Response to Gene Witmer's Commentary
Barbara Gail Montero

Gene Witmer is shocked that I think we need an argument to show that physicalism must imply that mental properties cannot be over and above physical properties. I'm not surprised by this. Witmer, like most, just understands physicalism as entailing a supervenience thesis. I think it is worthwhile, however, to ask why it should, and I take the primary value of my paper as merely posing this question.

However, seeing as how I did go on a bit after posing this question in the title, let me say a few words about the rest of the paper. Witmer's comments have helped me to see a number of places where I ought to have been clearer. What do I mean by the broadly physical? In general, I mean for the phrase to apply to anything that would not count as falsifying physicalism. What exactly this is, is an open question, but I am trying to argue that nonsupervenient mental phenomena could fall into this category. What exactly is the relation between the broadly and the narrowly physical? I take this to be an open question as well, however, I think that we can at least say this much: if something is broadly physical then it cannot be uniquely nonsupervenient upon the narrowly physical (say, the posits of physics).

I seem, however, to have botched my statement of what I see as a core physicalist commitment. When I said that physicalism implies the rejection of the idea that "in order to set the universe in motion, God created not only fundamental physics, but also mentality," Witmer, reasonably enough, takes this to mean that physicalism implies the rejection of God's special creation of the mental beyond her creation of the fundamental physical, which sounds pretty much like supervenience. What I should have said is that physicalism implies the rejection of the idea that God created a fundamental physics from which everything else followed save for the mental, which had to be created separately. This, I think alleviates the unhappy tension Witmer mentions.

Am I convinced that the rejection of fundamental mentality is essential to the physicalist claim? No, actually, I'm not. (I used to be. But that was just because I was, like everyone, riding the supervenience wave!) As long as the mental (and perhaps the normative) is neither the only fundamental aspect of the world, nor the only fundamental aspect apart from the (nonmental) fundamental entities and properties of physics, perhaps physicalism can still stand.

However, because I merely hint at rather than actually argue for this in the paper, I offered some suggestions for how physicalist might still take physics (or the nonmental) as more fundamental than the mental while rejecting RS style supervenience theses. And this is where, as Witmer rightly points out, I should have been more careful in my talking about composition. I should have said that if supervenience fails to weave together mind and body, the *via negativa-ists* can, if they so desire, maintain that nonmental things are more fundamental than mental things since mental and nonmental things both eventually decompose into nonmental things, which are either fundamental or decompose only into other nonmental things. Is this claim about composition a sufficient condition for physicalism? No, as Witmer points out, it isn't. Nor, as he states, is the claim that everything has some physical aspect. But it was not my intention to give a sufficient condition for physicalism here, but, rather, merely to satisfy the physicalist's desire to see physics (or the nonmental) as fundamental.

As for the thought experiment, I was happy to read that Witmer feels the pull of the intuition, but unhappy to hear his analysis of this pull. Of course, I can't know what is going on in the dungeons of my mind. The thought experiment, as I intend it, should help us better

understand what we take to be broadly physical, and given that we would still count chemical bonding as broadly physical even if it does not supervene on the entities and properties of physics, it should lead us to conclude that the broadly physical can include such nonsupervenient phenomena.

Witmer concludes by suggesting that our best arguments for physicalism aim to show that "(5) All actual facts are either (narrowly) physical or nothing over and above the narrowly physical," where the narrowly physical is understood as the entities, properties laws and relations of physics. This may be, but it doesn't mean that (5) is a necessary condition for physicalism. And—as will surprise no one—I still think that it is not.