

Philosophy of Mind



Introduction to the Mind-Body Problem

Two Motivations for Dualism

- ❖ External

 - ❖ Theism

- ❖ Internal

 - ❖ The nature of mind is such that it has no home in the natural world.

Mind and its Place in Nature

- ❖ 'A society of minds is not a big mind, but a system of bodies (such as the solar system) is just a big body.' (C. D. Broad, *The Mind and its Place in Nature*, p. 32)

Two Problems

- ❖ What is such that it is both mental and physical?
- ❖ How is the mental causally efficacious?

What is such that it is both mental and physical?

❖ Short Answer:

❖ We are.

❖ Long Answer:

❖ Whatever is such that it may serve as a subject to disparate categories of properties with seemingly incompatible realization requirements.

Property Taxonomies

- ❖ Consider the property of being even (ϕ).
 - ❖ This is evidently a mathematical property.
 - ❖ Necessarily, if x is ϕ then x is a number.
- ❖ Consider the property of metabolizing (ψ).
 - ❖ This is evidently a biological property.
 - ❖ Necessarily, if x is ψ , then x is a living being.

Disparate Categories, Incompatible Demands

❖ A simple argument:

1. If x is ϕ , then x is a number.

2. If x is ψ , then x is alive.

3. Necessarily, nothing is such that it is both a number and is alive.

4. Hence, there is no x such that $(\phi x$ and $\psi x)$.

❖ If we grant (3) (and let us), then we are compelled to assent to (4).

❖ Is this a problem?

❖ No, this is not a problem: we freely recognize disparate property bases.

Mental and Physical Properties: a Contrast

- ❖ The physical:
 - ❖ Not privileged to any subject (amenable to third-person access)
 - ❖ Subject to public confirmation
 - ❖ Quantitative without remainder
- ❖ The mental:
 - ❖ Epistemic
 - ❖ Authoritative
 - ❖ Privileged Access (known non-inferentially by their subjects alone)
 - ❖ Metaphysical
 - ❖ Qualitative: both locally and then again globally
 - ❖ Intentional

Forcing the Contrast

1. Mental properties have the property of being introspectively accessible to their bearers alone (ψ).
2. No physical property has ψ .
3. LL (or, the indiscernibility of identicals).
4. Hence, no mental property is a physical property.

A Consequence?

- ❖ If x is a physical system, then x has all and only physical properties.
- ❖ If ϕ is a physical property and ψ is a mental property, then ϕ is not identical with ψ .
- ❖ Hence, if x is a physical system, then x has no mental properties.

A Problem?

- ❖ Well, so far, we may accept that there are bearers of mental properties and bearers of physical properties.
 - ❖ That is not a problem.
- ❖ We may further accept that the bearers of mental and physical properties are disjoint.
 - ❖ That is not a problem.
- ❖ Yet (recall the easy response): we are committed to the view that we are the bearers of both mental and physical properties.
 - ❖ That is a problem.

A Mind-Body Problem

- ❖ We seem committed to the view that mental and physical properties require different sorts of subjects.
- ❖ We seem equally committed to the view that we are ourselves subjects to both sorts of properties.
- ❖ Hence the problem: we think that mental properties must be borne by physical subjects (to wit, ourselves) and yet we cannot regard them as able to be borne by such subjects. Thus we are, and cannot be, the subjects of mental states.
- ❖ N.b.: This is not a problem for your average theist: she actively believes that mental subjects and physical subjects are not only discrete, but necessarily so.

The Identity Thesis

- ❖ The Identity Thesis: every mental state is identical with some physical state.
- ❖ E.g., every pain state is identical with some neural state; every thought is identical with some neural state; and so on.
- ❖ In some sense, IT seems simple and natural.
 - ❖ Why doubt it?

One Solution to this Mind-Body Problem

- ❖ Dualism: Properly speaking, there is no single subject of mental and physical properties.
- ❖ Minds (souls) are subjects of mental properties.
- ❖ Bodies are subjects of physical properties.

An Argument for Dualism

❖ The Modal Argument:

1. It is possible that someone could be in physical state ϕ (say, being in neural state N^{237}) without being in mental state ψ (say, being in pain).
2. If (1), then ϕ is not identical with ψ .
3. So, ϕ is not identical with ψ .

Gertler's Version

1. I can conceive of myself as experiencing *this very pain* while possessing no physical features at all.
2. If (1), then, possibly, *this very pain* could occur in a disembodied being.
3. So, possibly, *this very pain* could occur in a disembodied being.
4. If *this very pain* were identical to a physical state, then it would not be possible that *this very pain* could occur in a disembodied being.
5. So, *this very pain* is not identical to any physical state.
 - ❖ It follows, then, that the IT is false.
 - ❖ It also follows, then, that some version of dualism is true.

Descartes' Version

1. I can doubt that my body exists. (That is, more clumsily: my body has the property of being able to be doubted by me as to whether it exists.)
2. I cannot doubt that I exist. (That is, again more clumsily: I lack the property of being able to be doubted by me as to whether I exist.)
3. LL
4. So, I am not identical with my body.

A Modal Cartesian Version

1. It is possible that my body does not exist. (I can imagine that my body does not exist; there is at any rate no contradiction in my doing so.)
2. It is not possible that I do not exist. (I cannot imagine that I do not exist; there is something self-undermining about the proposition 'I do not exist.')
3. LL
4. So, I am not identical to my body.

Reductive Physicalism

- ❖ An Argument from Carruthers (*RR*, 328):
 1. Some conscious states and events are causally necessary for the occurrence of some physical ones.
 2. In a completed neuro-physiological science there will be no need to advert to anything other than physical-physical causality.
 3. So some conscious states are (are identical with) physical (brain) states and events.
- ❖ Carruthers (*RR*, 328): 'The argument is valid.'

A Plausible Hypothesis

- ❖ Let us grant the conclusion of this argument provisionally, and consider some objections.
- ❖ Indeed, one may simply observe that reductive physicalism is the most natural, most plausible hypothesis available: minds are like other parts of the physical world. So, when we approach the mind, we should approach it like any other part of the physical world, namely by means of empirical investigation into its operations and nature.
 - ❖ Just as we discovered that lightning is the same as a discharge of electricity or that water is H_2O , so we will discover that mental events are neural events.

Still. . .

- ❖ Still, some objections, mainly stemming from Leibniz's Law, must be considered.
- ❖ LL: $x = y$ only if x and y have all of their properties in common
 - ❖ So, e.g., if the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces (CC) = The President of the United States (P), then whatever is true of (CC) is true of (P) and whatever is true of (P) is true of (CC).
 - ❖ Conversely, if the murderer, whoever that may be, has O+ blood, and the butler has B-, then the butler is not the murderer.

Certainty

1. I may be certain of my own experiences, when I have them. (For example, I may be certain that I am in pain, when I am in pain.)
2. I cannot be certain of my own physical states, including my own brain and neuro-physiological states. (Indeed, humans knew they were in pain long before anyone had every heard of a neuro-physiological state.)
3. LL
4. So, my experiences are not physical states of any kind.
 - ❖ That is, to put it cumbersomely: my mental states have the feature of *being known with certainty by me that they exist*, whereas my brain and neurophysiological states lack this feature.

Rejoinder

- ❖ Carruthers (*RR*, 329): ‘Leibniz’s Law only operates in contexts which are not intentional.’
- ❖ E.g. The police are certain that Dr. Jekyll is the murderer, but they are not certain—in fact they deny—that Mr. Hyde is the murderer.
 - ❖ Can we thus conclude that Dr. Jekyll is not identical with Mr. Hyde?
 - ❖ No, certainly not: they are the same.
- ❖ Again: Louis Lane believes Superman can leap tall buildings in a single bound, but she does not believe—in fact would deny, if asked—that Clark Kent can leap tall buildings in a single bound.
 - ❖ Can we conclude that Superman is not identical with Clark Kent?
 - ❖ No, certainly not: they are the same.
 - ❖ Perhaps, then, mental events and physical events are identical, but under different guises.

Compare

1. I can doubt that $8^3 = 512$.
2. I cannot doubt that $512 = 512$.
3. LL
4. So, 8^3 is not the same as 512.

Intentionality

1. Conscious mental states are intentional.
2. No merely physical state is intentional.
3. LL
4. So, conscious mental states are not merely physical states.

Rejoinder

- ❖ (2) is false:
 - ❖ Lemon selectors are ‘about’ yellow objects, in the sense that they are directed upon them.
 - ❖ Further, cruise missiles can ‘search’ for things which are not there.
 - ❖ So, they too can represent non-existent objects.

In conclusion. . .

- ❖ ‘. . .[W]e presented an argument for thinking it likely that all conscious states are identical with brain-states. Then. . .we replied to all the various possible objections to this idea. Since there is good reason to believe the identity-thesis to be true, and no good reason to believe it false, the case for that thesis is rationally convincing. We should therefore embrace the thesis of mind/brain identity, and declare ourselves to be strong materialists.’—Carruthers (*RR*, 335)