CONTENTS

PART I. BIZARRENESS AND DUBIETY 1

1 In Praise of Weirdness 3

2 Universal Bizarreness and Universal Dubiety 10

PART II. PECULIAR POSSIBILITIES 45

3 If Materialism Is True, the United States is Probably Conscious 47

4 1% Skepticism 72

5 Kant Meets Cyberpunk 101

PART III. THE SIZE OF THE UNIVERSE 123

6 Experimental Evidence for the Existence of an External World 125

   with Alan Tonnies Moore

7 Almost Everything You Do Causes Almost Everything (under Certain Not Wholly Implausible Assumptions); or, Infinite Puppetry 149

   with Jacob Barandes
PART IV. MORE PERPLEXITIES OF CONSCIOUSNESS 171

8 Consciousness, Innocent and Wonderful 173

9 The Loose Friendship of Visual Experience and Reality 189

10 Is There Something It's Like to Be a Garden Snail? Or, How Sparse or Abundant Is Consciousness in the Universe? 201

11 The Moral Status of Future Artificial Intelligence 229

12 Weirdness and Wonder 253

Appendix: Five More Objections to U.S. Consciousness 261

Acknowledgments 275

Notes 279

References 311

Index 347
PART I

Bizarreness and Dubiety
1

In Praise of Weirdness

The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go about, about:
Thrice to thine and thrice to mine
And thrice again, to make up nine.
Peace! the charm’s wound up.

—Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act I, Scene III

Weird often saveth
The undoomed hero if doughty his valor!

—Beowulf, X.14–15, Translated by J. Lesslie Hall

The word “weird” has deep roots in old English, originally as a noun for fate or magic, later evolving toward its present use as an adjective for the uncanny or peculiar. By the 1980s, it had fruited as the choicest middle-school insult against unstylish kids like me who spent their free time playing with figurines of wizards and listening to obscure science fiction radio shows. If the “normal” is the conventional, ordinary, and readily understood, the weird is what defies that.¹

The world is weird—deeply, pervasively so, weird to its core, or so I will argue in this book. Among the weirdest things about Earth is that
certain complex bags of mostly water can pause to reflect on the most
data. We can philosophize to the limits of our comprehension and peer into the fog beyond those limits. We can contemplate the foundations of reality, and the basis of our understanding of those foundations, and the necessary conditions of the basis of our understanding of those foundations, and so on, trying always to peer behind the next curtain, even with no clear method and no great hope of a satisfying end to the inquiry. In this respect, we vastly outgeek bluebirds and kangaroos and are rightly a source of amazement to ourselves.

I will argue that careful inquiry into fundamental questions about consciousness and cosmology reveals not a set of readily comprehensible answers but instead a complex blossoming of bizarre possibilities. These possibilities compete with one another, or combine in non-obvious ways. Philosophical and cosmological inquiry teaches us that something radically contrary to common sense must be true about the fundamental structures of the mind and the world, while leaving us poorly equipped to determine where exactly the truth lies among the various weird possibilities.

We needn’t feel disappointed by this outcome. The world is richer and more interesting for escaping our understanding. How boring it would be if everything made sense!

1. My Weird Thesis

Consider three huge questions: What is the fundamental structure of the cosmos? How does human consciousness fit into it? What should we value? What I will argue in this book—with emphasis on the first two questions but also sometimes touching on the third—is (1) the answers to these questions are currently beyond our capacity to know, and (2) we do nonetheless know at least this: Whatever the truth is, it’s weird. Careful reflection will reveal that every viable theory on these grand topics is both bizarre and dubious. In chapter 2 (“Universal Bizarreness and Universal Dubiety”), I will call this the Universal Bizarreness thesis and the Universal Dubiety thesis. Something that
seems almost too preposterous to believe must be true, but we lack the means to resolve which of the various preposterous-seeming options is in fact correct. If you’ve ever wondered why every wide-ranging, foundations-minded philosopher in the history of Earth has held bizarre metaphysical or cosmological views (I challenge you to find an exception!)—with each philosopher holding, seemingly, a different set of bizarre views—chapter 2 offers an explanation.

I will argue that every approach to cosmology and consciousness has implications that run strikingly contrary to mainstream “common sense” and that, partly in consequence, we ought to hold such theories only tentatively. Sometimes we can be justified in simply abandoning what we previously thought of as common sense, when we have firm scientific grounds for thinking otherwise; but questions of the sort I explore in this book test the limits of scientific inquiry. Concerning such matters, nothing is firm—neither common sense, nor science, nor any of our other epistemic tools. The nature and value of scientific inquiry itself rely on disputable assumptions about the fundamental structure of the mind and the world, as I discuss in chapters on skepticism (chapter 4), idealism (chapter 5), and whether the external world exists (chapter 6).

On a philosopher’s time scale—where a few decades ago is “recent” and a few decades from now is “soon”—we live in a time of change, with cosmological theories and theories of consciousness rising and receding in popularity based mainly on broad promise and what captures researchers’ imaginations. We ought not trust that the current range of mainstream theories will closely resemble the range in a hundred years, much less the actual truth.

2. Varieties of Cosmological Weirdness

To establish that the world is cosmologically weird, maybe all that is needed is relativity theory and quantum mechanics.

According to relativity theory, if your twin accelerates away from you at very high speed, then returns, much less time will have passed for the traveler than for you who stayed here on Earth—the so-called Twin
Paradox. According to the most straightforward interpretation of quantum mechanics, if you observe what we ordinarily consider to be a chance event, there’s also an equally real, equally existing version of you in another “world” who shares your past but for whom the event turned out differently.² (Or maybe your act of observation caused the event to turn out one way rather than the other, or maybe some other bizarre thing is true, depending on the correct interpretation of quantum mechanics, but it’s widely accepted that there are no non-bizarre interpretations.) So if you observe the chance decay of a uranium atom, for example, there’s another world branching off from this one, containing a counterpart of you who observes the atom not to have decayed. If we accept that view, then the cosmos contains a myriad of different, equally real worlds, each with different versions of you and your friends and everything you know, all splitting off from a common past.

I won’t dwell on those particular cosmological peculiarities, since they are familiar to academic readers and well handled elsewhere.³ However, some equally fundamental cosmological issues are typically addressed by philosophers rather than scientific cosmologists.

One is the possibility that the cosmos is nowhere near as large as we ordinarily assume—perhaps just you and your immediate environment (chapter 4) or perhaps even just your own mind and nothing else (chapter 6). Although these possibilities might appear unlikely, they are worth considering seriously, to assess how confident we ought to be in their falsity, and on what grounds. I will argue that it’s reasonable not to entirely dismiss such skeptical possibilities. Alternatively, and more in line with mainstream physical theory, the cosmos might be infinite, which brings its own train of bizarre consequences (chapter 7).

Another possibility is that we live inside a simulated reality or a pocket universe, embedded in a much larger structure about which we know virtually nothing (chapters 4 and 5). Yet another possibility is that our experience of three-dimensional spatiality is a product of our own minds that doesn’t reflect the underlying structure of reality (chapter 5) or that our sensory experience maps only loosely onto the underlying structure of reality (chapter 9).

Still another set of questions concerns the relationship of mind to cosmos. Is conscious experience abundant in the universe, or does it
require the delicate coordination of rare events (chapter 10)? Is consciousness purely a matter of having the right physical structure, or might it require something non-physical (chapter 2)? Under what conditions might a group of organisms give rise to group-level consciousness (chapter 3)? What would it take to build a conscious machine, if that is possible at all—and what should we do if we don’t know whether we have succeeded (chapter 11)?

In each of our heads there are about as many neurons as stars in our galaxy, and each neuron is arguably more structurally complex than any star system that does not contain life. There is as much complexity and mystery inside as out.

The repeated theme: In the most fundamental matters of consciousness and cosmology, neither common sense, nor early twenty-first-century empirical science, nor armchair philosophical theorizing is entirely trustworthy. The rational response is to distribute our credence across a wide range of bizarre options.

Each chapter is meant to be separately comprehensible. Please feel free to skip ahead, reading any subset of them in any order.

3. Philosophy That Closes versus Philosophy That Opens

You are reading a philosophy book—voluntarily, let’s suppose. Why? Some people read philosophy because they believe it reveals profound, fundamental truths about the way the world really is and the one right manner to live. Others like the beauty of grand philosophical systems. Still others like the clever back-and-forth of philosophical dispute. What I like most is none of these. I love philosophy best when it opens my mind—when it reveals ways the world could be, possible approaches to life, lenses through which I might see and value things around me, which I might not otherwise have considered.

Philosophy can aim to open or to close. Suppose you enter Philosophical Topic X imagining three viable, mutually exclusive possibilities, A, B, and C. The philosophy of closing aims to reduce the three to one. It aims to convince you that possibility A is correct and the others
wrong. If it succeeds, you know the truth about Topic X: A is the answer! In contrast, the philosophy of opening aims to add new possibilities to the mix—possibilities that you hadn’t considered before or had considered but too quickly dismissed. Instead of reducing three to one, three grows to maybe five, with new possibilities D and E. We can learn by addition as well as subtraction. We can learn that the range of viable possibilities is broader than we had assumed.

For me, the greatest philosophical thrill is realizing that something I’d long taken for granted might not be true, that some “obvious” apparent truth is in fact doubtable—not just abstractly and hypothetically doubtable, but really, seriously, in-my-gut doubtable. The ground shifts beneath me. Where I’d thought there would be floor, there is instead open space I hadn’t previously seen. My mind spins in new, unfamiliar directions. I wonder, and the world itself seems to glow with a new wondrousness. The cosmos expands, bigger with possibility, more complex, more unfathomable. I feel small and confused, but in a good way.

Let’s test the boundaries of the best current work in science and philosophy. Let’s launch ourselves at questions monstrously large and formidable. Let’s contemplate these questions carefully, with serious scholarly rigor, pushing against the edge of human knowledge. That is an intrinsically worthwhile activity, worth some of our time in a society generous enough to permit us such time, even if the answers elude us.

My middle-school self who used dice and thrift-shop costumes to imagine astronauts and wizards is now a middle-aged philosopher who uses twenty-first-century science and philosophy to imagine the shape of the cosmos and the magic of consciousness. Join me! If doughty our valor, mayhap the weird saveth us.
FIGURE 1.1
INDEX

abductive (explanationist) arguments, 15, 34, 129, 131, 134, 145–47, 294n15
abundance of consciousness.
See consciousness, abundance or sparseness of
afterlife, 19, 281n19, 283n63
aggregate intelligences. See Antarean antheads; group consciousness;
United States, as conscious entity
agnosticism, 96–97
Agrippan trilemma, 294n16
AI. See artificial intelligence
Albantakis, Larissa, 307n9
alien beings: and aggregate or spatially discontinuous intelligences, 49–56
(see also Antarean antheads; Sirian supersquids); Antarean antheads, 52–56, 266, 267, 271; and cognitive processing within vs. between subsystems, 268–69; compared to animals, 54–56; and group consciousness, 49–56, 267; and lack of common ground for theories, 224; and materialist views of consciousness, 48–56, 69, 70; moral standing of quasi-conscious aliens, 305n24; and nested consciousness, 63; and neurochauvinism, 69; and pain, 22–24, 56; probable existence in infinite universe, 156; and representational states, 271; and sense of taste, 104–5; and simulated reality, 77–78; Sirian supersquids, 49–52, 266, 285n12; and speed and synchrony of cognitive processing, 266; two-seater homunculus, 268–69
Allais, Lucy, 291n6
anesthesia by genocide, 25, 26, 27
animals: and associative learning, 207, 223–24, 302n44; compared to alien species, 54–56; and definition of consciousness, 183–84; and materialist views of consciousness, 48, 54–56, 59, 70; moral status of, 32–33, 233, 242, 249; and pain, 22; properties of consciousness argument about animal consciousness, 213; and scope of mentality issue in dualism, 29–30, 32; and scope of mentality issue in idealism, 33; slippery-slope argument about animal consciousness, 210–11; and solipsism, 128–29; and sparseness or abundance of consciousness, 67–68, 201–16 (see also snail); and species-specific knowledge about consciousness, 225–27; varied nervous systems of, 206, 301n5
Antarean antheads (hypothetical alien species), 52–56, 266, 267, 271
Anthropic Principle, 293n30, 296n6
anti-nesting principle, 261–65, 306n1, 306n6
Aplysia californica, 207, 223
Aristotle, 14
artificial intelligence (AI), 109–11, 229–252; “boxing” safety tests, 243–44; and debatable personhood, 229–230, 239–248; and existential debt, 235–36; fission-fusion
INDEX

artificial intelligence (continued)
monsters (AI systems that can split or combine at will), 251; and hedonic, rational, and eudaemonic features of entities, 242–43; and lack of common ground for theories, 224; large language model programs (ChatGPT, etc.), 231–32, 303n5; and moral issues, 229–230, 235–251, 305n24; near-future of humanlike AI, 230, 231–35; and necessary conditions for full personhood, 237–39; policy recommendations for creators of AI systems, 247–48, 305n31; and quasi-consciousness, 305n24; rights of AI systems, 229, 234–35, 239, 243–48, 303n1; risks of AI systems, 243–44; self-assessment by GPT-3, 304n15; subhuman, superhuman, or highly divergent AI systems, 230, 248–251; variety of possible substrates for, 115–16. See also sims

Asimov, Isaac, 109, 244
aspen forests, 55
associative learning, 207, 223–24, 302n44
atheism, 82, 96–97, 281n19
attention, 182–83, 218
auditory experiences, 74; and defining consciousness by example, 179–81; and empirical tests of radical solipsism, 141–42; and loose relationship between sensory experiences and reality, 200; and modal sparseness or abundance of experience, 217; and reactivity in dreamless sleep, 212

Barandes, Jacob, 123, 149, 169
beer can consciousness, 68–69
beer can pain, 23, 26, 27
Bentham, Jeremy, 237
Beowulf, 3
Berkeley, George, 30, 32, 39, 41, 79
Big Bang, 82–83, 119, 154–55, 168, 227
Big Crunch, 155
biology: alien biology (see alien beings); consciousness not necessarily requiring biological substrate, 57; examples of aggregate entities (corals, aspen forests, etc.), 55; fine-tuning of the universe for life, 43; and neurochauvinism, 68–69; U.S. viewed as a biological organism, 57–58. See also animals; brain; human beings; sensory experience; snail

Birch, Jonathan, 303n44
bizarreness: and “compromise/rejection” views, 33–34; and cosmology, 42–43 (see also infinitude); defined, 15–17; and dualism, 28–32; examples of bizarre, true things, 16, 149; and idealism, 32–33; and materialism, 18–28; and simple functionalism, 23–26; and transcendental idealism, 103; and virtual reality, 116. See also Universal Bizarreness thesis

Bizarros (future counterparts of you), 163–67
black holes, 152, 154
Block, Ned, 23, 36, 68–69, 178, 264
Blockheads (thought experiment), 285n12
Bloom, Paul, 281n19
Boltzmann, Ludwig, 81, 153
Boltzmann brain scenario, 81–83, 92, 154, 289n23, 296n13
Bostrom, Nick, 77–78, 80, 119, 243
Bourget, David, 281n19
brain: and anti-nesting principles, 306n11; Boltzmann brain scenario, 81–83, 92, 154, 289n23, 296n13; brain in a vat scenario, 57, 73, 79, 86, 118; and conditions for consciousness, 58–63; consciousness of split-brain subjects, 211; discontinuous or aggregate brains of hypothetical alien species, 49–56 (see also Antarean antheads; Sirian supersquids); of garden snail, 204–5; and pain, 22–24; scanning/uploading memories and cognitive patterns into virtual reality, 110; sims lacking biological brains, 109; specialness (or not) of, 58–63; speed and synchrony of cognitive processing, 266. See also cognitive processing; neurochauvinism; unconscious mind
Bronfman, Zohar, 223–24
Brooks, D. H. M., 308n24
Buddhism, 14, 32

calculation, and empirical test of radical
solipsism, 132–38
Carnap, Rudolf, 39
Carroll, Sean, 153
causation, 13, 14, 297n24; and cosmological
infinitude, 158–169, 257; cosmology and
backward causation, 42; and dualism,
28–30; and empirical tests of radical
solipsism, 141–43; and epiphenomenal-
ism, 29; and idealism, 33; and inadequate
definitions of consciousness, 177; and
materialism, 282n40; and transcendental
idealism, 118
Chalmer, David, 30, 294n15, 307n9; and
definition of consciousness, 178; as dualist
philosopher, 36; and Kant, 292n10; and
property dualism, 33; and simulated
reality, 79, 106, 119–120, 288n15; and
slippery-slope argument, 210–11; and
survey on atheism in philosophy depart-
ments, 281n19; and U.S. as a conscious
entity, 268–69; “zombies” thought
eperiment, 20–21
ChatGPT, 231, 303n5
chess, and empirical test of radical solipsism,
132, 143–46
Chinese nation or Chinese brain thought
eperiment, 68
Churchland, Patricia, 185
Church-Turing Thesis, 307–8n12
Cicero, 15–16
cognitive processing, 265–66, 268–69. See also
information processing
color: in dreams, 74; and inverted spectrum
cases, 300n5; and Jackson’s “Mary,” 20–21;
as a secondary quality, 104, 190–91,
292n8
common ground problem in theories of
consciousness, 221–25
common sense: Cicero on, 15–16; conse-
quences of mind-world theories defying
common sense, 21–24 (see also specific
metaphysical theories); cultural variability
of, 14; defined, 16; and definition of
bizarreness, 15–16; dualism broadly
supported by, 28; examples of bizarre,
true things, 16; and group consciousness,
27, 65; incoherence of, in matters of
metaphysics, 13, 30–31, 42; and lack of
common ground for theories of con-
sciousness, 222; and method of disanal-
ogy, 65; as poor guide to central issues
in the sciences, 19–20; as poor guide to
fundamental structures of the mind and
world, 4, 5, 65; and possible reasons for
bizarreness of metaphysics, 12–14; and
the U.S. as a conscious entity, 65
compliant world solipsism, 131
“compromise/rejection” theories of mind-
world relationship, 30, 33–34, 36, 72–100.
See also epiphenomenalism; neutral
monism; property dualism; skepticism; transcendental idealism
computers: artificial intelligence (see artifi-
cial intelligence); Church-Turing Thesis,
307–8n12; and cyberpunk movement in
science fiction, 103, 108–9; flexibility of
computational implementation, 114–16;
future of, 253; immaterial computation,
111–14; large language model programs
(ChatGPT, etc.), 231–32, 303n5, 304n15;
and prime number calculation test of
radical solipsism, 132–38; The Sims/SimCity
(computer game), 80, 109–10; simulated
reality and transcendental idealism, 103;
and simulated/virtual reality, 77–81, 106
(see also sims; simulated reality; virtual
reality); and temporality and causality, 118;
Turing machines, 111–14; variety of possible
substrates for, including non-material sub-
strates, 114–16; virtual reality in The Matrix,
105–6. See also machine consciousness
Confucius and Confucianism, 158, 225
consciousness: abundance or sparseness of (see consciousness, abundance or sparseness of); aspects of (see consciousness, aspects of/criteria for); and the brain, 58–63 (see also brain); conscious entities (see consciousness, entities potentially possessing); consciousness not necessarily requiring biological substrate, 57; consciousness question as possibly ill-defined, ambiguous, or incoherent, 34, 214–16; criteria indicating consciousness, 179–181 (see also consciousness, definitions); denying that consciousness exists, 66–67, 185; difficulty of definitively detecting consciousness, 41; distortions due to drugs, alcohol, and sleepiness, 32; and dreaming, 73–77 (see also dreams and dreaming); and dreamless sleep, 212; and enteric nervous system, 212; and functionalism, 22, 261–62; fundamental assumptions about consciousness and the external world, 10–11; fundamental questions about, 4; and Humphrey’s feedback loops, 21; and inadequacy of common sense, 5 (see also common sense); and Jackson’s “Mary,” 20–21; and Leibniz’s mills, 20–21, 70; and moral standing of AI systems, 235–39; and neurochauvinism, 67–69; properties of consciousness argument about animal consciousness, 213; and quantum mechanics, 42; and refrigerator light error, 217, 218; relation to the cosmos (see mind-world relationship; reality); scanning/uploading memories and cognitive patterns into virtual reality, 110; species-specific nature of evidence about, 203, 225–27; synonyms, 177; theories about (see consciousness, theories of); and virtual reality, 108–9 (see also simulated reality; virtual reality); and “zombies” of Kirk and Chalmers, 20–21. See also artificial intelligence; brain; introspection; phenomenal consciousness; self; the; sensory experience; sims; soul; unconscious mind; and following headings consciousness, abundance or sparseness of, 6–7, 41, 66–68, 201–28, 257; and animals, 67–68, 201–16; arguments for abundance, 209–11; arguments for spareness, 211–14; and consciousness question as possibly ill-defined, ambiguous, or incoherent, 214–16; entity spareness or entity abundance, 217; and initial assumptions made in theories of consciousness, 222–23; and lack of common ground for theories, 221–25; and modal spareness or modal abundance, 217–18; plausibility of answers about, 203, 209–16, 220–27; and properties of consciousness argument, 213; and refrigerator light error, 217, 218; and slippery-slope argument, 210–11; and species-specific evidence about consciousness, 225–27; state spareness or state abundance, 217; and types of phenomenally experienced properties, 219; unconscious activities (dreamless sleep, “flow” states, etc.), 217; consciousness, aspects of criteria for, 27, 65, 67–68, 179–181; attention, 182–83, 218; conscious imagery, 179–181; Crick’s 40-hertz oscillations, 21; emotion, 180–81; environmental responsiveness, 59, 60; goal-directed behavior, 60, 63; historical and environmental embedding, 59, 61, 63; information processing, 59, 60, 63–64 (see also information processing); luminosity and subjectivity of human consciousness, 213–14; pain perception, 22–24 (see also pain); representational capacity/self-representation, 61, 63, 270–72; self-awareness, 183, 217, 298n7; self-monitoring and self-regulation, 63; sense of agency, 183; sensory and somatic
experiences, 179, 181; sociality, 61; speed and synchrony of cognitive processing, 265–66

consciousness, definitions, 173–188, 298n7, 298n8, 298–99n11; and animals, 183–84; and assumptions about other people, 180–81; and attention, 182–83; contentious cases, 182–84; defining consciousness by example, 176–188, 298–99n11, 299n17; and dreaming, 180–81; and emotion, 180–81; and identity, 180–81; features of a good definition, 174–76; inadequate approaches, 176–78; Innocence conditions, 175, 178, 298n8, 299n16; negative examples, 178, 181, 299n17; and problematic assumptions, 185–88; risk of definition by example, 178, 299n17; and self-reports, 183, 299n15; and sensory and somatic experiences, 179, 184; and snail consciousness, 202; standard sense of consciousness, 173; and terminology mismatches, 173–74; wonderfulness condition, 175–76, 178, 184, 186

consciousness, entities potentially possessing: aggregate/group intelligences, 7, 27, 48, 53–56 (see also Antarean antheads; group consciousness; United States, as conscious entity); alien beings, 49–56 (see also alien beings); animals (see animals); artificial intelligence (AI), 229–252 (see also artificial intelligence); borderline cases, 215–16; garden snail, 201–16 (see also snail); machine consciousness (see machine consciousness); nested consciousness, 63, 261–65, 306n1; scope of mentality issue in dualism, 28–30; scope of mentality issue in idealism, 33; scope of mentality issue in materialism, 28n140; separate streams of consciousness within one organism, 211; sims, 109–11 (see also sims); slippery-slope argument about animal consciousness, 210–11; spatially discontinuous intelligences, 49–52, 55 (see also contiguism; Sirian supersquids); species-level consciousness, 308n15; U.S. as a conscious entity, 47–71 (see also United States, as conscious entity);

consciousness, theories of: author’s credence estimates for different theories, 283n66; dualist theories, 28–32 (see also dualism); higher-order theories, 213, 298n7, 309n26; idealist theories, 32–33 (see also idealism; transcendental idealism); Integrated Information Theory, 223, 262–64, 307n9; lack of common ground for theories, 221–25; lack of good empirical methods for investigating metaphysical ideas, 39–42; lack of grounds for favoring one theory over another, 228; materialist theories, 27, 47–71 (see also materialism); panspsychism, 33, 221, 223, 284n3, 299n17, 308n14; radically skeptical theories, 43, 72–100 (see also skepticism; solipsism); reliance of theories on introspection or verbal reports, 203; transcendental idealism, 101–21 (see also transcendental idealism);

conspiracy theories, 36

contiguism (prejudice against spatially discontinuous entities), 49, 52–56, 62

Copernican Principle, 151, 152, 168, 287n37, 296n6

Copernicus, Nicolaus, 16

corals, 55

Cornu aspersum, 205. See also snail

cosmology: and Anthropic Principle, 296n6; Big Bang, 82–83, 119, 154–55, 168, 227; and Copernican Principle, 151, 152, 168, 287n37, 296n6; cosmic inflation, 150–51; cosmic solipsism, 291n1; cosmological dubiety/doubt, 42–44, 103; cosmological infinitude and its implications, 149–169 (see also infinitude); cosmological skepticism, 81–84; and deities, 82–83, 97; and “fine tuning” of the universe for life, 43; fundamental questions about the
cosmology (continued)
cosmos, 4; and fundamental wildness of all theories, 18, 42–43; heat death of the universe and its aftermath, 152–55, 159–161, 163, 168; and inadequacy of common sense, 5; and limits of Mainstream Naturalism, 256–57; and materialism, 44; multiverse hypothesis, 6, 12, 17, 43, 279n5, 280n15; relation of the cosmos and the mind (see mind-world relationship); size of the observable universe, 123; skeptical possibilities about, 6, 43–44; topology of the universe, 150–51, 167, 296n4; and transcendental idealism, 119; weirdness of relativity theory and quantum mechanics, 5–6, 42–43. See also universe

Crick, Francis, 21
cyberpunk, and transcendental idealism, 103, 105–7

Darling, Kate, 234, 305n24
Darwin, Charles, 16
Dennett, Daniel, 56, 266–67, 293n123, 303n5
Descartes, René, 30–32, 112, 114, 126, 146, 292n20
Design Policy of the Excluded Middle, 247–48
DeWitt, Bryce, 280n15
Diaspora (Egan), 77
disagreement, skeptical arguments from, 35–39, 177, 221–25, 283n59, 283n61. See also common ground problem in theories of consciousness
disanalogy, method of, 63–65
disjunctive metaphysics. See under metaphysics
dogs: consciousness of, 210, 221, 222; moral standing of, 233, 242, 249
Domhoff, G. William, 287n3
Doomsday argument, 297n29
doubt: cosmological dubiety/doubt, 42–44, 103; and disagreement of experts, 35–39; and disjunctive metaphysics, 254–55; doubt about personhood of AI systems (see artificial intelligence; personhood); doubt about the existence of others, 97–100, 148 (see also solipsism); philosophical doubt, 255–56. See also skepticism; Universal Dubiety thesis
doxastic hallucination, 288n5
dreams and dreaming, 287n2, 287n3, 288n5, 288n8, 288n9; and definition of consciousness, 180–81; imagistic nature of dreaming, 74, 180, 287n2; and solipsism, 127–29, 145–46; subjective experience as possibly a dream, 73–77, 83–84, 88–90, 127–29, 145–46, 180–81
Dretske, Fred, 270–72, 308n21
dualism, 28–32; and causal powers issue, 28–30; as competitor to materialism and idealism, 19; contrast to transcendental idealism, 102; defined, 18; Descartes and, 31–32; and empirical tests, 39; and lack of coherent commonsense metaphysics of immateriality, 30–31; philosophers associated with, 30–32, 36; property dualism, 33; Reid and, 31; and scope of mentality issue, 28–30; substance dualism, 19, 28, 31, 33, 35, 39, 97, 102, 281n35. See also soul
“dubious” theories and propositions, defined, 16, 17. See also doubt; Universal Dubiety thesis

Egan, Greg, 77, 110, 115–16
Eigenlicht, 131–32
Einstein, Albert, 16
emotion, and definition of consciousness, 180–81
Emotional Alignment Design Policy for AI systems, 305n31
enteric nervous system, 212
entity spareness or entity abundance, 217
epiphénoménalisme, 29, 33, 39, 177
Estrada, Daniel, 305n24
eternal recurrence, 279n3, 297n28
Exclusion Postulate (Integrated Information Theory), 263, 264, 307n19
externalist reliabilism, 75
external world, proofs of existence, 125–148;
chess playing test, 132, 143–46; historical
attempts, 126–29; memory tests, 132,
138–143; predictions of radical solipsism
vs. external world hypothesis, 132–34, 138,
143, 146–47; prime number calculation
test, 132–38

faster-than-light communication, 25, 26
Feyerabend, Paul, 185
Fichte, J. G., 32
Fisher, John Martin, 94
flying, 88–93
Frankish, Keith, 185, 299n16
functionalism, 22–26, 261–62
galaxies, 151–55
Galileo Galilei, 295n1
garden snail. See snail
Garfield, Jay, 185
Garza, Mara, 235, 247, 305n31
Gibson, William, 105–6
Ginsburg, Simona, 223–24, 301n44
glasses, and visual experiences, 194–95
God/deities: agnosticism, 96–97; atheism,
82, 96–97, 281n19; and attempts to cure
radical solipsism, 126; and cosmology,
82–83, 97; and “fine tuning” of the universe,
43; God as a deceiver, 289n24; and
idealist approach to mind-world relation-
ship, 32, 79; and non-biologically based
consciousness, 57; and transcendental
idealism, 121
Goff, Philip, 30, 36
Gopnik, Alison, 238
Gott, J. Richard, III, 297n29
GPT-3, GPT-4, 231, 303n5, 304n15
Greco, John, 72
Greene, Brian, 156
group consciousness, 7, 48, 284n3, 285n18,
308n24; and aggregate intelligences, 53–54;
and anti-nesting principles, 261–65; and
common sense, 65; and hypothetical
alien species, 49–56, 267; and lack of
distinct boundary between individuals
and groups (corals, aspen forests, etc.),
55; and materialism, 27, 65; and spatially
discontinuous intelligences, 49–52, 55, 69;
as a theoretical wilderness, 64; United
States as a conscious entity, 27, 47–71,
261–273 (see also United States, as
conscious entity);

Harris, Charles, 198–99
Hawking, Stephen, 42
hearing. See auditory experiences
heat death of the universe, 152–53; aftermath
of, 153–55, 159–161, 163, 168
Hegel, G. W. F., 30, 32
Helix pomatia, 206
Hinduism, 32
hinge epistemology, 76, 82
Hobson, Allan, 75
Hoel, Erik, 307n9
homeostasis, and the U.S., 57
Huebner, Bryce, 308n24
human beings: bodies as empirical objects
in immersive spatial environment, 107;
consciousness of split-brain subjects, 211;
and cosmological infinitude, 156–58;
enteric nervous system, 212; future of
human species, 253; luminosity and
subjectivity of human consciousness,
213–14; and modal sparseness or abun-
dance of experience, 220; possibility that
we are radically mistaken about our
position in the cosmos, 43–45 (see also
skepticism); and species-specific
knowledge about consciousness, 203,
225–27; as symbiotic aggregates of
simpler entities, 54. See also brain;
sensory experience
Hume, David, 88, 126
Humphrey, Nicholas, 21
Hurley, Susan, 196
idealism, 32–33; and agnosticism, 97; bizarreoness and dubiety in idealist mind-world theories, 18, 32–33; and causal powers issue, 33; as competitor to materialism and dualism, 19; defined, 18; and deities, 32, 79; metaphysical idealism, 102; philosophers associated with, 32, 79; religious traditions associated with, 32; and scope of mentality issue, 33; and simplicity, 41; and simulated reality, 79. See also solipsism; transcendental idealism

imagery: and definition of consciousness, 179–181; imagistic nature of dreaming, 74, 180, 287n2

inference to the best explanation. See abductive (explanationist) arguments

infinitude, 149–169; and causation/infinite puppetry, 158–169; and existence of counterparts of almost everything and everyone, 155–58; and infinite sibling galaxies, 151–55, 161; infinite universe as reasonable default view, 150–51; and occurrence of all possible events, 155–58; and signaling between counterparts, 163–64

information processing: cognitive processing within vs. between subsystems, 268–69; computationally intractable amounts of information, 307n9; and criteria for consciousness, 59; and functionalism, 262; and modality width, 218–19; and objections to the idea of the U.S. as a conscious entity, 63–64, 262–63, 265–66, 268–69; and slippery-slope argument for abundance consciousness, 211; speed and synchrony of cognitive processing, 265–66. See also Integrated Information Theory

Innocence conditions, 298n8, 299n16

Integrated Information Theory (ITT), 223, 262–64, 307n9; Exclusion Postulate, 263, 264, 307n9

interactive immersive spatial environment, defined, 106

introspection, 134, 145, 295n25, 303n48; and AI systems, 238; and definition of consciousness, 183–84; reliance of theories on introspection or verbal reports, 203; and sensory experiences, 130, 193, 196–97; and solipsism, 129–130; and species-specific knowledge about consciousness, 221, 225–27; and U.S. as a conscious entity, 265, 272

inverted spectrum, 300n5

inverting lenses, 196–99

ITT. See Integrated Information Theory

Jablonka, Eva, 223, 301n44

Jackson, Frank, 20–21, 37

Johnson, Samuel, 39

Kammerer, François, 185, 270–71, 299n17, 306n2

Kant, Immanuel: compared with Chalmers, 119–120, 292n10; noumena, 14, 33, 111; and radical solipsism, 126, 146; and transcendental idealism, 33, 101–5, 119–120. See also transcendental idealism

Kepler, Johannes, 16

Kirk, Robert, 20–21

Koch, Christof, 307n9, 308n24

Kohler, Ivo, 196

Kripke, Saul, 283n60

language: large language model programs (ChatGPT, etc.), 231–32, 303n5, 304n15; and limits of philosophy, 34; and possible sparseness of consciousness, 67–68

learning, 207, 223–24, 302n44

Lee, Geoffrey, 305n24

Leibniz, G. W., 12, 13, 20, 30, 70

Lem, Stanisław, 294n20

lenses, inverting, 196–99

Lewis, David, 13, 22–24, 37, 279n5

life, and “fine tuning” of the universe, 43
Limax maximus, 207
Linde, Andre, 150
List, Christian, 307n9, 308n24
locality and nonlocality, 24–26
Locke, John, 300n2
loss aversion, 94–95, 290n39
Lowe, E. J., 282n35
luminosity and subjectivity of human consciousness, 213–14
Lycan, William G., 308n24

Macbeth (Shakespeare), 3
machine consciousness, 7, 57; Leibniz’s mill, 20–21, 70; and neurochauvinism, 68–69; and representational states, 270; and simulated reality, 77–78, 109–11 (see also simulated reality; virtual reality); variety of possible substrates for, 15–16. See also artificial intelligence; computers; robots; sims
madman skepticism, 84
mad pain and Martian pain (Lewis’s ideas), 22–24, 26
Mainstream Naturalism, 256–57
Mary, the colorblind scientist (thought experiment), 20–21
materialism, 18–28, 256–57; and anesthesia by genocide, 25, 26, 27; and beer can pain, 23, 26–27; bizarreess in materialist approaches to mind-world problem, 20–28 (see also specific topics under this heading); and causal powers issue, 282n40; and causation in infinite universe, 257; as competitor to idealism and dualism, 19; and cosmology, 44; and criteria for consciousness, 27, 59; defined, 18–19, 47, 291n2; and empirical tests, 39–41; explanation for consciousness, 62; and group consciousness, 27, 48 (see also United States, as conscious entity); and hypothetical alien species, 49–56; and Leibniz’s mills, 20–21, 70; limits of Mainstream Naturalism, 256–57; and machine consciousness, 57, 68–69 (see also machine consciousness);
“material” vs. “physical” terms, 280–81n18; and neurochauvinism, 23–24, 26, 67–69; and nonlocality in pain experience, 24–26; and pain, 22–28, 257; philosophers associated with, 30–32, 36; problems with materialism, 118–19, 256–57; reasons to expect bizarreess in materialist approaches to metaphysics of the mind, 19–20; and reductionism, 62, 286n27; and scope of mentality issue, 282n40; and simple functionalism, 22–26; transcendental idealism as alternative to, 102, 118–19; trilemma presented by, 26; universal vs. cosmic materialism, 280n17; and U.S. as a conscious entity, 27, 47–71, 257 (see also United States, as conscious entity);
The Matrix (1999 movie), 105–7, 292n10, 292n11
McGinn, Colin, 283n66
memory: and dreaming, 74; and empirical tests of radical solipsism, 130–32, 138–143, 147; and immaterial computation and Turing machines, 112–14; scanning/uploading memories and cognitive patterns into virtual reality, 110
metacognition, 213, 298n7
metaphysical idealism, 32–33, 39, 44, 79, 102
metaphysics: and abductive arguments, 15 (see also abductive [explanationist] arguments); author’s credence estimates for different theories, 283n66; bizarreess of, 21–24 (see also bizarreess; Universal Bizarreness thesis); and definition of consciousness, 175; disjunctive metaphysics, 254–55; and doubt as appropriate stance, 36–39 (see also Universal Dubiety thesis); and empirical tests, 39–42, 129–146; metaphysical questions as possibly ill-posed or incoherent, 34, 214–16; metaphysics of mind as theoretical wilderness, 17–18, 35, 64; and Occam’s razor, 39, 41; philosophers’ search for “commonsensical” metaphysics, 14–15;
metaphysics (continued)
reasons to expect bizarreness in
materialist approaches to metaphysics
of the mind, 19–20; and shortcomings of
common sense, 13, 30–31, 42; simplicity,
fecundity, explanatory power as theoretical
virtues of theories, 41. See also "compromise/rejection" theories of mind-world
relationship; dualism; idealism; material-
isim; skepticism; solipsism; transcenden-
tal idealism
Metaphysics (Aristotle), 14
Mill, John Stuart, 136, 237
mind-world relationship: bizarreness of
compromise/rejection views, 18–34;
bizarreness of dualist approach, 28–32;
bizarreness of idealist approach, 32–33;
bizarreness of materialist approach, 18–28
(see also United States, as conscious
entity); and empirical tests, 39–42,
129–146; fundamental assumptions
about consciousness and the external
world, 10–11; and lack of good empirical
methods for investigating metaphysical
ideas, 39–42; and McGinn's mysterian-
ism, 283n66; metaphysics of mind as a
theoretical wilderness, 17–18, 35, 64; and
neutral monism, 33; proofs of existence
of external world, 125–148; and property
dualism, 33. See also "compromise/rejec-
tion" theories of mind-world relation-
ship; dualism; idealism; materialism; skep-
ticism; solipsism; soul; transcendental
idealism
mirrors, 189–193, 300n2
modal realism, 279n15
modal spareness or modal abundance, 217
Montaigne, Michel de, 87, 100
Monton, Bradley, 290n39
Moore, Alan T., 123, 125, 138–146
Moore, G. E., 14, 126–27, 146
morality: and AI systems, 229–230, 233,
239–248; and causation in infinite
universe, 166; and Design Policy of the
Excluded Middle, 247–48; and doubt
about the existence of others, 97–100;
ethical assumptions for discussions of
moral standing of AI systems, 235–39;
and fission-fusion monsters (AI systems
that can fuse or combine), 251; full rights
dilemma for AI systems with debatable
personhood, 243–48; grounds for moral
standing, 237–39, 242, 305n24; and he-
donic, rational, and eudaimonic features
of entities, 242–43; moral dilemmas of
debatable AI personhood, 230, 243–48;
moral dilemmas of subhuman, superhu-
man, or highly divergent AI systems, 230,
248–251; moral status of animals, 32–33,
233, 242, 249; moral status of quasi-
conscious aliens, 305n24; necessary
conditions for full personhood, 237–39;
and personhood, 229–230; and
Utilitarianism, 237
Mori, Masahiro, 305n30
multiple veridicalities of sensory experiences,
191–93, 197–99, 300n5
multiverse/many worlds, 6, 12, 17, 43, 279n15,
280n15
Myers, Blake, 304n15
Nagel, Thomas, 202, 298n8
nations, viewed as biological organisms, 57–58
Naturalizing the Mind (Dretske), 270
Nemirow, Laurence, 37
nested consciousness, 63, 261–65, 306n1
neurochaunvisim, 23–24, 26, 67–69
Neuromancer (Gibson), 105–6
neurons, 28–29, 204–5
neutral monism, 33
Nicolausian discounting, 93–95, 290n39
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 12, 297n28
Noé, Alva, 196
nonlocality, 24–26, 264
non-skeptical realism, 85, 90, 94, 96, 100,
129, 148, 290n30, 295n29
normality, and pain experience, 24–25
noumena, 111, 118, 121

objects and entities: catalog of entities that exist, 13; and compromise/rejection views, 33; empirical objects in immersive spatial environments, 106–8, 117; and empirical tests of radical solipsism, 132–146; mind-dependent vs. mind-independent qualities, 190–91; properties of, and sensory perception, 119, 293n28; and solipsism, 127–29, 132–146; and spatial contiguity, 49 (see also contiguism); spatiotemporally coincident objects, 12; and transcendental idealism, 101–2, 104–5, 116–17; unperceived empirical objects, 108

Occam’s Razor, 39, 41

octopus, 301n5

Pacherie, Elisabeth, 308n24

pain, 22–23, 26, 262; and alien beings, 56; anesthesia by genocide, 25, 26, 27; and anti-nesting principles, 262; beer can pain, 23, 26, 27; and brain states, 22; and functionalism, 22–26, 261–62; mad pain and Martian pain (Lewis’s ideas), 22–24, 26; and materialism, 22–28, 257; and neural chauvinism, 23–24, 26; and nonlocality, 24–26

panpsychism, 33, 221, 223, 284n3, 299n17, 308n24

Penrose, Roger, 236

Permutation City (Egan), 115–16

personhood, 303n1; debatable personhood of AI systems, 229–230, 239–243; and ethical assumptions about AI systems, 236; and fission-fusion monsters (AI systems that can fuse or combine), 251; as moral concept, 229–230; moral dilemmas of debatable AI personhood, 243–48; necessary conditions for full personhood, 237–39

phenomena, distinguished from noumena, 111

phenomenal consciousness, 173, 178, 185, 214, 299n16

phenomenology, 47, 202. See also consciousness

philosophy: and childish weirdness, 259; common ground problem in theories of consciousness, 221–25; disagreements among philosophers, 35–39, 221–25; and disjunctive metaphysics, 254–55; failure of philosophers to develop non-bizarre metaphysical theories, 12, 18–35; neglect of transcendental idealism in modern discourse, 102; philosophical doubt, 255–56; philosophy that opens vs. philosophy that closes, 7–8, 254–55; secularism of recent philosophers, 281n19; value of, 8, 255–56

Pihlström, S., 294n16

Platonism about abstract entities, 12, 14

pocket universe, 6

Popper, Karl, 294n15

prime numbers, and empirical test of radical solipsism, 132–38

properties of consciousness argument, 213

property dualism, 33

proprioception, 199

protons, and panpsychism, 221

puppetry, infinite, 165–69

Putnam, Hilary, 22, 112, 261–62

qualia, 177, 307n9

quantum mechanics, 5–6, 17, 42–43, 154–55

quietism, 71

rabbit consciousness, 48, 54–55, 63–64, 66, 269

radical skepticism. See skepticism

radical solipsism. See solipsism

randomness, and solipsism, 131

realism: color realism, 300n5; and definitions of consciousness, 186; Lewis’s modal realism, 279n15; non-skeptical realism, 85, 90, 94, 96, 100, 129, 148, 290n30, 295n29
reality: all theories as ultimately defying common sense, 11–15 (see also common sense; Universal Bizarreness thesis; Universal Dubiety thesis); base level and simulated level of reality, 110–11, 117; boundaries of a reality, 108, 150, 292n11 (see also spatial manifolds); contrasted with universe and cosmos, 280n17; durability of, 120–21; fundamental assumptions about consciousness and the external world, 10–11; loose relationship between sensory experiences and reality, 189–200; mind-dependent vs. mind-independent qualities of objects, 190–91; multiverse/many worlds, 6, 12, 17, 43, 279n5, 280n15; and phenomena distinguished from noumena, 111; proofs of existence of external world, 125–148; simulated reality, 43, 77–81, 92 (see also simulated reality; virtual reality); and universal and cosmic materialism, 280n17; unknowable nature of underlying reality, 101–4, 117, 121 (see also transcendental idealism);
reduction/reductionism, 62, 104, 110–11, 286n27, 286n28
refrigerator light error, 217, 218
Reid, Thomas, 14, 30, 31
relativity theory, 5–6, 16, 43
religious beliefs, 281n19. See also atheism; God/deities representational states, 270–72
reproduction, by nations, 58
Revonsuo, Antti, 75
rights, and AI systems, 229, 230, 234–35, 239, 243–250, 303n1
robots, 109, 305n30; and debatable personhood, 240; moral standing of, 233, 305n24; and near-future of human-like AI, 231–33; people’s attachment to robots and chatbots, 234; responsiveness of toy robots, 212; rights for, 234–35; Robot Alpha case, 240, 243. See also artificial intelligence; machine consciousness; sims
Roelofs, Luke, 308n24
Rosen, Melanie, 75
Rosenthal, David M., 298n7
Russell, Bertrand, 33, 127–28, 295n30
Schechter, Elizabeth, 211
Schellenberg, Susanna, 301n13
Schelling, F. W. J., 32
Schlick, Moritz, 283n63
science: and childish weirdness, 258; common sense as poor guide to central issues in physics, biology, and cosmology, 19–20; and conversion of wild theories to merely bizarre theories, 16; and definition of consciousness, 175; disputable assumptions underlying, 5; empirical tests of radical solipsism, 129–146; and limits of Mainstream Naturalism, 256–57; scientific materialism, 256–57 (see also cosmology; materialism); and unknowable nature of underlying reality, in transcendental idealism, 102, 104. See also biology; cosmology
science fiction: cyberpunk and transcendental idealism, 103, 105–7, 109; and group consciousness, 284n3; and rights of AI systems, 244; scanning/uploading memories and cognitive patterns into virtual reality, 110; and substrates for virtual reality, 115–16
Scott, James C., 308n16
Searle, John, 23, 68–69, 178, 236
sea sponges, 55
secondary qualities, 291n6, 300n2. See also color; taste
Seeing Like a State (Scott), 308n16
self, the: and causation in infinite universe, 158–167; and cosmological infinitude, 157–58; and empirical tests of radical solipsism, 129–146; future counterparts, 163–167; and higher-order theories of
consciousness, 213; self-awareness, 183, 217, 298n7; and sense of agency, 183. See also consciousness; introspection; memory; sensory experience; sims; solipsism; soul sensory experience: correlation (or not) with underlying reality, 6, 189–200; and definition of consciousness, 179, 184; and dreaming, 74, 288n5; Eigenlicht and other uncontrollable experiences, 131–32; and empirical tests of radical solipsism, 130, 136; and Humphrey’s feedback loops, 21; and Jackson’s “Mary,” 20–21; and Leibniz’s mills, 20–21; and limitations of empirical science, 104; and materialism, 20–21, 119; and modality width, 218–19; and modal sparseness or modal abundance, 217–18; and moral standing of AI systems, 238; multiple veridicalities of, 191–93, 197–99, 300n5; as possibly inadequate for giving rise to consciousness, 213; sensory reactivity within dreamless sleep, 212; and separate streams of experience within one organism, 211; and snails, 209; and spatiality and transcendental idealism, 104–5; and transcendental idealism, 104–5, 116–17; unconscious influence of, 181; unperceived empirical objects, 108; and “zombies” of Kirk and Chalmers, 20–21. See also auditory experiences; pain; smell, sense of; taste; touch, sense of; visual experiences

Sextus Empiricus, 72
Shakespeare, William, 3

shape, as quality of objects, 190–91

Siewert, Charles, 178

simple functionalism, 22–26

simplicity of theories, appeals to, 39, 41, 128

sims (artificial intelligences within a shared virtual reality), 109–11; being a short-term sim, 79, 90, 95, 120, 288n15; and phenomena distinguished from noumena, 111

*The Sims/SimCity* (computer game), 80, 109–10

simulated reality, 6, 77–81, 83–84, 92, 288n15, 289n18, 293n23; and agnosticism, 97; base level and simulated level of reality, 110–11; boundaries of a reality, 108; definition of virtual reality, 106; and empirical objects, 106–7; and idealism, 79; and immaterial computation and Turing machines, 111–14; and Kantian or quasi-Kantian transcendental idealism, 101–21; large vs. small or unstable simulations, 79–81; and observable universe, 168; and phenomena distinguished from noumena, 111; plausibility of possibility that we live in simulated reality, 80–81, 119; and radical skepticism, 79–80; random simulation, 120–21; short-term simulations, 120–21; and spatial manifolds, 107; toy simulation, 120; and transcendental idealism, 117; virtual reality in *The Matrix*, 105–6

Sirian supersquids (hypothetical alien species), 49–52, 266, 267, 285n12

size, as quality of objects, 190–91

skepticism: 1% skepticism, 72–100, 103; 289n23 (see also specific topics under this heading); and agnosticism, 96–97; Boltzmann brain scenario, 81–83, 92, 289n23; brain in a vat scenario, 57, 73, 79, 86, 118; consciousness as a fictitious concept (nobody is conscious), 66–67, 185; and cosmology, 6, 81–84, 97; definition and examples of radically skeptical scenarios, 84–85; disregarding extremely remote possibilities, 93–95; and doubt about the existence of others, 97–100 (see also solipsism); and dreaming, 73–77, 83–84, 88–90, 288n8; estimates of likelihood of radical scenarios, 72–73, 76–77, 81, 83, 85–86; “evil deceiver” skepticism, 294n15; explanationist grounds for counterarguments, 294n15; and fear, 95–96; Hume and, 126; implications for psychology and real life behavior, 88–100, 290n39; and madman doubt, 84;
skepticism (continued)

and pocket universe, 6; and priorities, 90–93; and radical solipsism, 125–26, 147 (see also solipsism); and simulated reality, 6, 43, 77–81, 83–84, 92; skepticism as potentially self-defeating, 86–88; and transcendental idealism, 103, 119–121; wildcard skepticism, 83–84. See also non-skeptical realism

Skepticism and Naturalism (Strawson), 14

sleep, 206, 212, 217, 307n9. See also dreams and dreaming

slippery-slope argument about animal consciousness, 210–11

Smart, J. J. C., 22, 39, 41

smell, sense of, 202, 205

Smith, David Livingstone, 305n30

snail, 201–16, 220–27; analysis of possible answers to question of snail consciousness, 203, 209–16, 220–27; and consciousness question as possibly ill-defined, ambiguous, or incoherent, 214–16; and dimensions of sparseness or abundance of consciousness, 220; learning by snails, 206–7, 302n44; overview of possible answers to question of snail consciousness, 202–4; snail behavior, 205–9, 301n12; snail brains, 204–5; snail senses, 205–6, 209, 301n12; and species-specific knowledge about consciousness, 226–27

solipsism, 32, 125–148, 257, 294n15, 294n16; assumptions underlying empirical tests, 130–33; and chess playing test, 132, 143–46; compliant world solipsism, 131; cosmic solipsism, 291n1; and Eigenlicht experience, 131–32; empirical tests of radical solipsism, 129–148; historical attempts to disprove/cure radical solipsism, 126–29; and memory tests, 132, 138–143; predictions of radical solipsism, 132, 140–47; and prime number calculation test, 132–38; and proofs of existence of an external world, 125–148; radical solipsism defined, 125; and randomness and uncontrollability in experiences, 131–32; and simplicity, 41; and the unconscious mind, 135, 136, 143, 145, 146; and unrecognized patterns in relationships among experiences, 136–37

soul: Cartesian soul, 112, 114, 117, 118; and causal powers issue, 28–32; and distortions of consciousness due to drugs, alcohol, and sleepiness, 32; and dualism, 19, 28–32; and epiphrenomenalism, 29, 39; and idealism, 19, 32; and immaterial computation and Turing machines, 111–14, 292n20; and scope of mentality issue, 29–30, 32; and transcendental idealism, 118; vegetative soul, 31, 282n38; and virtual reality, 115–17. See also consciousness, entities potentially possessing sparseness of consciousness. See consciousness, abundance or sparseness of spatial continuity or discontinuity, and group consciousness, 49–52, 55, 69

spatiality: closed vs. open topology of the universe, 150–51, 167, 296n4; and infinite sibling galaxies, 152; shape as a feature of things as they are in themselves, 190–91, 291n1; and the soul, 117; and transcendental idealism, 101–5, 117, 190; and virtual reality, 106, 117. See also objects and entities spatial manifolds, 105, 107, 108, 110, 111, 115, 116, 292n11

spiritual exercises, 96

stars, and heat death of the universe, 152

Star Trek, 77, 109

state sparseness or state abundance, 217

Stoicism, 96

Stratton, George, 195, 198–99

Strawson, P. F., 14, 280n10

subjectivity, 298n8; luminosity and subjectivity of human consciousness, 213–14. See also self, the

substance dualism, 19, 28, 31, 33, 35, 39, 97, 102, 281n35. See also dualism

supersquids. See Sirian supersquids

supervenience, 2.4–25, 111
Swampman (thought experiment), 61, 281n32
symmetry, and extremely remote possibilities, 93, 95
taste, 104–5, 179, 191
Taylor, James, 196
Tegmark, Max, 150, 156
theoretical wilderness, 17–18, 35, 64
theoretical wildness, 16, 17
Thomas, Nigel J. T., 287n2
Thompson, Evan, 88
time: and infinite sibling galaxies, 152; and nonlocality in pain experience, 24–26; and transcendental idealism, 118. See also causation; infinitude
Tononi, Giulio, 262–64, 306n6, 307n9, 308n24
touch, sense of, 74, 199, 205–6; and modal sparseness or abundance of experience, 218; and reactivity in dreamless sleep, 212
transcendental idealism, 43–44, 101–21, 291n6; as alternative to materialism, 102, 118–19; and Cartesian souls, 118; as compromise/rejection view of mind-world relationship, 33, 102; contrast to materialism, substance dualism, and metaphysical idealism, 102; and cosmological doubt, 103; and cosmology, 119; and cyberpunk movement in science fiction, 103, 105–7, 109; and empirical objects, 101–2, 104–5; and immaterial computation and Turing machines, 111–14; and loose relationship between visual experiences and reality, 190; neglect of, in current discourse, 102; and phenomena distinguished from noumena, 111; plausibility of, 118–19; and simulated/virtual reality, 103, 117; and skepticism, 103, 119–121; and spatiality, 101–5, 117; and temporality and causality, 118; theses described, 101–2; and Universal Bizarreness thesis, 103; and Universal Dubiety thesis, 103; and unknowable nature of underlying reality, 101–4, 117, 121
The Truman Show (1998 film), 246
Turing machines, 111–14; and immaterial computation, 111–14, 292n20; requirements for, 112; variety of possible substrates for, 115–16
Twin Paradox, 5–6, 16
two-seater homunculus, 268–69
unconscious mind: and empirical tests of radical solipsism, 135, 136, 143, 145, 146; and sensory experiences, 181; unconscious activities (dreamless sleep, “flow” states, etc.), 217
United States, as conscious entity, 27, 47–71; and anti-nesting principle, 261–65, 306n1, 306n6; and cognitive processing within vs. between subsystems, 268–69; and computationally intractable amount of information, 307n9; counterarguments, 63–71, 261–273, 306n2, 306n6 (see also specific issues under this heading); and higher-order models of consciousness, 309n26; materialist criteria for consciousness apparently met by the U.S., 59–63, 69–70; and possibility of aggregate or spatially discontinuous intelligences, 49–56, 69–70; and possibility of non-biologically based intelligences, 58–59; possible resolutions of issue, 70–71; and radically different structure from human beings, 266–67; and representational states, 270–72; and slow or asynchronous cognitive processing, 265–66; statement of argument, 48, 59; U.S. viewed as biological organism, 57–58
Universal Bizarreness thesis, 4–5, 21–35, 283n66; and compromise/rejection theories, 35–36; definition of “bizarreness,” 15–16; definition of “wild” theories, 16; and dualism, 28–32; and idealism, 32–33; and lack of common ground for theories, 224; and materialism, 18–28; and metaphysics, 21–24, 34–35 (see also specific metaphysical theories under this heading); statement of thesis, 34–35; theoretical wildness, 16–17; and transcendental idealism, 103
Universal Dubiety thesis, 4–5, 18, 34–44, 283n66; and cosmological dubiety, 42–44; and disagreement of experts, 35–39; and lack of common ground for theories, 224; and lack of good empirical methods for investigating metaphysical ideas, 39–42; and limited human perspective, 44; statement of thesis, 35; and transcendental idealism, 103

universe: and Anthropic Principle, 296n6; Big Bang, 82–83, 119, 154–55, 168, 227; Big Crunch, 155; contrasted with reality and cosmos, 280n17; and Copernican Principle, 151, 152, 168; heat death and its aftermath, 152–55, 159–161, 163, 168; infinite universe and its implications, 149–169 (see also infinitude); observable universe, 150, 151; and sparseness or abundance of consciousness, 201–28; topology of, 150–51, 167, 296n4. See also cosmology

Utilitarianism, 237

Valberg, J. J., 288n8

Vilenkin, Alex, 150, 156

virtual reality (computer-generated simulated reality): boundaries of a reality, 108; defined, 106; durability and stability of, 120–21; and empirical objects, 106–8; and immaterial computation and Turing machines, 111–14; and phenomena distinguished from noumena, 111; and sims (artificial intelligences), 109–11; The Sims (computer game), 109–10; and spatial manifolds, 107; and transcendental idealism, 117; underlying structure as undiscoverable from within the virtual reality, 108, 117; and uploading memories and cognitive patterns from biological brains, 110; variety of possible substrates for, 114–16. See also simulated reality

visual experiences: anti-representationalist view, 301n13; and definition of consciousness, 181; and dreaming, 74; Eigenlicht experience, 131–32; flatness of, per Locke, 300n2; and glasses, 195; and half-submerged oar, 195; inverted spectrum thought experiment, 300n5; and inverting lenses, 196–99; loose relationship between visual experiences and reality, 189–200; and materialism, 20–21; and mirrors, 189–193, 300n2; and multiple veridicalities of sensory experiences, 191–93, 197–99, 300n5; and reactivity in dreamless sleep, 212; and snails, 205–6, 209; and types of phenomenally experienced properties, 219

Vogel, Jonathan, 294n15

wakefulness, confidence in, 73–81

Wasan Selection Task, 185n14

weirdness: benefits of childish weirdness, 258–59; bizarre, 15–17; defined, 3; “dubious” theories and propositions, 16, 17; and fundamental questions about the cosmos and the mind, 4–5; as intrinsic to all theories about the mind and the cosmos, 4–5; taxonomy of, 17; theoretical wilderness, 17–18, 35, 64; theoretical wildness, 16–17. See also bizarre,ness; Universal Bizarreness thesis; Universal Dubiety thesis

Williams, Bernard, 94

Windt, Jennifer, 75, 287n2

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 14–15, 71, 125, 127

wonderfulness, and definition of consciousness, 175–76, 178, 184, 186

world, external: fundamental assumptions about consciousness and the external world, 10–11; proofs of existence, 125–148. See also cosmology; mind-world relationship; objects and entities; reality; specific metaphysical theories

Zhuangzi, 100

zombies, 20–21