

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND: Provisional Course Notes

Preamble

Philosophy of Mind: Philosophy of Mind is currently the most controversial sub-discipline of metaphysics . . . with significant implications for every other domain of philosophy, including the very "act" of philosophizing!

Not only are the usual theoretical "results" of philosophy of mind counter-intuitive to our "common sense" understanding of our selves. It is also controversial because it appears to be either *pseudo-scientific* or *pseudo-philosophical*. Why?

If either, it appears *prima facie* to be attempting to rationally articulate - at the very least - "empirical" questions - Do minds exist? What is the mind? What are "mental" phenomena? How can it/they be studied? What is the relation of the mind to the brain? Do all animals have minds?

Any attempts to "answer" such questions, once articulated, only make the issue of its "pseudo" status more significant.

At an earlier time it could have appeared - analogously - to be either *pseudo-theological* as well as *pseudo-philosophical*, in attempting to answer an analogous set of "non-empirical" questions. Do minds exist? What is the mind? What are "mental" phenomena? How can it/they be studied? What is the relation of the mind to the soul? Do all animals have minds?

Is there a way out? I think so. It should be made clear at the outset that there is a distinct difference between the "philosophical" & "scientific" interests in this and many other so-called "philosophical" questions. Scientists - and their allied therapeutic professionals - who are interested in these kinds of questions - neuroanatomists, neurophysiologists, psychologists, "cognitive" scientists, psychiatrists & psychotherapists, and even computer scientists - have an "interest" in both "empirical" and "conceptual" issues. Likewise with the "interested" philosophers! However their respective "interests" are clearly different.

The scientist needs a set of "canonical" or "regulative" or "default" concepts which can consistently underwrite, at least for a time, an on-going empirical inquiry of observation, hypothesis, experiment, theory, and rational elucidation, explanation, & criticism.

The philosopher has no such "need"! What the philosopher is about is the rational elucidation of those very same critical "default" concepts. And their rational justification as a basis for any possible empirical inquiry. And their role in any possible rational criticism of that kind of inquiry. Methodologically, however, philosophizing itself involves its own provisional "default" concepts in a "reflective equilibrium" with those of the science in question.

In effect, what the philosopher is engaged in - today - is asking this crucial "normative" question - Should we continue to use "mental" concepts in describing ourselves [or any other animals] given what we now know - empirically - about ourselves?!

Method: If the argument/s for one view [V-1] are "weaker" than those for another view [V-2], then it follows that the way in which we have to conceive ourselves & the world implicit in V-2 would, *a fortiori*, be the more "rationally" plausible. Therefore we would have a moral obligation to adjust our view of ourselves accordingly, unless there were compelling overriding rational considerations not to do so.

[Note: A "weaker" argument is one plagued by more objections than a rival argument and/or objections of a kind that require responses of a kind that get both more complex & more implausible.]

See my notes on the enterprise & discipline of philosophy for the way in which I conceive the relationship between the "normative" & the "descriptive" in philosophy >>>>>
Philosophy

See my notes on the way in which I conceive of philosophical method as an on-going "dialectic" of rational elucidation, rational justification, & rational criticism >>>>>
Philosophical Dialectic

See the following for bibliographic & Internet resources on the ways in which philosophers have conceived of philosophical "method" >>>>>
Philosophical Methods

And the related question - If so, how should we articulate those concepts so as to have a "realistic" conception of ourselves as human beings . . . without committing any of the usual "metaphysical" fallacies. [Link:]

Of course, scientists as well as philosophers can engage in "conceptual" enquiry. But most choose not to. And philosophers themselves can also engage in "empirical" enquiry. But most do not! Both - at times - can & do pay attention to what the other is doing. The need for such attention is, however, quite different.

Scientists will engage in "reconceiving" their disciplines when the prevailing way of inquiry yields paradoxical results. And they may even engage the efforts of philosophers. Of course, some philosophers are prone, like our model Socrates, to insert themselves - unbidden - into such activities!

Philosophers must always pay attention to relevant empirical inquiries, not just as opportunities for engaging in "conceptual interference", but because concepts - even the most abstract - derive their value from their sustained use in our attempts to know as well as to act in accordance with what we know.

And yet *Philosophy of Mind* is a vital enquiry for both since it goes to the core of an even more important - & cross-cutting - philosophical discipline - *Philosophical Anthropology*! But that goes to the further question of our status as *persons*!

Canonical Method: At any given period of time in the history of philosophy there is a "canon" of both philosophical texts and philosophical issues, including the articulation of claims & counter-claims, arguments & counter-arguments. These are the texts & issues which *define and regulate* the on-going dialectic. The canon - notwithstanding its status as an interim or provisional convention - is convenient in that it articulates the debates and thereby gives the newcomer a sense of what has to be known in order to join in at any point. The following outline for *Philosophy of Mind* is "canonical" in that sense.

Canonical Questions: These are the questions which determine the scope of the enquiry.

> Do minds exist? Do mental phenomena exist?

> If so, are minds & mental phenomena distinct from physical objects, properties, and phenomena?

> Are mental & physical phenomena related? If so, how?

Note: Some philosophers prefer "mental" rather than "physical" because, they claim, the former term is narrower in scope & more traditional than the latter term. For "methodological" reasons - which I will address later - the term "material" is better contrasted with "spiritual" rather than with "mental". The viability of the parallel distinctions between the "material/spiritual" and the "physical/mental" reflect the fact that the "tradition" which gave rise to both *Philosophy of Mind* & *Philosophical Anthropology* has been unraveled and reconstituted - by philosophers! This often happens in the "history" of philosophy and lends credence to the claim that there is no [& never will be any] "progress" in philosophy. This claim reflects a superficial understanding of what has happened & what the "history" of philosophy means to the doing of philosophy. Not surprisingly, the worst offenders here are some "practitioners" of the humanistic & social science disciplines who would like to control the conceptual debate or have it disappear entirely.

Canonical Concepts: Concepts which regulate the meaning of the entire discussion. The meaning of these should therefore remain both neutral & constant throughout the debate. If any one concept changes in meaning the meaning of the whole dialectic can & usually does shift.

Physicalist Terms

Physical Object:

Physical Property:

Physical Phenomena:

Physical Event:

Physical State:

Mentalist Terms

Mental Object:

Mental Property:

Mental Phenomena:

Mental Event:

Mental State:

Dualist Terms

Psycho-physical Object:

Psycho-physical Property:

Psycho-physical Phenomena:

Psycho-physical Event:

Psycho-physical State:

Canonical Dialectic: The theories around which the critical discussion takes place, in terms of thesis & argument, pro & con, critique & response, objection & reply.

Presentation: The following presentation is divided into two parts -

- > Outline of the theories which constitute the on-going dialectic
- > Crucial elements of the dialectic in terms of thesis & argument & critique & response

Note: The "dialectic" is not necessarily linear and forward-moving. The following represents where the debates have moved to & the directions in which I think the dialectic could move further. But there are philosophers who advance critiques from any point in the dialectic against any of its other points. And thereby attempt to reconstitute it! That's the "progress" to be made. The "reconstitution" - if successful - forces us to re-think our self-defining concepts & possibly re-conceive ourselves and others!

Canonical Theories: The theories around which the "dialectic" or critical discussion takes place.

OUTLINE

Mind-Body Dualisms

Interactionism

Parallelism

Epiphenomenalism

Mind-Body Monisms: Idealism & Immaterialism

- > Eliminative Idealism / Immaterialism
- > Reductive Idealism / Immaterialism: A "Type-Type" Identity Theory ???

Mind-Body Monisms: Materialism & Physicalism

- > Eliminative Materialism
- > Reductive Materialism: "Type-Type" Identity Theory
- > Functionalism: "Input/Output" Theory

New Directions: Back to *dualism* ? ? ? ? ?

- > Token-Token Identity Theory
- > Wide Token Identity
- > Narrow Token Identity
- > "Property" Dualism

New Directions: Go back to go forward ? ? ? ? ?

- > Reclaim Aristotle?????
- > Reclaim Augustine?????
- > Reclaim Aquinas?????
- > Reclaim Cusanus?????

DIALECTIC

Mind-Body Dualisms

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of "mind-body" dualism: Plato, Augustine, Descartes,

Theory: Simple M-B Dualism

Thesis: Human beings are comprised of two radically distinct substances - material & spiritual or physical & mental.

Exposition:

Argument-1: The "theistic" argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Argument-2: The "cogito" argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Argument-3: The "introspective" argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Dualistic Interactionism

Thesis: Human beings are comprised of two radically distinct substances - material & spiritual or physical & mental, and these two substances are causally inter-related.

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of mind-body "dualistic interactionism":

Argument:

Critique-1: Where does interaction occur?

Response:

Segue:

Critique-2: How does interaction occur?

Response:

Segue:

Critique-3: Interaction violates the "conservation of energy" principle.

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Dualistic Parallelism

Thesis: Human beings are comprised of two radically distinct substances - material & spiritual or physical & mental, but these two substances are not causally inter-related.

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of mind-body "dualistic parallelism":

Argument:

Critique-1: Parallelism cannot explain observed regularities

Response-1: Occasionalism:

Segue:

Response-2: Pre-established Harmony:

Segue:

Critique-2: Not sufficient evidence to reject interactionism

Response:

Segue:

Critique-3: Parallelism uses an *ad hoc* hypothesis

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Dualistic Epiphenomenalism

Thesis: Human beings are comprised of two radically distinct substances - material & spiritual or physical & mental, but these two substances are causally inter-related in only one direction, from body-to-mind but not vice versa.

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of mind-body "dualistic epiphenomenalism":

Argument:

Critique-1: It rejects the effects of people's minds on the course of events.

Response:

Segue:

Critique-2: It requires "nomological" danglers.

Response:

Segue:

Comparisons: Dualistic Theories: Interactionism is rationally more cogent/plausible than either parallelism or epiphenomenalism.

Theory: Monistic Idealism

Thesis:

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of "monistic" idealism: George Berkeley,

Argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Monistic Materialism

Thesis:

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of "monistic" materialism: Thomas Hobbes,

Argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Eliminative Materialism

Thesis:

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of "eliminative materialism":

Argument-1: Analytical / Logical Behaviorism

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Argument-2: Rorty's Analogy: Demons & Pains

Exposition:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Argument-3: Folk Psychology

Exposition:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Type-Type Identity

Thesis:

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of mind-body "type-token" identity theory:

Argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Token-Token Identity

Thesis:

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of mind-body "token-token" identity theory:

Argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Reductive Materialism: "Central State" Materialism

Thesis:

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of the "central state" version of reductive materialism:

Argument:

Critique-1: The "central state" argument does not imply that reductive materialism is true.

Response:

Segue:

Critique-2:

Response:

Segue:

Critique-3:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Functionalism

Thesis:

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of mind-body "functionalism":

Argument:

Critique: The "inverted spectrum" problem:

Response:

Siege:

Meta-theory: "Wide Token Identity" Theories

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of mind-body "wide token" identity theory:

Segue:

Meta-theory: "Narrow Token Identity" Theories

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of mind-body "narrow token" identity theory:

Segue:

Theory: "Property" Dualism

Thesis:

Exposition:

Representative Advocates: The following philosophers have argued for one or another form of mind-body "property dualism":

Argument:

Critique: The "narrow identity" theory makes no sense!

Response: Linguistic "parallelism" ? ? ? Linguistic "convergence" ? ? ?

Segue:

Alternatives: Go back to go forward?

Theory: Aristotle: Hylomorphism:

Thesis:

Exposition:

Argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Augustine: Neo-platonism ? ? ? ?

Thesis:

Exposition:

Argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Aquinas: Hylomorphism: ? ? ? ? ?

Thesis:

Exposition:

Argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Nicholas of Cusa - An alternative to Aristotle / Augustine / Aquinas / Descartes ? ? ? ? ?

Thesis:

Exposition:

Argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Theory: Other ? ? ? ? ?

Thesis:

Exposition:

Argument:

Critique:

Response:

Segue:

Next: Please return periodically. I am sure there will be changes in my thinking - and yours - as I - and you - do just a little more philosophy.

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References

Introductory Texts: Most introductory textbooks have a section on *philosophy of mind*. These, I think, give the best expositions in that they get you started very quickly thinking out the various solutions for yourself, i.e., they get you started "doing" philosophy rather than just present one or more doctrines.

J. Cornman, K. Lehrer, G. Pappas - *Philosophical Problems & Arguments*. This was the primary source for the "dialectical" framework up through "property" dualism.

N. Warbuton - *Philosophy: The Basics*. A very good overview of both the *mind-body* problem & the problem of *other minds*.

W. Earle - *Introduction to Philosophy*

M. Hollis - *Invitation to Philosophy*

C. McGinn - *Problems in Philosophy*

A. Sparkes - *Talking Philosophy*

D. Stewart, H. Blocker - *Fundamentals of Philosophy*

L. McHenry & F. Adams - *Reflections on Philosophy*

Intermediate Texts

G. Graham - *Philosophy of Mind*

R. Scruton - *Modern Philosophy*

Advanced Texts

S. Priest - *Theories of Mind*

P. Smith & O. R. Jones - *The Philosophy of Mind*