

For next time:

Continue with Ryle, “Descartes’s
Myth”

Ryle's Objection to Cartesian Dualism

- Objection: Cartesian Dualism *and* the interaction problem for it rest on a **category mistake**.
- Roughly, a category mistake results when one kind of thing or fact is presented as belonging to another kind to which it could not possibly belong.

Category Mistakes

- 2 kinds of category mistakes:
 - (a) the placing of an entity in the wrong category/kind.
 - The University ex.
 - The mistake here is to include the University in the same category as the institutions/departments which compose it.
 - According to Ryle, one commits the category mistake by speaking of the Davidson Library, the Philosophy Dept., etc., and the University, as if the University was “an extra member of the class of which these other units are members”.

Category Mistakes

- (b) the attribution to an entity of a property it could not possibly have.
 - Witness the difference between (1) and (2):
 - (1) Many undergraduates are Democrats;
 - (2) Many tables are Democrats. \

The big question for Cartesian Dualists is:
How can the mind cause the body to behave in various ways?

Ryle—This question results from the following category mistake: it presupposes, falsely, that minds (and the mental lives of persons) are something *over and above* a person's actual behavior or dispositions to behave.

Minds, thoughts, pains, feelings, and the like, are not objects like shoes, apples, brains, or fingers. They aren't private *inner episodes* of a "spectral mind," either. (There is no *Ghost in the Machine!*)

They are nothing over and above a person's actual behavior or dispositions to behave.

- So, the big problem for C. Dualists (interaction) is dissolved, but only at the expense of Cartesian Dualism itself.

Ryle's Behaviorism

- A methodological point: psychology is a proper science *only if* its subject matter is **public** and **observable**.
- The only kind of *evidence* that is relevant to any proper science is the kind that results from the method of third-personal observation or experimentation.

- A Cartesian-based psychology—with its commitment to *private* inner episodes of the mind and its reliance on *introspective* evidence—does not, therefore, count as a proper science.
- So, psychology is a proper science *only if* it isn't a Cartesian-based psychology.

- Psychology proper, then, is not—or should not be—the study of private inner episodes of a “spectral mind.”
- Rather, it is—or should be—the study of *observable behavior or dispositions to exhibit such behavior.*

- **Philosophical Behaviorism:** having a mind *consists in* the exhibiting of overt behavior or the possession of dispositions to exhibit such behavior. (Same goes for having a belief, a desire, an intention, a pain, etc.)

Behaviorists' on Pain

- Pain \neq some private inner episode of the soul/mind that somehow mysteriously causes the body of a person to moan, wince, or say “Ouch!”
- Pain = a person’s moaning, wincing, or saying “Ouch!” or a person’s disposition to moan, wince, or say “Ouch!”

Objections to Behaviorism

- **Objection 1:** Consider a possible world that is exactly like ours in respect to the behavior of individuals, except that the majority of individuals at that possible world are *brainless automatons* whose behavior is controlled by some team of intelligent scientists.

So, my behavioral twin at this possible world (Twin-Tim) exhibits all the same overt behavior and has all the same dispositions to behave.

Whenever I stump my toe, I moan.

Whenever Twin-Tim stumps his toe, he moans.

A behaviorist seems committed to saying that if one of us is in pain, then so is the other. But, intuitively, I am the only one in pain.

- **Objection 2:** Mental states are **causes** of overt behavior (and they **explain** why a person has dispositions to behave in certain conditions).
- What might causally explain why I drink from a glass of water is (i) my desire to drink water and (ii) my belief that this glass before me has water in it.
- I have a certain desire and I have belief about how to satisfying that desire. Together they can be the cause of my drinking from the glass.

- Belief-Desire explanations are quite good causal explanations of behavior.
- They can also be quite good *predictions* of behavior.

Consider this case:

- Suppose some person is walking along the side of a road and witnesses a violent car accident. The person quickly pulls out her cell phone and dials the following sequence of numbers: 9, 1, ...
- Can we predict which number she will dial next?
- She desires to call the emergency line to get help and she believes that by dialing 911 she will achieve this.

- But something X is the cause of something Y *only if* there is *no conceptual connection* between X and Y.

Ex.: My kicking the table can be the cause of the table's falling over.

My punching Alex in the face can be the cause of Alex's getting angry at me.

But my being an unmarried male *cannot* be the cause of my being a bachelor.

- So, mental states are causes of behavior *only if* there is *no conceptual connection* between behavior and mental states.
- But behaviorism presupposes there is such a connection.
- So, behaviorism is false.

Materialism

- Descartes was right about one thing: mental states are causes of a person's behavior. So, behaviorism must be abandoned. But the interaction problem is devastating to Cartesian dualism. It should therefore be abandoned as well.

- **Materialism:** every mind is identical to some brain.
- Brains are the causes of a person's behavior.
- **The Identity Theory of Mental States:** mental states = brain states.

Materialists on Pain

- Being in Pain = being in brain state **B**,
- where **B** might be the synchronous firing of the large group of nerve cells in the nervous system known as C-fibers.
- Neurological evidence supports this identification: whenever someone is experiencing pain, they are in **B**, and *vice versa*.

Correlations, Causes, Identities, oh my!

- One of the popular pieces of evidence that gets put forth in favor of the Identity Theory is that there are *correlations* between mental states and brain states.
- But not every correlation is suggestive of an identity.
- Just because Fs are correlated with Gs does not imply, *by itself*, that $Fs = Gs$.

- Sometimes a correlation between Fs and Gs can be accounted for by a **direct causal relationship** between Fs and Gs:
 - Fs are correlated with Gs because Fs *cause* Gs, or *vice versa*.
- Ex.1: There is a correlation between my car insurance increasing and my getting into car accidents for which I'm at fault.
 - In this case, my getting into car accidents *causes* my car insurance to increase, and this explains the correlation.

- Ex.2: There is a correlation between maintaining a long-term high-cholesterol diet and having heart disease.
 - In this case, maintaining such a diet *causes* heart disease. If that were so, then it would explain the correlation.

- Sometimes a correlation between Fs and Gs is explained by an **indirect causal relationship**:
 - Fs and Gs are correlated because Fs indirectly cause Gs:

Fs cause Hs and Hs cause Gs, such that whenever you have a G, you also have an H, and whenever you have an H, you also have an F.

This would explain the correlation between Fs and Gs.

- Sometimes a correlation can be explained by a **common cause**:
 - Js cause Fs and Js also cause Gs, such that whenever you have an F and a G, you also have a J. This would explain the correlation between Fs and Gs: they have a common cause—Js.

The Explanatory Role Argument for the Identity Theory

- Suppose we have good reason to think that a certain type of mental state, M, causes some behavior type, T, to occur.
- Suppose further: Being in brain state B has been found to occur **when and only when** M occurs.

But if we settle for *mere* correlations (not identities) between mental states and brain states, then all we can conclude about our case is the following:

- Being in B is *correlated with the cause of T*, and the cause of T = mental state M.

Clearly, though, an appeal to chance won't explain this **systematic correlation**.

- Fs and Gs are **systematically correlated** just in case (Fs occur iff Gs occur)
- So, brain state B and mental state M are systematically correlated just in case (M occurs iff B occurs).

- Since we've ruled out an appeal to chance, our options for explaining the correlation between M and being in brain state B are:
 - (i) They're identical.
 - (ii) There's a direct causal relationship.
 - (iii) There's an indirect causal relationship.
 - (iv) They have a common cause.

- The common cause option:

There may not be any one kind of thing that is the cause of mental state M. Suppose M is **acute pain**. The cause of acute pain is *wildly disjunctive*, and involves very different kinds of things:

- (having a viral infection for more than 2 weeks, or falling off the roof of a building, or getting slammed by a car or bicycle, or going without food for an extended period, or ...) causes acute pain.

- A *wildly disjunctive* cause like this one poses a problem for the opponent of I.T.:
- It may very well be the cause of acute pain (a mental state), but *given that acute pain is **not** identical to any brain state*, such a cause would not serve as a good explanation for the systematic correlation between acute pain and being in B.

- So, positing identities between mental states and brain states provides **the best explanation** for why M occurs just when being in brain state B occurs.
- These identities thus play a crucial explanatory role.
- So, we should accept the Identity Theory.