

Materialism

The Nature of Mind

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- While science is not the be all end all of truth it is one of the only disciplines where intellectual consensus is regularly met and radical ideas can become widely accepted doctrine in a relatively short time. Therefore when considering the nature of mind from another aspect such as philosophically, science must be taken into account when positing new ideas
- The current scientific consensus is that the workings of the mind and body are all based of physico-chemical reactions of the central nervous system
- Armstrong's goal is to put forth thoughts on the nature of mind that does not contradict this modern scientific consensus

Behaviorism

- Properties of glass
- Disposition to behave in a certain way
- Armstrong rejects the idea of the mind as a reactor to external forces or events because while this is sufficient from an outside point of view it does not take into account our own consciousness and thoughts which occur *concurrently* to outside events
- Behavior is logically tied to thoughts and mental processes but is not the same
- The mind does not just react, or have a propensity to behave, rather it has states which cause certain behavior to manifest

- Armstrong puts forth that if a scientist were to consider the brittleness of a glass they may conclude that the brittleness is due to the molecular structure and bonds that make up the glass
- This however is not a disposition as behaviorists say but is rather a state of the glass
- The assertion that objects, specifically the mind, have states means that they do not just react to external actions but rather the *cause* of behavior and action under given circumstances
- Armstrong uses this logic to define mental states as a state of the person apt for producing certain ranges of behavior

- Armstrong then reconciles this definition of mental states with the idea of consciousness
- While his definition of mental states works for experiences outside the body, consciousness is not simply a mental state apt to bring about behavior
- Example of driving for long distances and “zoning out”
- Obviously the man was aware of the road however some level of consciousness was missing
- This leads him to the assumption that consciousness is simply the perception or awareness of one’s own state of mind
- Capacity is similar to mental states in that while it may not manifest itself it can be used selectively if the actor is moved to do so

- The driver was aware of the road otherwise he would have crashed his car, however he was not aware of his own awareness of the road
- This awareness of ones own mind gives man the ability to discriminate between different mental states
- His mind can react, even physiologically, to outside forces and actions but what behaviorism was missing was that the mind also is able to monitor and react to itself
- Behavior is not a reaction but rather an expression of awareness
- By perceiving our own mental states we are able to we may selectively behave towards the way our mind reacts
- Armstrong acknowledges he does not prove materialism but rather provides a philosophy of mind that is not contradictory