

# Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W  
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Class #19 - Intro to Behaviorism  
Skinner, from *Science and Human Behavior*  
Hempel, "The Logical Analysis of Psychology"  
Locke, "On the Inverted Spectrum"

# Descartes's Main Argument for Dualism

MB1. I have a clear and distinct understanding of my mind, independent of my body.

MB2. I have a clear and distinct understanding of my body, independent of my mind.

MB3. Whatever I can clearly and distinctly conceive of as separate, can be separated by God, and so are really distinct.

MBC. So, my mind is distinct from my body

# In the Spirit of Arnauld's Objection

- AO

AO1. I have a clear and distinct understanding of Clark Kent, as someone who can not fly.

AO2. I have a clear and distinct understanding of Superman, as someone who can fly.

AO3. Whatever I can clearly and distinctly conceive of as separate, can be separated by God, and so are really distinct.

AOC. So, Clark Kent is not Superman.

- The conclusion of SC is clearly false.
- But, the form of SC is the same as the form of MB.



# Descartes's First Response

Distinguish between substances and attributes

- Descartes claims to have understanding of two complete substances.
- Arnauld presents one substance (a triangle) and one property (that the Pythagorean theorem holds of it).
- Still, Arnauld can hold that Descartes is claiming that the mind, a substance, lacks any bodily properties.
- So, this distinction will not help Descartes.

# Descartes's Second Response

We can understand that a triangle is right-angled without understanding that the Pythagorean theorem holds, but we can not understand that the Pythagorean theorem holds without understanding that the triangle is right-angled.

- Descartes's claim seems false.
- The Pythagorean theorem is just a general case of a more general theorem, the Law of Cosines.
  - In any triangle ABC,  $c^2 = a^2 + b^2 - 2ab \cos C$ .
- Let's say that we are given the measurements of three sides of a right triangle (e.g. 5, 12, and 13) and told to solve for the measure of angle C.
- We could notice that the three terms other terms drop out, that  $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$ , leaving  $\cos C = 0$ .
- So the Pythagorean theorem holds.
- Then, we derive that C is a right angle.
- But, before we do so, we need not recognize that fact.

# Descartes's Third Response

- In Arnauld's case, we don't have a clear and distinct understanding of the triangle/Clark Kent.
- But we can know, just by introspection, that the body is inessential to the mind, since I can understand, in some special way, the mind, without the body.
- Arnauld's point is that we must wonder if the way that we know the mind is insufficient to rule out an essential link to the body.
- Descartes believes that our knowledge of the mind is complete, so that his argument for the mind/body distinction succeeds.
- Arnauld wonders if our knowledge of the mind is incomplete.

# The Problem of Interaction

- The main problem with the Cartesian theory of mind
- Our bodies affect our minds; our minds affect our bodies.
- Why does the mind get drunk when the body does the drinking?
- If they are independent substances, it is hard to see how they could do so.
- Ryle: “theoretical shuttlecocks” transfer information from one domain to the other.
- Monism is motivated mainly by the problem of interaction.

# The Pineal Gland



- Descartes claimed that interactions between the mind and body take place in the pineal gland.
  - the seat of the soul
- This does not solve the problem of interaction.
- It merely locates the problem.
- Contrast with a chip in our brains.
- If the controller is no kind of physical object, it is difficult to see how it could have any effects on physical objects.

# Materialism

- Some early modern philosophers (e.g. Hobbes and Gassendi) denied the existence of a non-physical mind.
- But their accounts of thought were far too thin to be plausible.
  - Hobbes thought that memory was explained in terms of inert particles stimulated by experience and continuing to move in the brain.
- It is natural to think that motions in the brain (neural firings, say) cause our conscious experience.
- It is far less-plausible to assert that conscious states are just motions of particles.
  - Motion is not color.
  - Sound is not the motion of air.
- Still, pressure increasingly mounted against the Cartesian view through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

# Psychology, Philosophy, and Introspection

- Cartesian dualism and the view of consciousness as definitive of the mental dominated philosophical thought about the mind through the nineteenth century.
- Kant agreed with in many ways with Descartes
  - that the ability to reason distinguished humans from other animals
  - that minds were different in kind from bodies
  - that our understanding of ourselves must be rooted in our conscious experience.
- Psychology declared its independence from philosophy in the late nineteenth century.
- The methods of the early psychologists relied almost exclusively on introspection.
- Freud, Adler, Jung, and William James all agree with the Cartesian view.
  - We have privileged access to our mental states.
  - We can know about our own minds best by reflection.
  - The only way to know about the minds of others is by their reports of their own mental states.

# The End of Cartesian Dualism

- Developments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries started to erode the Cartesian view.
- The problem of interaction and the ghost in the machine.
- The increasing importance of unconscious mental states to psychological explanation eroded the Cartesian notion that the essence of mental states is their consciousness.
  - ▶ “The evidence adduced recently by Freud seems to show that there exist channels tributary to this stream, which run hidden from their owner. People are actuated by impulses the existence of which they vigorously disavow; some of their thoughts differ from the thoughts which they acknowledge; and some of the actions which they think they will to perform they do not really will. They are thoroughly gulled by some of their own hypocrisies and they successfully ignore facts about their mental lives which on the official theory ought to be patent to them. Holders of the official theory tend, however, to maintain that anyhow in normal circumstances a person must be directly and authentically seized of the present state and workings of his own mind” (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p 14).
- Darwin’s work showed that humans were contiguous with other animals.
  - ▶ no different in kind
  - ▶ more advanced faculties
  - ▶ Our ability to reason can be explained according to evolutionary principles.

# Introspection and Science

- More threatening to introspective psychology and its Cartesian roots is that there is no way to test or verify what some one says about their own mental states.
- Memories may be largely reconstructed.
- Our reports of our own conscious thoughts are highly influenced by suggestion and context.
- Proper scientific treatment of mental states requires greater objectivity than the Cartesian view seems to allow.
- Scientists demand observational access to data and replicability of phenomena.

# Behaviorism: The First Physicalist Theory of Mind

- A variety of sources
  - ▶ logical empiricists
  - ▶ psychological behaviorists
  - ▶ linguistic philosophers
- The logical empiricists (e.g. Hempel) and the psychological behaviorists (e.g. Skinner) were united in their desire to dispense with metaphysical speculation in favor of concrete, observable scientific evidence.
- The linguistic philosophers (e.g. Ryle and Wittgenstein) agreed with the logical empiricists and the psychological behaviorists that appeals to obscure internal processes were dispensable, and that we should explain behavior in terms of what is observable.

# Three Problems with Dualism

## A Summary

1. The problem of mind/body interaction
2. The usefulness of positing unconscious mental states
3. The lack of third-person observational access