likely responsible for our intuitively classifying both sorts of event as species of a single genus.

Rorty has recently offered an argument for the incorrigibility of the mental which does not rely on a claim of 'mental'- 'physical' incompatibility. He considers the case of a person who, though “having normal skills at counting sides of things,” nonetheless “always sincerely reports an \((n - 2)\)-sided after-image after contemplating an \(n\)-sided polygon (for \(n\) greater than 4)” (“More on Incorrigibility” (“MI”), p. 196). On Rorty’s view,

[i]t seems rational to believe that he gets funny after-images, and that it is up to psychologists to explain why. A psychologist who kept saying “But you can't! Your retinal images are normal, so your after-images must be!” would be fighting the data. What we want is a criterion [of incorrigibility] which captures this privileged reporting – this ability to fend off well-confirmed theory by simple sincere insistence (“MI,” p. 196).

Rorty seems to think that this discussion supports his belief “that the reason why we say that after-images are mental and retinal images are not is simply that when
all the chips are down we have to take the subject's word about the former but not about the latter" ("MI," p. 196). But although Rorty's specific diagnosis of this case is convincing, his general remarks are not. For in giving the person "normal skills at counting sides of things," Rorty adds a factor that prevents the situation from being an unaided conflict between "well-confirmed theory" and "simple sincere insistence." If these skills are to apply not only to sides of physical objects but also to the sides of phenomenal polygons in afterimages, the possession of these skills by itself gives very substantial reason to accept as veridical the person's surprising reports. If, however, these skills apply clearly only when counting the sides of perceived physical objects, Rorty has given no reason to rule out the possibility of systematic error in the person's judgments about his own afterimages. Although counting sides of physical objects may depend on responding appropriately to phenomenal representations, this would not entitle us to conclude that our judgments about such representations, even in cases such as afterimages, are invariably unproblematic.25

If it turned out that no discoveries could lead to our regarding all reports of mental events as capable of being overridden, we would be warranted in concluding that introspective access is the last word about them. But if no discoveries ever enabled us to override introspection with observation, this would almost certainly be because mental events prove recalcitrant to being explained in neural or other somatic terms. And it would be this recalcitrance to theoretical explanation by reference to the physiological which would make us count mental events as nonphysical and would also make introspection the last word about them. If theoretically reductive explanation is possible, however, we would have convincing reasons to regard mental events as somatic and to override introspective reports of them with observation. In either case, the idea that introspective reports are incorrigible would be based not on a linguistic convention about what reports are immune from being overridden but on new knowledge about the nature of mental events. In advance of our knowing whether such explanation is possible, however, whatever incorrigibility may attach to introspective reports can only be a matter of our current relative lack of grounds on which to override them. For as long as we do not know whether observation and theory can override introspection, we have nothing stronger on which to base a practice of taking introspection to be the last word. And since we are largely ignorant of the nature of mental events, save what we learn from introspection and what relatively little we now know of their causal connections with behavior, stimuli, and each other, it is not surprising that some such practice would have arisen. But there is, also, a fact of the matter about whether introspection can justifiably be overridden, and we can hope to discover it by determining whether a theoretical reduction of the mental is possible. If, prior to such a determination, we nonetheless regard mental events as incorrigibly reportable, it is simply because we do not yet know enough about them to know whether they really are.

III

Traditionally, there have been two different ways of delineating the distinctively
mental, one cast in terms of the special, immediate access we have to our own mental states, the other based on the phenomenal qualities and propositional content by reference to which we distinguish among types of mental states. Phenomenal qualities are unique to mental states, at least if we do not conflate them with the perceptible properties of physical objects. And except for speech acts that express mental states, only mental states themselves have propositional content. But there is no clear reason to think that there is anything about intentional or phenomenal properties themselves which resists a thoroughgoing naturalist treatment, at least if one does not identify giving a naturalist account of something with reducing it to physics.

By contrast, if we take consciousness of our mental states to be the key to what makes them mental, obstacles to a naturalist treatment arise. One can explain such consciousness as one’s awareness of one’s own mental states and this, in turn, by reference to one’s mental states’ regularly causing one to have roughly contemporaneous thoughts that one has them. Such an account is entirely compatible with mind-body materialism. Although it may not seem to us that we have such second-order thoughts about our mental states whenever those states are in our stream of consciousness, this causes no problem for the account. For that is exactly what we should expect, except when we have thoughts, in turn, about those second-order thoughts and are, thereby, aware of them as well. When we just have a thought about a mental state, that state is conscious; when we also have a thought about the second-order thought, we are then self-conscious, in that we are aware of ourselves as being conscious of the original mental state, and can then consciously regard that mental state as introspectible. So introspection, by itself, need cause no difficulty for materialism.

But if, following the Cartesian tradition, one holds that to think something and to know that one thinks it are the same thing and, therefore, that we are at least potentially aware of every mental state we have, the foregoing account will fail. For, then, we shall not be able to explain why we often do not seem to have the second-order thoughts postulated by the above account by appealing to our lack of awareness of them. Consciousness of our mental states will, on the Cartesian view, be an intrinsic property that they have, rather than a matter of their being the subject of a distinct thought, which Descartes sometimes seems to deny is even possible. And, conceived as an intrinsic property of all mental states, consciousness will very likely seem to be an irremediable obstacle to a materialist or naturalist account. Since this difficulty stems from the idea that having a mental state involves knowing that one has it and the related idea that no medium separates mental states from our awareness of them, it is natural to describe the difficulty in terms of the incorrigibility of the mental. But it is actually no more than the idea that all mental states are conscious that creates the problem.

The obvious materialist reply to this line of argument is to maintain that having a mental state does not imply knowing that one has it and, therefore, that not all mental states need be conscious mental states. Instead of consciousness, then, we can take being an inner event with intentional or phenomenal properties to be the mark of what is distinctively mental. This reply is not without support.
It is far clearer what it would be like to have states with phenomenal or intentional properties but lacking consciousness than to have conscious states with neither phenomenal nor intentional properties. The idea that what all mental states have in common is their phenomenal or intentional properties, moreover, does not need to be qualified. But just as Rorty is forced to concede that such states as beliefs, emotions, and intentions only approximate full incorrigibility (420), so, on the classical Cartesian picture, no particular mental state need be more than potentially conscious.\footnote{31} Even if the Cartesian picture is wrong and not all mental states are conscious, this would not undermine the idea that consciousness is an important and striking feature of many mental states, though the incorrigibility that results from the Cartesian picture would, at best, have to be modified. Perhaps no organism that is never conscious can have mental states, but an organism’s being conscious does not entail that its mental states are conscious. For an organism’s being conscious, if this means more than that it is awake, consists simply in its being aware of something, without its necessarily also being aware that it is. Thomas Nagel may be correct in observing that, while “the mind-body problem would be much less interesting” without consideration of consciousness, “[w]ith consciousness it seems hopeless.”\footnote{32} But the appearance of insolubility results not from having to take account of consciousness at all, as Nagel suggests, but from regarding the consciousness of mental states as what distinguishes the mental.

It has sometimes been maintained that having a mental state requires being aware of it; perhaps the most compelling case of this idea is the claim that having a pain involves experiencing it consciously as a pain.\footnote{33} But even if our psychological terminology contains such a suggestion, that is far from conclusive. There could be little reason to talk about pain, or other somatic sensations, of which we are not immediately aware. But we are more motivated to talk about thoughts, emotions, and perceptual sensations even when we are not immediately aware of them, and in these cases having a mental state seems far less, if at all, to imply being conscious of it. So even with somatic sensations, the appearance of such an implication may be no more than a reflection of our usual interests, rather than a reflection of the meanings of our words or the nature of the mental states themselves. Something’s hurting does entail awareness that it hurts, and so perhaps the same is true of being in pain. But even if that is so, the state one is aware of when one is in pain or when something hurts might nonetheless sometimes exist without our being conscious of it.

It also may be possible, moreover, to explain the intuition that mental states must all be conscious not as a matter of the necessary nature of those states, but as the result of how we have fixed the extension of the term ‘mental’ (see “Naming and Necessity,” pp. 274-77 and pp. 315-33, and “Identity and Necessity,” pp. 156-61). Since, at the very least, not all mental states are conscious without qualification, it is more reasonable to think of the extension of ‘mental’ as having been fixed by reference to a range of unproblematically conscious states than to regard consciousness as what distinguishes mental states from everything else. In the case of individual objects, perhaps, what fixes the extension of a term must always refer to
whatever object the term itself refers to. But this need not be so with terms used
to determine kinds of things; in such cases, the kind can be fixed by means of parti-
cular identifying marks, which we then discover are not actually true of all, or even
any, of the things of that kind. How we fix a range of phenomena for scrutiny
is not always a good indicator of the nature of the phenomena thus determined. So
it is plausible, for example, to see the subject matter of biology as having been fixed
by reference to the capacity for reproduction, even though investigation and theory
have led to more complicated and less unified accounts of the nature of biological
phenomena. Similarly, there is no compelling and non-question-begging reason to
think that what fixes the extension of 'mental' cannot be distinct from what is es-
tential to a state's being a mental state. Regarding the extension of 'mental' as
having been fixed by reference to consciousness, therefore, would not rule out the
possibility that the states so determined are not all conscious and that what is dis-
tinctive of, or essential to, all such states is rather that they are inner states with
phenomenal or intentional properties. If such an account succeeds, then conscious-
ness can be a mark of the mental in this qualified way without, however, this imply-
ing that all mental states are conscious or causing any difficulty for materialism.

The foregoing account of consciousness is intended, in part, to help dispel
whatever difficulty we may have in forming an intuitively clear idea of how living
organisms can have conscious states. In this respect, the account resembles the dis-
cussion, in the last section, of the mental-physical contrast. It was suggested there
that insisting on an intermediate level of distinctively biological analysis could help
bridge the intuitive gap between the mental and the phenomena of physics. Similar-
ly, the foregoing account of consciousness insists on a distinctive level of analysis
between the biological and the conscious, namely, the level of nonconscious mental
states. In so doing, the account aims at reducing the intuitive gap between merely
living things and beings with conscious mental states. These considerations suggest
that Descartes contributed to the appearance of an unbridgeable gulf between the
mental and the physical in two ways, not only by counting as mental only what is
conscious, but also by eradicating the distinctiveness of the biological in urging that
living organisms are automata. Repudiating the idea of a distinctive level of bio-
logical analysis is not, however, merely a peculiarity of Descartes's position. For the
mathematical model of science, which inspires the repository picture of the mind,
is primarily regarded as a model for physics and as applicable to biology and even
chemistry only insofar as they prove reducible to physics. So the repository picture,
too, by neglecting the distinctively biological, seeks to capitalize on the dramatic
distance between the mental and the phenomena studied by physics proper.

Against this background, Rorty's views represent a kind of compromise. In
keeping with his claim "that common sense is irredeemably Cartesian" (406, fn. 11),
Rorty espouses a mark of the mental inspired by considerations of consciousness
and so must reject a defense of materialism based on the adoption of an alternative
mark, instead. But he does wish to defend a materialist position, and it seems most
unlikely that a materialist account of consciousness is possible unless it treats con-
sciousness as an extrinsic property of mental states, that is, as a relation that each
mental state bears to something else. Rorty’s treatment of incorrigibility as a linguistic convention governing reports of mental states satisfies just this condition (422). But since the convention expresses the import of the Cartesian view of the mental, Rorty’s account can explain how, though “common sense is irredeemably Cartesian,” materialism can nonetheless be true.

Rorty strikes this particular compromise, however, because it preserves the ‘mental’-‘physical’ incompatibility, for he believes that without that incompatibility the notions of mentality and consciousness involved in his account would not be of genuinely Cartesian notions. This is vividly reflected in Rorty’s conception of the mind-body problem. He writes that without

the opposition between the mental and the physical, . . . considered as an opposition between two incompatible types of entity, rather than [merely]

. . . between two ways of talking about human beings . . . , we would not have had a mind-body problem at all (408).

And so the Cartesian notion of the mental and the attendant ‘mental’-‘physical’ incompatibility is, he claims, required “to make sense of materialism” (406), at least if we are to regard materialism as a response to the mind-body problem. Since this conception of that problem rules out all solutions but immaterialism and eliminative materialism, it is tempting to think that it is, in effect, tailored to yield Rorty’s eliminative-materialist solution. But many other contemporary discussions of mind-body materialism seem also to presuppose some form of a priori ‘mental’-‘physical’ incompatibility, though few would follow Rorty in explicitly locating the source of the a priori opposition with the meaning of ‘mental’. For example, the widely accepted idea that the existence of irreducibly psychic properties of mental events is incompatible with materialism betrays the tacit assumption that being psychic implies being nonphysical.

Taking immaterialist doctrine to be definitive of the mental may be to beg the question against materialism, but conflating theory with definition in this way is hardly a singular occurrence. For it is not especially uncommon that a theory that succeeds in explaining a particular range of phenomena comes tacitly to be taken as also defining the nature of those phenomena. The effect of so construing scientific theories is normally benign, at least until we are faced with competing theories that purport to deal with the same phenomena. But in the case of the mind-body problem, it is notorious that we already face competing theories. In this case, therefore, the idea that a ‘mental’-‘physical’ incompatibility is constitutive of the mind-body problem is perhaps simply an example of the general doctrine that philosophical problems are conceptual in nature and, therefore, cannot yield to empirical considerations.

There is more than tradition that might prompt one to take Rorty’s view of the mind-body problem. For unless that problem is regarded as the result of something given that is in conflict with a thoroughgoing scientific and empiricist picture of things, it may seem difficult or even impossible to explain why the relation between mind and body was ever thought to be problematic, and why it has so per-
Rorty appeals to this consideration in arguing against a functionalist view of the mental ("Functionalism, Machines, and Incorrigibility," p. 204). And he may be right in saying that unless "people thought that there was a natural kind—indeed an 'irreducible ontological category'—in the area," they would never have "thought there was a mind-body problem" ("More on Incorrigibility," p. 197).

It hardly follows, however, that the mere existence of the mind-body problem entails that the mental really does constitute an "irreducible ontological category." All that is required is that this should seem to be so and seem so in a way that, if not conclusive, is still reasonably compelling. And the pervasive idea that some such thing as consciousness is distinctive of the mental provides exactly what is needed for this; if all mental states are conscious or if the consciousness of mental states is not an 'extrinsic property of such states, it is far from clear that a materialist account can succeed. So Rorty may be correct when he says that without the notion of immediate awareness as applied to mental states but to nothing else, we would not have had "the mind-body problem which has bothered philosophers from Descartes to Feigl." But just as the relation between mind and body will not seem to constitute a problem without some plausible appearance of opposition between the two, there will also be no problem if, as Rorty believes, it is clear from the outset that this opposition cannot be dissolved or reconciled. A problem will exist only so long as we do not know what to make of the apparent opposition. For the mind-body problem is simply the question of the nature of the mental, specifically with regard to such competing theories as materialism and dualism. Rorty has permitted the mind-body problem to dictate the nature of the mental, rather than allowing the nature of the mental to determine the correct solution to the mind-body problem.

Rorty believes that since the mind-body problem, properly so called, derives from the Cartesian notion that the mental and physical are incompatible, no account of the mental that fails to incorporate this notion will be germane to the problem (406). Any naturalist account of the mental must, therefore, be automatically unresponsive to the problem and so fail. But even if Rorty were right about the nature of the mind-body problem, contesting a central presupposition of a problem can be entirely germane and responsive to the problem. The nature and history of intellectual problems is no more a privileged area of knowledge to which other areas must conform than is the study of the meanings of words, whose claim to special status and "magisterial neutrality" Rorty rightly rejects ("Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories," p. 25). When properties thought essential to a subject matter have been abandoned; such as entelechies in biology and Aristotelian essences of various sorts, the typical reaction has been to dispense not with the subject matter, as Rorty envisages our doing, but rather with the view that the property in question really is essential to the subject matter. Moreover, the withering away of whatever incorrigibility now belongs to reports of thoughts and sensations could only enhance the prospects of a scientific study of those states. In general, a subject matter is abandoned only if it emerges that a scientific study of it is impossible.
This conservatism with respect to subject matters is not simply an accident of history. For abandoning a subject matter along with a mistaken theory about it makes needlessly difficult the comparison of our current theories with those of the past. Perhaps Feyerabend and others are right in thinking that, strictly speaking, distinct theories are always incommensurate and that no theory-neutral descriptions of subject matters are possible. Even so, the usefulness of regarding our current theories as being about the same subject matters as past theories will generally outweigh whatever advantage there may be in seeing ourselves as having jettisoned the subject matters of theories we have rejected. Perhaps no ahistorical overview is possible from which we could compare the Cartesian idioms of the present with the non-Cartesian idioms Rorty envisages for the future. But even if any attempt to compare the views of different eras must reflect the perspective of the then current era, this does not by itself imply that any such comparison is erroneous. As long as we can validly compare Cartesian theories and idioms with non-Cartesian theories and idioms, there can be little if any reason to take Cartesian theories as definitive of mental subject matter. Rorty’s belief that the connection between being mental and being incorrigibly reportable cannot be severed is an example of an unwarranted essentialism with respect to subject matters.

Putting aside the question of a ‘mental’-'physical' incompatibility, whatever empirical discoveries could lead us, on Rorty’s eliminative account, to dispense with reference to the mental would also vindicate standard, noneliminative materialism. The two views differ principally on the question of that incompatibility and, therefore, about that much of the nature of the mental. But Rorty takes what is mental to be a conventional matter, roughly like what is a capital crime. So his account will fall short of commonly accepted beliefs about mental phenomena no less than do more standard materialist accounts, such as those implicit in Hobbes’s a priori materialist arguments or in Smart’s and Armstrong’s rather cavalier topic-neutral construals of mentalistic statements.

If the foregoing arguments are correct, neither considerations pertaining to consciousness nor the nature of the mind-body problem will warrant Rorty’s incompatibilist interpretation of the mental-physical contrast. More generally, since a naturalist account of the mental-physical contrast is defensible, we need not adopt the view of that contrast implied by the repository picture of the mind. A naturalist view may require us to repudiate particular theories of mental phenomena, at least insofar as those theories purport to define the nature of those phenomena, and perhaps, in some cases, even insofar as the theories offer explanations of the phenomena. But a naturalist view of the mental-physical contrast and of the mind-body problem itself need not cause us to renounce our traditional, common-sense intuitions about the nature of the mental.

Nor are such maneuvers as Rorty’s appeal to an incorrigibility based on linguistic convention necessary to defend materialism while also preserving the distinctive insights of the Cartesian picture. For we need not hope to explain the peculiar importance of consciousness and related notions by claiming that they provide a mark of the mental, even in the qualified way suggested above. It is arguable that
these notions are, instead, what enable us to distinguish persons from all other beings. We must take care, here, not to confuse being a person with simply being a member of the human species. But, equally, having mental states is, by itself, clearly not unique to persons, though the notion of a being with mental states has not infrequently been unthinkingly conflated with the notion of a person. Rorty is right in holding that being mental is being incorrigibly reportable, then the attribution of mental states to nontalking animals will be problematic at best. Rorty might plausibly maintain that we are all Cartesians at least in denying the existence of any mind-body problem for such animals, though even this can be forcefully disputed (see Nagel, "What Is It Like To Be a Bat?" passim). But whatever we may say about that question, we clearly are not Cartesians in holding also that nontalking animals never have any mental states. And even if our conceptual descendants came to think that what such animals have are not mental events, proper, but only thoughts and sensations, it is clear that, at present, we think that they have both. The behavior of nontalking animals may even seem sometimes to indicate the presence of higher-order mental states (see, e.g., Dennett, pp. 274-5), though that inference may seem somewhat unconvincing when one notices that such cases seem never to involve our concluding that the animal has a higher-order mental state that is just about its own mental states and not at least in part about those of another creature. Whatever the case about that matter, what no animals other than persons have is the particular kind of reflective consciousness that involves some fair degree of general rational connectedness or, intuitively, a lack of "mindlessness" in the awareness of its mental states. A compelling case has been made for the related view that what distinguishes persons is their having a particular sort of higher-order mental state, specifically, second-order volitions (see Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," passim). The temptation to equate being a person with simply having mental states may result in part from our being able to know the mental states of creatures with introspective consciousness, at least in familiar cases, in which introspection is sometimes articulated, in a way we cannot know the mental states of others when such consciousness is absent. But we need no more rely on introspective reports to know the mental states of nonpersons than we must, or typically do, rely on such reports to know the mental states of other persons. Rorty's eliminative-materialist strategy relies on separating the notion of being mental from that of being a thought or sensation, that is, from the notion of being an inner state with intentional or phenomenal properties. But the unintuitive consequences that derive from Rorty's way of combining the Cartesian and materialist pictures can be avoided if, instead, we simply distinguish the notion of having mental states from that of being a person.

Notes

1. Richard Rorty, "Incorrigibility as the Mark of the Mental," The Journal of Philosophy, 67, no. 12 (June 25, 1970):399-424 (henceforth "IMM"). References in the text to this article will occur as parenthesized page numbers. Rorty advances related but distinct views in "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories," The Review of Metaphysics, 19, no. 1 (September
mental events, criteria are seldom decisive in other cases either. In Rorty's earlier "MBIPC," moreover, he makes a compelling case for his claim that thoughts and sensations may not provide decisive criteria for the occurrence of particular what we say about them (eg., "Smart
jects, see
convincing criticism of several incorrigibility theses, see Kathryn Pyne Parsons, "Mistaking
butes to mental events actually obtains. For although reference to behavior, stimuli, and other thoughts and sensations may not provide decisive criteria for the occurrence of particular mental events, criteria are seldom decisive in other cases either. In Rorty's earlier "MBIPC," moreover, he makes a compelling case for his claim that "[o]ur neighbors will not hesitate to
ride roughshod over our reports of our sensations unless they are assured that we know our way around among them, and we cannot satisfy them on this point unless, up to a certain point, we tell the same sort of story about them as they do. . . . As in the case of other infallible pronouncements, the price of retaining one’s epistemic authority is a decent respect for the opinions of mankind” (“MBIPC,” pp. 45-46; see n. 25 below). And his arguments apply at least as well to thoughts as to sensations. Even if some epistemic favoritism is part of “the opinions of mankind,” telling “the same sort of story” about our thoughts and sensations as others tell seems to require that we have something along the lines of those criteria which Rorty now maintains we lack. Whatever the case on this matter, there is a marked reluctance to override first-person contemporaneous reports of thoughts and sensations which is not matched in cases of other sorts and seems to exist to roughly the same extent whether or not evidence is present that would justify overriding such reports.

Gerald Doppelt explicitly recognizes the pragmatic character of Rorty’s notion of incorrigibility. See “Incorrigibility, the Mental and Materialism,” Philosophy Research Archives 3, no. 1213 (December 1976): 507-8, and “Incorrigibility and the Mental,” The Australasian Journal of Philosophy 56, no. 1 (May 1978): 4 (henceforth referred to by year). ((1978) is a shortened and revised version of [1976] .) And Doppelt presents a number of convincing arguments against that very notion ([1976]: 512-28 and [1978]: 7-19). As he notes (fn. 13 in both articles), his arguments do not hinge on imagining scientific results that may be forthcoming. Similar arguments occur in Parsons, “Mistaking Sensations,” pp. 210-13. The present discussion does not, however, rely on evaluating any claims for or against incorrigibility. But see n. 20 below.


12. It seems likely that Sikora’s insistence that a well-confirmed theory could not be used to override repeated sincere avowals of intense pain depends on his tacitly disregarding the force of the discoveries and changes of linguistic usage envisaged by Rorty. See R. I. Sikora, “Rorty’s New Mark of the Mental,” Analysis 35, no. 6 (June 1975): 194. Similarly, being wedded to the belief that thoughts and sensations are necessarily or analytically mental may be responsible for arguments against Rorty that are wide of the mark. See, e.g., Doppelt, [1976]: 531-32 and 535, and Carol Donovan, “Eliminative Materialism Reconsidered,” Canadian Journal of Philosophy 8, no. 2 (June 1978): 301-2. The conviction that thoughts and sensations cannot fail to be mental may also result in the conflation of the distinct versions of eliminative materialism Rorty propounds in “MBIPC” and “IMM.” William G. Lycan and George S. Pappas argue that “MBIPC” does not claim that it is a straightforwardly empirical matter than no sensations exist: See their “What Is Eliminative Materialism?” The Australasian Journal of Philosophy 50, no. 2 (August 1972): 54-55. But it is perhaps more plausible to construe “MBIPC” as arguing that, though it is a straightforward empirical truth that no sensations exist, the pragmatic status of the belief that none exist is strikingly and importantly different from the status of other, more ordinary beliefs that something does not exist. This pragmatic status would provide one crucial way in which Rorty’s view in that article diverges from the more standard reductive materialism of Smart and others.

13. See Donovan, “Eliminative Materialism Reconsidered,” passim, for a discussion of what empirical discoveries are necessary, on Rorty’s view (though the conditions she quotes [on p. 290] from “IMM” are offered by Rorty in connection not with materialism but with “a certain form of parallelism,” which he regards as closely resembling the identity thesis (“IMM,” p. 423)). Donovan may be right in urging (on pp. 296-99) that Feyerabend’s somewhat looser view of the requisite empirical discoveries is preferable to Rorty’s, but suitable adjustments in Rorty’s account would leave the central features of his argument intact. Also, David R. Hiley may be correct, in his sympathetic defense of Rorty’s position, in claiming that as a general matter Rorty believes it to be impossible to “provide criteria for evaluating the adequacy of alternative vocabularies” (“Is Eliminative Materialism Materialistic?” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 38, no. 3 [March 1978]: 336). But the alternative vocabulary Rorty envisages in
"IMM" varies only slightly from our own, and Rorty does state what would warrant the shift ("IMM," p. 421; cf. "MBIPC," p. 27, fn. 6).


16. So it is misleading to suggest, as Pappas does, that Rorty's discussion is an example of the sort of antimaterialist argument that claims materialism is incompatible, by way of the substitutivity of identity, with the incorrigibility of the mental ("Incorrigibility and Central-STATE Materialism," Philosophical Studies 29, no. 6 [June 1976]:456, fn. 5). Recent arguments by M. C. Bradley and Lycan have sought to refute the claims of such writers as Armstrong and Baier that materialism and incorrigibility are indeed incompatible. See Bradley, "Two Arguments Against the Identity Thesis," in Contemporary Philosophy in Australia, ed. Robert Brown and C. D. Rolls (London and New York, 1969), pp. 173-80; Lycan, "Materialism and Leibniz' Law," The Monist 56, no. 2 (April 1972), pp. 279-82; Baier, "Smart on Sensations," pp. 59-60 and 64-65; and Armstrong, A Materialist Theory of the Mind, pp. 100-103, and "Incorrigibility, Materialism and Causation," Philosophical Studies 30, no. 2 (August 1976):125-27. But Bradley's and Lycan's refutations bear on the traditional notion of incorrigibility, which implies truth (e.g., Bradley, p. 174, and Lycan, p. 277). So these arguments do not, as Pappas suggests, affect Rorty's position (Pappas, p. 456, fn. 5). But since the incorrigible reportability of mental states is, on Rorty's view, a matter of linguistic practice, such incorrigibility would not be incompatible with the identity of mental with neural events, even if the neural events failed, as such, to be incorrigibly reportable. But cf. n. 24 below.

17. Though Doppelt rightly stresses the pragmatic character of Rorty's views on these matters ([1976]:510 and [1978]:6), he goes on, somewhat surprisingly, to claim that "Rorty needs to distinguish 'almost-incorrigibility' as a practical attitude . . . from this concept as an epistemic attitude" ([1976]:515 and [1978]:10). Perhaps Doppelt maintains this because he regards "Rorty as a framework-pragmatist but not a case-pragmatist" ([1976]:510 and [1978]:6). This distinction, however, strongly echoes Carnap's between external and internal questions ("Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology," in Meaning and Necessity, enlarged ed. [Chicago, 1956], p. 206), and Rorty's avowed Quinean propensities (e.g., "IMM," p. 415) make it unlikely that he would regard either distinction as being tenable and unlikely, therefore, that Doppelt's use of his distinction accurately captures Rorty's position.

18. P. E. Meehl and Wilfrid Sellars' distinction between 'physical,' and 'physical,' corresponds roughly to the difference between the physical taken to be what contrasts with the mental and the physical construed as what contrasts with the biological, respectively. See their "The Concept of Emergence," vol. I in Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, ed. Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven (Minneapolis, 1956), p. 252.

19. Cf. Noam Chomsky's suggestion that the notion of a physical explanation gets progressively extended to cover any explanations that are scientifically satisfactory, even future explanations of the mental. Chomsky notes that this is an "uninteresting terminological" point (Language and Mind, enlarged ed. [New York, 1972], p. 98).

20. Such dispositions seem needed to cover such longer-range states as intentions, beliefs, desires, emotions, and the like. Rorty calls these sorts of states "mental features" and contrasts them with mental events, proper ("IMM," pp. 406-8), though he does not construe mental features as dispositions for mental events to occur. Rorty accords mental features only the qualified status of being able to be subjects of near-incorrigible reports (pp. 419-20). Moreover, he recognizes that momentary mental features "tend to collapse into" mental events (p. 420 though his words leave it unclear whether what is momentary is the mental states or their
propositional content). So he casts the event-feature distinction principally in terms of mental events', but not mental features', making "up the content of the stream of consciousness" (p. 407). It seems far from plausible, however, that reports of mental features are even nearly incorrigible. And since it also seems clear (though Rorty appears to deny this; see p. 407) that the occurrence of particular kinds of mental events is closely connected with having particular sorts of mental features, the incorrigibility of reports of mental features will undermine the incorrigibility Rorty claims for reports of mental events. (Doppelt has independently made this point. See [1976]:524-26 and [1978]:17-18.)

21.See, e.g., Sellars, Science, Perception and Reality (London and New York, 1963), chaps. 2 and 5; Lewis, "Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications"; and Sydney Shoemaker, "Functionalism and Qualia," Philosophical Studies 27, no. 5 (May 1975):291-315. David Coder distinguishes two "different and competing viewpoints on the concept of mind." According to one, what is essential to mental states is what "one gets . . . by abstracting from what one's consciousness reveals," whereas the other maintains that what is essential to such states are "the causal relations that, on the first viewpoint, mental states have [merely] contingently" ("The Fundamental Error of Central State Materialism," American Philosophical Quarterly 10, no. 4 [October 1973]:291). It is not clear, however, that one need regard these viewpoints as either competing or conflicting, for what is revealed in consciousness may turn out to be a matter of the causal relations that mental states bear to each other and to particular nonmental states.


25.In "MBIPC," discussing the putative infallibility of first-person reports of pains, Rorty maintains that such reports can be in error. Having argued that no helpful distinction exists between misnaming and misjudging as distinct sources of error in introspective reports of sensations (p. 45), Rorty urges that "the common-sense remark that first-person reports always will be a better source of information about the occurrence of pains than any other source borrows its plausibility from the fact that we normally do not raise questions about a man's ability to use the word 'pain' correctly" (p. 46). Rorty concludes that "if 'always be a better source of information' means 'will never be over-ridden on the sort of grounds on which presumed observational errors are over-ridden elsewhere in science,' then our common-sensical remark is probably false. If 'always be a better source of information' means merely 'can only be over-ridden on the basis of a charge of misnaming, and never on the basis of a charge of misjudging,' then our common-sensical remark turns out to depend on a distinction that is not, there" (p. 46). (Cf. the somewhat similar discussion in Parsons, "Mistaking Sensations," p. 207.) But in supposing that skills in counting sides apply to the phenomenal polygons of afterimages, Rorty must be assuming that the words used in reporting such afterimages are being applied correctly and, hence, that error arising from misnaming has been ruled out. It would be useful to know how Rorty would propose to distinguish the two sorts of error in the case under consideration.

26.Phrases like 'how such-and-such feels (looks, sounds)' and 'what it's like to be (see, hear) such-and-such' refer at once to particular phenomenal qualities and to the conscious awareness of them, thereby encouraging the conflation of these two components of experiences. But as long as we can distinguish these components, the distinction suggested here is not threatened.

27.This distinction has been central in the history of discussions of the mental and of the mind-body problem. Gareth B. Matthews has recently maintained, e.g., that the modern notion of consciousness, conceived as "the function of a self-transparent agent (the mind)," as well as "the problems of a Cartesian philosophy of mind . . . [both] arise from a rather deliberate decision by Descartes and his followers to conceive and talk about perception and thinking in a new way . . . " ("Consciousness and Life," Philosophy 52, no. 199 [January 1977]:23 and 26). Similarly, Freud, in talking about unconscious mental states, seems to some extent to have
regarded himself as having proposed a new way of thinking and talking about the mental.

Everyone—or almost everyone—was agreed that what is psychical really has a common quality in which its essence is expressed: namely the quality of being conscious . . . All that is conscious, they said, is psychical, and conversely all that is psychical is conscious: that is self-evident and to contradict it is nonsense. . . . Moreover the equation of what is mental with what is conscious had the unwelcome result of divorcing psychological processes from the general context of events in the universe and of setting them in complete contrast to all others. . . .


Freud did not think this view was original with him, however; see, e.g., p. 286.

28. It is not enough for this roughly contemporaneous thought just to be about one's own mental state; it must also be a thought that one is, oneself, in that mental state. For useful discussions of this sort of reference, see Hector-Neri Castaíeda, "On the Logic of Attributions of Self-Knowledge to Others," The Journal of Philosophy 65, no. 15 (August 8, 1968):439-56 and works cited therein, and G. E. M. Anscombe, "The First Person," in Mind and Language, ed. Samuel Guttenplan (Oxford, 1975), pp. 45-65.

29. For a particularly vivid account of this idea, see Zeno Vendler, Res Cogitans (Ithaca and London, 1972), pp. 190-94.


35. The foregoing six paragraphs and the last paragraph of this section summarize my argument in "Two Concepts of Consciousness," forthcoming.


37. See my "Mentality and Neutrality," sec. ii, for a discussion of this point.


42. Part of an earlier version of this paper, entitled "Against Eliminative Materialism," was presented at the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, December 29, 1975. I am grateful to Margaret Atherton, Richard E. Grandy, and Robert Schwartz for helpful comments on earlier drafts.