

Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W
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Russell Marcus

Class #17 - The Mind

Business

- Paper exchanges
- Philosophy Courses

Reductions and Mind

- A reduction is an explanation in simpler or more fundamental terms.
- Personal identity:
 - a reductive theory of the self
 - an argument for why such a reduction is impossible
- Philosophy of mind: What are minds and mental states?
- Is the mind merely the thing that thinks?
- How are minds related to bodies?
- Are minds explicable in physical terms, as behaviors or brains?
- Is a mind the software of the brain?
- What is consciousness, and how do conscious states relate to other mental states?
- We want a reduction of mental states or an explanation of why no such reduction is possible.

Mind and Identity

similarities in form and content

- Descartes: the self is the mind is the soul.
 - ▶ Substantial view of the self
- The body theory and biological theory are substantial theories.
- Locke's theory is not a substantial view.
 - ▶ The self is not a thing, or substance, but a connection among mental states.
 - ▶ Pris or Rachael could be Tyrell's niece without being the same thing (body or soul) as her.



Locke, Reid and Consciousness

- memory theory and consciousness theory
 - ▶ Locke seems to think of memory as a kind of consciousness.
 - ▶ Memory is like storage for conscious experiences.
- Reid: a memory of an experience is not like the conscious experience itself.
 - ▶ “Mr. Locke attributes to consciousness the conviction we have of our past actions, as if a man may now be conscious of what he did twenty years ago. It is impossible to understand the meaning of this, unless by consciousness be meant memory, the only faculty by which we have an immediate knowledge of our past actions. Sometimes, in popular discourse, a man says he is conscious that he did such a thing, meaning that he distinctly remembers that he did it... But this ought to be avoided in philosophy, otherwise we confound the different powers of the mind, and ascribe to one what really belongs to another. If a man can be conscious of what he did twenty years or twenty minutes ago, there is no use for memory, nor ought we allow that there is any such faculty. The faculties of consciousness and memory are chiefly distinguished by this, that the first is an immediate knowledge of the present, the second an immediate knowledge of the past” (Reid 347).
- If there is a self, and if we are not going to take it as a brute fact, then we need to have a more subtle understanding of the nature of mental states, of conscious experience.

Two Kinds of Mental States

Phenomenal and Intentional



- The first approach focuses on consciousness.
 - ▶ sensations
 - ▶ portions of emotions
 - the dog barking in the yard
 - the smell of garlic
 - the blue sky
 - a tickling sensation
 - my joy, or my anger, or my anxiety, or my appreciation
 - my belief that it is sunny or my belief that the tangent to a circle meets a radius of that circle at right angles
- Descartes: all mental states are conscious and the only conscious things are minds.
 - ▶ But there seem to be unconscious mental states.
 - ▶ emotions, feelings, or attitudes
 - ▶ non-occurrent beliefs
 - That I love my children
 - That the square root of two is irrational

Intentional States

- Intentions have some content, are about something, represent.
- Propositional attitudes
 - relations between people and a proposition
 - A proposition is a mind- and language-independent fact.
 - that snow is white
 - that $2+2=4$
 - that I will eat lasagne for dinner.
 - I can believe that snow is white or desire that I will eat lasagne for dinner.
- As well as having intentions, we attribute them to other people.
- It is an open question whether all mental states are of one kind or another, or whether conscious experience and intentionality are two different kinds of mental states.

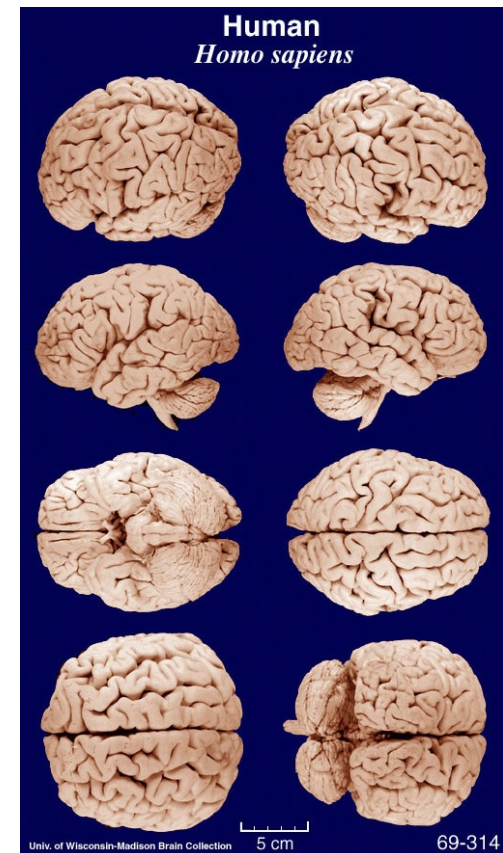
From Dualism to Materialism

- Until the twentieth century, few philosophers took the possibility of a physical theory of mind seriously.
- Over the last century, philosophers of mind developed a variety of theories attempting to accommodate a materialist framework.
- We will look at four distinct theories of mind.
 - dualism
 - behaviorism
 - identity theory
 - functionalism
- At the end, we will look specifically at the problem of consciousness.

Two Problems of Consciousness

an easy problem and a hard problem

- The so-called easy problem involves determining the functions of the brain.
 - ▶ Neuroscience is essential
 - ▶ perceptual systems
 - ▶ attention spans
 - ▶ phenomena like staring
 - ▶ An understanding of the brain, and the rest of the body.



The Hard Problem of Consciousness

- The hard problem is to explain the connection between brains and conscious awareness.
 - ▶ The neural correlates of consciousness does not suffice for explaining what it is to be conscious.
 - ▶ Consciousness involves experience, rather than function.
- We don't know whether cognitive neuroscience can tell us anything, or everything, about who we are.
 - ▶ It seems obvious that a complete description of our bodies, especially our brains, will suffice to explain our minds, and thus who we are.
 - ▶ But the nature of conscious awareness seems to resist physical explanation.

Locke on the Hard Problem

That the size, figure, and motion of one body should cause a change in the size, figure, and motion of another body is not beyond our conception. The separation of the parts of one body upon the intrusion of another and the change from rest to motion upon impulse, these and the like seem to have some *connection* one with another. And if we knew these primary qualities of bodies, we might have reason to hope we might be able to know a great deal more of these operations of them one upon another. But our minds not being able to discover any *connection* between these primary qualities of bodies and the sensations that are produced in us by them, we can never be able to establish certain and undoubted rules of the consequence or *coexistence* of any secondary qualities, though we could discover the size, figure, or motion of those invisible parts which immediately produce them. We are so far from knowing what figure, size, or motion of parts produce a yellow color, a sweet taste, or a sharp sound that we can by no means conceive how any *size, figure, or motion* of any particles can possibly produce in us the *idea* of any *color, taste, or sound* whatsoever; there is no conceivable *connection* between the one and the other (*Essay IV.III.13*).

Can Machines Think?

- If we had physical explanations of consciousness, then in theory we could construct machines that think.
 - ▶ Not just by procreating
- Machine Abilities
 - ▶ menial tasks
 - ▶ chess
 - ▶ Jeopardy
 - ▶ poetry
 - ▶ art
- But the idea that a physical machine could think is uncomfortable, for many of us.
 - ▶ “Not until a machine can write a sonnet or compose a concerto because of thoughts and emotions felt, and not by the chance fall of symbols, could we agree that machine equals brain, that is, not only write it but know that it had written it. No mechanism could feel (and not merely signal, an easy contrivance) pleasure at its successes, grief when its valves fuse, be warmed by flattery, be made miserable by its mistakes, be charmed by sex, be angry or depressed when it cannot get what it wants” (in Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” *Mind*, 1950).

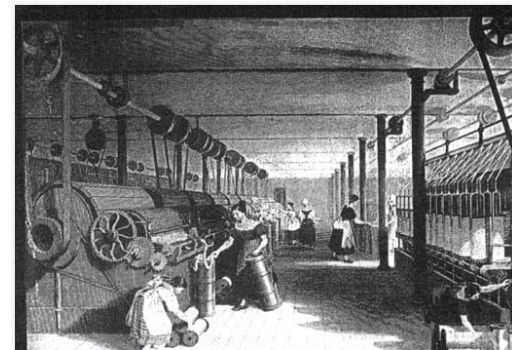


Distinguishing Persons from Mere Machines

- Standard View
 - ▶ The abilities of machines to perform even complicated tasks are due to our intelligence, our minds, and not their own.
 - ▶ Machines can only do what we tell them to do.
 - ▶ Plausible?
- Lister's claim
 - ▶ Not: we can distinguish ourselves by what we do or make.
 - ▶ Real intelligence involves internal processes that cause those behaviors or products.

Internal Processes

- Internal processes of machines may be unobservable.
- We can see levers and dials and circuits.
 - Leibniz's Mill
 - “*Perception*, and what depends on it, *is inexplicable in terms of mechanical reasons*, that is, through shapes and motions...When inspecting its interior, we will only find parts that push one another, and we will never find anything to explain a perception” (M17, AW 276b).
- What would it mean to see the intelligence of a machine?
- How does one see a mind?
- How do we see the intelligence of another person?
- Inferring the existence of other minds



Replicants

- Are replicants persons?
- The moral conundrum
 - Are they persons or mere machines?
 - May Deckard kill the replicants?
- Appearance?
- Memories?
- Consciousness?
 - Are replicants producing their behaviors as a result of conscious, inner experience, or as a result of the “chance fall of symbols.”
 - Do they have minds?
 - What is a mind?



Materialism and Replicants

- If replicants are persons, then we can conclude that machines are able to think, that mental states are reducible to physical states.
- Eliminative materialists believe that our ordinary language will be abandoned in the future for a more precise language about our brains and bodies.
- “Paul feels pain differently than he used to: when he cuts himself shaving now he feels not “pain” but something more complicated—first the sharp, superficial A-delta-fibre pain, and then, a couple of seconds later, the sickening, deeper feeling of C-fibre pain that lingers. The new words, far from being reductive or dry, have enhanced his sensations, he feels, as an oenophile’s complex vocabulary enhances the taste of wine... One afternoon recently, Pat burst in the door, having come straight from a frustrating faculty meeting. “She said, ‘Paul, don’t speak to me, my serotonin levels have hit bottom, my brain is awash in glucocorticoids, my blood vessels are full of adrenaline, and if it weren’t for my endogenous opiates I’d have driven the car into a tree on the way home. My dopamine levels need lifting. Pour me a Chardonnay, and I’ll be down in a minute.’” (The *New Yorker* profile of the Churchlands, February 12, 2007).

Blade Runner and This Course

- The question of whether the replicants in *Blade Runner* are persons will guide the rest of the course.
- First, we will look at the nature of mental states and conscious experience.
- Then, we will look at the moral question of what makes a person.
- A large part of the answer to that question involves the nature of consciousness.

Liberals, Chauvinists, Solipsists

- Liberal view of minds
 - ▶ minds are just information processors
 - ▶ Defenders of artificial intelligence
 - ▶ “Saying Deep Blue doesn’t really think about chess is like saying an airplane doesn’t really fly because it doesn’t flap its wings” (Drew McDermott).
- Chauvinistic view
 - ▶ only humans have minds
- Solipsism
 - ▶ An even narrower view
 - ▶ I have good reasons only to believe that I have a mind.

Do Animals Have Mental States?

- Smart Chimps
- Painting Elephant
- What we say about the nature of mental states will be general.
- It will apply to all sorts of things: humans, robots, aliens, and animals.