

# 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 ( $\phi$ ).
  - ❖ This is evidently a mathematical property.
  - ❖ Necessarily, if  $x$  is  $\phi$  then  $x$  is a number.
- ❖ Consider the property of metabolizing ( $\psi$ ).
  - ❖ This is evidently a biological property.
  - ❖ Necessarily, if  $x$  is  $\psi$ , then  $x$  is a living being.



# Disparate Categories, Incompatible Demands

❖ A simple argument:

1. If  $x$  is  $\phi$ , then  $x$  is a number.

2. If  $x$  is  $\psi$ , 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  $(\phi x \text{ and } \psi x)$ .

❖ 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 ( $\psi$ ).
2. No physical property has  $\psi$ .
3. LL (or, the indiscernibility of identicals).
4. Hence, no mental property is a physical property.



# Leibniz's Law

- ❖ Or, more precisely, the Indiscernibility of Identicals
- ❖ 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.



# 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.



# Two Solutions 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.
- ❖ Identity Theory: The mind *is* the brain (or, the brain and central nervous system).
  - ❖ Mental properties are identical with physical properties.
  - ❖ There is no categorial difference because, in fact, there is no difference; arguments to the contrary are mistaken.



# 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?



# A Plausible Hypothesis

- ❖ 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  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , so we will discover that mental events are neural events.



# Descartes' Dualism

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.



# 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 clumsily: 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.



# 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.



# Some Terms

- ❖ Let *reductive physicalism* be the thesis that mental events exist, but are identical with first-order physical events (presumably events in the brain and neural system).
  - ❖ Mental events are like lightning and water. There is lightning: lightning is identical with such-and-such a discharge of electricity. There is water: water is identical with H<sub>2</sub>O.
- ❖ Let *non-reductive physicalism* be the thesis that mental events exist, but cannot be identified with first-order physical events.
  - ❖ One possibility: mental events are physical, but they are primitive, and not to be identified with anything beyond themselves. Mental events are like numbers (if there are numbers) in the realm of mathematical entities or like the basic building blocks of the physical system (if there are basic building blocks).
  - ❖ A second possibility: mental events are not strictly in their own natures physical, but they are (and perhaps can only be) realized in physical systems. Mental states are like algorithms or functions.
- ❖ Let *eliminativism* be the thesis that there are no mental events.
  - ❖ There seem to be mental events, but in fact there are none.
    - ❖ Mental events are like witches. Witches are not, as it happens, women who suffer from epilepsy. Rather, *there are no witches*. People who thought otherwise were simply wrong.



# Reductive Physicalism

## ❖ A Simple Argument

1. Some conscious states are caused by some physical states; and some physical states are caused by some mental states.
2. If in order to explain (1) in a completed neuro-physiological science we will need to postulate only physical causes, then we have (or will have) grounds for accepting reductive physicalism.
3. In fact, in a completed neuro-physiological science we will need to postulate only physical causes to explain (1).
4. So, we have (or will have) grounds for accepting reductive physicalism.



# Mary, the Colour Scientist

- ❖ Mary is a brilliant scientist who is, for whatever reason, forced to investigate the world from a black and white room via a black and white television monitor. She specializes in the neurophysiology of vision and acquires, let us suppose, all the physical information there is to obtain about what goes on when we see ripe tomatoes, or the sky, and use terms like ‘red’, ‘blue’, and so on. She discovers, for example, just which wavelength combinations from the sky stimulate the retina, and exactly how this produces via the central nervous system the contraction of the vocal chords and expulsion of air from the lungs that results in the uttering of the sentence ‘The sky is blue’... What will happen when Mary is released from her black and white room or is given a colour television monitor? Will she learn anything or not? It seems just obvious that she will learn something about the world and our visual experience of it. But then is it inescapable that her previous knowledge was incomplete. But she had all the physical information. Ergo there is more to have than that, and Physicalism is false.—Jackson (1982)



# The Knowledge Argument 1

1. Mary knows everything physical there is to know about colour.
2. If, when she steps out of the room, she learns something new about redness, then there is something to know about redness beyond the physical.
3. If there is something to know about redness beyond the physical, then physicalism is false.
4. Mary does learn something new about redness when she steps out of the room.
5. Hence, physicalism is false.



# The Knowledge Argument 2

1. Mary knows all of the physical facts about redness, but none the less learns some new facts upon first perceiving redness directly.
2. If (1), then there must be some non-physical facts—viz. facts pertaining to *qualia*.
3. So, there are some non-physical facts—viz. facts pertaining to *qualia*.
4. If (3), then physicalism is false.
5. So, physicalism is false.



# Generalized

1. If physicalism is true, then all of reality can be characterized in objective terms.
2. There are (or seem to be) subjective facts, including perspectival and experiential facts.
3. So, if physicalism is true, either (i) these (seemingly) subjective facts can be reduced to physical facts, or (ii) these seemingly subjective facts are not facts at all. [This is to say either: (i) reductivism or (ii) eliminativism.]
4. Subjective facts cannot be reduced to physical facts.
5. Subjective facts cannot be eliminated.
6. So, physicalism is false.



# Eliminative Materialism

## ❖ A Simple Argument

1. There are mental states only if they are identical with physical states.
2. Mental states are not identical with physical states.
3. So, there are no mental states.



# Folk Psychology

- ❖ Commonsense psychology is a “folk theory”—just like the (now discredited) folk theories of physics, biology, and so forth.
- ❖ Every folk theory yet encountered turns out to be very poor at offering deep, projectable explanations or at making predictions.
- ❖ Hence, unless there is some overriding reason to think that this particular folk theory is correct, folk psychology, along with its terminology and its modes of explanation, should simply be eliminated.
  - ❖ There isn't any special reason.
    - ❖ So, folk psychology, along with its terminology and its modes of explanation, should simply be eliminated.



# A Special Reason?

- ❖ Folk psychology is not analogous to folk physics or folk biology.
  - ❖ It is, instead, a framework required for the very idea of interpersonal communication and understanding.
- ❖ Moreover, a certain incoherence threatens the eliminativist: if the very *statement* of the eliminativist position requires semantic values and a presupposition of mentality, then eliminativism turns out to be self-undermining.