COMMENTS*

WITH much of Ziff's interesting paper I have no quarrel. The identity theory, no doubt, is not compelling, and, while I don't share Ziff's disapproval of our "unfortunate" mentalistic conceptual scheme, this is for present purposes of little moment. More important is that Ziff seems, so far as I understand him, to give the traditional problem of other minds too short shrift. What he says on this head, however, is compressed and aphoristic; his arguments are sometimes merely adumbrated; I am by no means confident that I have grasped them. Hence my comments are a request for more light rather than a settled criticism.

"Do I know whether others have minds? and, if so, how do I?" The answer, says Ziff, is easy, the hypothesis that only he has a mind being nowadays preposterous. Why so? Ziff has two arguments. First, the hypothesis that only he (or I) has a mind is "futile"; for if I (or he) alone have a mind, then there must be some further relevant difference between me (or my body) and others: but no such differences can be found. And secondly, he says, there is much confirming evidence for our "conceptual scheme," a conjunction of hypotheses one conjunct of which is that I am not unique in having a mind: so then this evidence confirms that conjunct.

But with respect to what is the hypothesis that only I have a mind futile? And what is the relevant evidence that confirms our conceptual scheme? Suppose we say my total evidence is a set of propositions of which p is a member if either I know p to be true and p is merely about my own mind or physical objects (including human and animal bodies) and their behavior, or p is a logical consequence of such propositions. (A necessary but not sufficient condition of p's being merely about my own mind or physical objects is that it not entail the existence of mental states not my own.) Part of the problem of other minds, then, is the question whether we can show that it is more likely than not, on my total evidence, that I am not unique in having a mind.

Thus armed, let us return to Ziff's argument. Why must there be a relevant factor differentiating me or my body from others if only I have a mind? Couldn't there be a body like mine

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in the respects Ziff mentions but differing from it in being unminded? Couldn't I (or my body) have a mindless double? No, says Ziff, and he gives an argument for his conclusion. But just what is Ziff concluding? That it is inconceivable or logically impossible that I have a mindless double? This seems pretty clearly false, and the argument Ziff provides does not support it. That on what we all know to be true it is wildly improbable that I have a mindless double? This is doubtless so, but irrelevant to Ziff's further concerns. So the claim must be that on my total evidence it is vastly unlikely (or anyhow unlikely) that I have a mindless double. Why so? The essential premise seems to be

(A) If I had a mindless double, I would be unable to provide a sound (i.e., coherent, complete, and simple) theory explaining this fact.

But is (A) true? Despite Ziff's disarming disclaimer, it is no easy matter to explain simplicity, coherence, and completeness as applied to theories of the sort under consideration: consider the following "theory." There are just two minds, mine and Descartes' Evil Genius. The latter takes perverse pleasure in practical jokes of cosmic dimensions and has created me expressly to deceive me. He has also created a considerable array of mindless human bodies (among them my mindless double) that behave in pretty much the way one might expect minded human bodies to behave. He repeats this charade every seventy years or so with a different victim.

Does this "theory" explain the facts? Is it sufficiently coherent, simple, and complete? It is surely coherent; and it seems as simple as the theory that, for each of these bodies, there is a mind. As for completeness, no doubt suitable supplementary hypotheses can be adjoined to it. In short, I see no reason, or no very good reason, for thinking (A) true.

But suppose we concede this conclusion; suppose we grant that my total evidence contains or confirms the proposition that, if I alone have a mind, then I (or my body) must be unique in some further relevant respect. How does it follow that, on my total evidence, it is unlikely that I am unique in having a mind? I am unique in various further respects; no one else has these finger prints, and only in my body do I, e.g., feel pain. And of many of the properties that distinguish me from others I cannot divest myself. It is no part of my total evidence that these properties are causally irrelevant to having a mind: how then am I to discover that they are? Accordingly, I find Ziff's first argument inconclusive.

Arguing, secondly, that on my total evidence the theory that others have minds is very probable, Ziff points out that this theory is one conjunct of a conjunction of hypotheses constituting what he calls a "conceptual scheme." Various conjuncts of this scheme, moreover, are confirmed by various parts of my evidence: which parts therefore confirm the entire scheme and each of its conjuncts. But the structure of this argument is not easy to discern. Possibly the suggestion is that this conceptual scheme is confirmed by any proposition confirming any conjunct of it, on the grounds that a conjunction is confirmed by any proposition that confirms any of its conjuncts; and possibly it is suggested that any proposition confirming the scheme confirms every conjunct of it, on the grounds that a proposition confirms the logical consequences of any proposition it confirms. But these two principles lead to trouble, entailing as they do that, if a proposition confirms any proposition, it confirms every proposi-Hence I do not know how the second argument is to be construed.

A crucial question here is this: can we show that no conceptual scheme inconsistent with the one we adopt is as probable as the latter on our total evidence? I do not say this cannot be shown; but I do not see how to show it.

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ZIFF'S OTHER MINDS *

In the first part of his paper Mr. Ziff is concerned to show the "futility" of the hypothesis that he (or anyone) is unique in having a mind. He does this by pressing the point that it could not be the case that the only relevant difference between himself (or anyone) and another is that he has a mind and the other does not. Ziff claims that the futility of the uniqueness hypothesis "provides important support for the counterthesis that others too have minds," but he does not explain how this is so. Certainly it would not be conceded by anyone who believes, as does the skeptic about other minds, that the hypothesis that others have

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