

Mind-Body Problem: Part 1

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March 18, 2025

1 Major Positions on the Mind-Body Problem

1.1 Dualism

Human beings (and other conscious animals) are composed of both a mind and a body.

Substance Dualism Human beings are made up of mind and body—two separate substances.

Property Dualism Human beings are made up of a single substance: body. However, the body has both mental and physical properties.

1.2 Physicalism (Materialism)

Human beings (and other conscious animals) are entirely physical.

Identity Theory (The Hardware View) Mental states are identical to brain states.

Functionalism (The Software View) Mental events can be exhaustively described in terms of sensory inputs, behavioral outputs, and internal states.

Eliminative Materialism A fuller understanding of neuroscience will eventually eliminate discussion of mental states altogether.

2 Key Concepts

2.1 Leibniz's Law

- Also called the indiscernibility of identicals
- According to Leibniz's Law x and y are numerically identical if, and only if, any property held by x is held by y (and vice versa).

2.2 Sense and Reference

- An important distinction in the philosophy of language introduced by Gottlob Frege.
- Frege pointed out that we know that $a=a$ *a priori*, but we know that $a=b$ *a posteriori*.

2.3 Sense and Reference (cont)

- Frege used the following example:
 - The “Evening Star” is the first star to appear in the evening and the “Morning Star” is the last star to disappear in the morning.
 - Now consider these two statements:
 1. The Evening Star is the Evening Star

- 2. The Evening Star is the Morning Star
 - The statement (1) is true and known *a priori*. The statement (2) is also true but known *a posteriori*—based on the discovery that both refer to the planet Venus.
 - So the terms “Morning Star” and “Evening Star” have different senses (or meanings) but the same referent—i.e. the planet Venus.

2.4 Sense and Reference (cont)

- Statements with propositional attitudes pose a difficulty for Frege’s distinction.
 - Consider the following statements:
 1. Lois Lane believes that Superman is Superman.
 2. Lois Lane believes that Superman is Clark Kent.
 - Statement (1) is true; statement (2) is false—but Superman and Clark Kent are coreferential (they refer to the same thing).
 - Frege’s solution is to say that because we are dealing with a propositional attitude (belief) the terms Superman and Clark Kent must refer to their meanings/senses instead of their normal referent (the person who is both Superman and Clark Kent).

2.5 Occam’s razor (the principle of parsimony)

Named after William of Occam (1290–1349). According to Occam’s razor when two or more hypotheses/theories have equal explanatory power, we should choose the one which postulates the fewest entities.

2.6 Qualia (singular Quale)

- An instance of private, subjective, first-person experience.
- Subjective phenomena essentially connected with a single point of view.

2.7 Intentionality

- Also called aboutness or ofness. Intentionality is the property of being of or about something else.
- For example, beliefs, desires, and intentions are directed at or about objects or states of affairs other than themselves.
- Thus beliefs, desires, and intentions are intentional whereas rocks and trees are not.
- Most, but perhaps not all, mental states have intentionality. For example, undirected forms of anxiety or depression may be mental states but not intentional states.

2.8 Substance

- In everyday language we use the word substance in the same way we use the word stuff—referring to the physical material that something is made of.
- In philosophy a substance is an individual thing that has properties and can undergo change.

2.9 Terms to help with the reading for next class

Functional Organization The pattern of causal organization embodied in the mechanism responsible for some-things behavior

Isomorphic *A* is isomorphic to *B* iff *A* and *B* have the same form/structure.

Sources

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