

Consciousness #1



NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF THE MIND

research project 2015-2017



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



John
Templeton
Foundation

newdirectionsproject.com

New directions in the study of the mind

- A project based in Cambridge, supported by the John Templeton Foundation
- Investigating non-physicalist, non-reductionist approaches to the mind
- In particular: consciousness and intentionality

This seminar

- 2015-16: 20-week seminar on non-physicalist, non-reductionist perspectives on consciousness
- 2016-17: 20-week seminar on non-physicalist, non-reductionist perspectives on intentionality
- For part II philosophy students, philosophy graduate students (MPhil & PhD) and any member of the University

Prospectus 2015-16

Michaelmas term 2015: Themes

1. Preliminaries: physicalism, reductionism
2. Conceptions of consciousness
3. The history of phenomenal consciousness:
sense-data, the given, qualia etc.
4. Phenomenal consciousness without qualia

Physicalism etc.

- Materialism
- Physicalism
- Naturalism
- Reductionism

Materialism

- Everything is material/matter
- Democritus, Epicurus, Lucretius
- Gassendi, Hobbes

Physicalism: origins

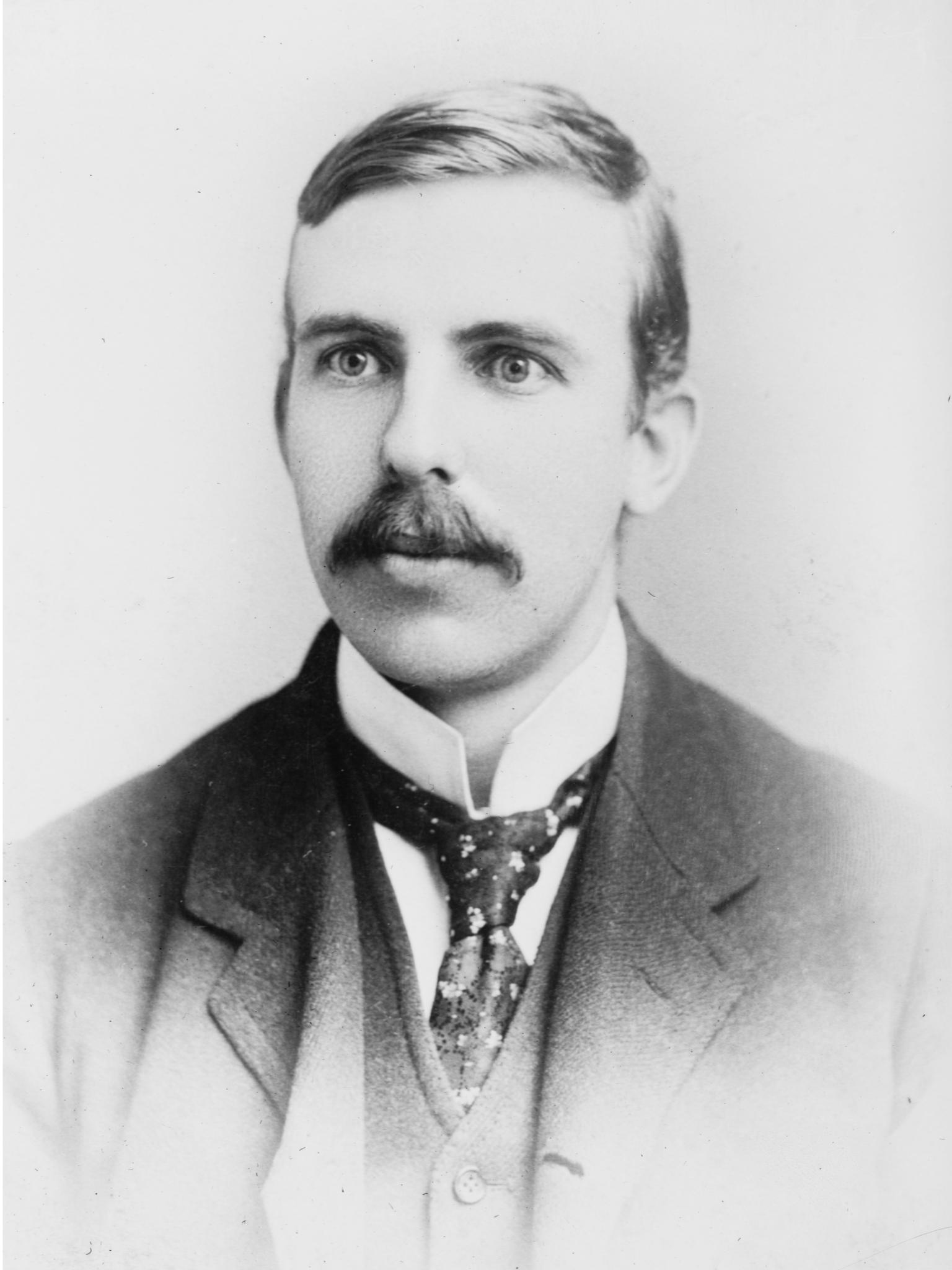
- Logical positivism
- Otto Neurath ‘Physicalism: the philosophy of the Vienna Circle’ (1931)
- Rudolf Carnap ‘Psychology in physical language’ (1932)
- Thesis about the language of science

Physicalism as an ontological thesis

- ‘Everything is physical’?

Rutherford

“There is physics; and there is stamp-collecting”



Two questions

1. What does ‘everything’ mean?
2. What does ‘physical’ mean?

‘Everything’

- Every object/particular/substance?
- Everything whatsoever (including every property, relation, fact etc.)

Stoljar's two conceptions of the physical

- The theory conception: subject-matter of physics
- The object conception: paradigm physical objects

Daniel Stoljar, ‘Physicalism’ *SEP*

Hempel's dilemma (1969)

- Suppose physicalism = the doctrine that everything is physical
- Either ‘physical’ refers to current physics, and so physicalism is false
- Or ‘physical’ refers to some as-yet-undescribed future physics, and so physicalism is virtually trivial

What about the stamp-collecting?

- Weaker forms of physicalism
- Supervenience versions of physicalism
- David Lewis, ‘New Work for a Theory of Universals’ (1983); Frank Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics* (1998)

Physicalism as a contingent thesis

- Worlds, duplicates, physical duplicates
- **Not:** any two worlds which are physical duplicates are duplicates
- Physicalism is a contingent thesis

What would God have to do to create *this* world?



Lewis & Jackson

- Any world which is a (minimal) physical duplicate of this world is a duplicate *simpliciter*
- This is the thesis of supervenience physicalism

The definition of physicalism

- Doesn't appeal to what is fundamental, or to essence, or to explanation
- Does appeal to the idea of 'the physical'

Physicalism etc.

- ~~Materialism~~
- ~~Physicalism~~
- Naturalism
- Reductionism

What about the mind?

- The traditional mind-body question
- Mental and material ‘substances’

Substance

- Subjects of predication
- Natural unities
- Capable of independent existence

Substance

Cartesian substances are capable of independent existence

(NB Cartesian souls are not ‘made of mental stuff’)



Hence today's formulation of the mind-body problem

- A zombie is a physical duplicate of one of us who is not conscious
- Physicalism implies zombies are impossible
- Dualism implies zombies are possible