

Core Theme-Review Outline

Warning: This outline is not intended to be a substitute for substantive review of your notes and the readings done in class. Please use it as a tool, not as your sole means of preparation!

I. The Relationship between the Mind and the Body.

A. It should be noted that this relationship bears on the question of what the underlying substance of the universe is. There are two generally held approaches to this question - monism and dualism

1. Monism - reality is made up of one thing (everything is matter = materialism, ideas alone exist = idealism)

2. Dualism - reality is made up of two basic substances (matter + mind/spirit/ideas)

B. Dualist conceptions of the mind body relationship

1. Cartesian dualism - Man has a physical body that occupies space (Descartes would say the physical body has "extension" and a mind that is not physical). Mind and body interact and effect one another. The central problem with Cartesian dualism is the problem of interaction (how does the physical interact with the non-physical)

2. Epiphenomenalism - A dualist position that tried to address the problem of interaction above. Holds that the body and mind both exist, but that the mind (our consciousness) has no impact on our physical bodies.

C. Monist theories of the mind body relationship

1. Mind Brain identity - Mental states reduce to corresponding physical states.

a) Product of advances in Neuro science and brain function mapping - Phineas Gage

b) Language referring to mental states ultimately is language describing brain states

c) Problems - Chauvinism, moral hazard, consciousness

2. Behaviorism - Minds don't exist. When we use mental language (I am happy) we are only using shorthand to describe behavior.

(problems - only works for observable behavior, behaviors contrary to true intent, complexity of descriptions without referring to mental states, consciousness)

3. Functionalism - Anything can be a mind if it functions appropriately. This addressed the weaknesses of Mind Brain identity because it held that things without a brain could still have minds - computers, aliens, three toed bing bings from Alpha V etc. A mind can be "Instantiated in many forms. (Problems - Chinese Room, consciousness)

II. Consciousness - What is it and how can it be explained?

A. Definition - subjective experience. What it is like to be something.

B. Chalmers - The hard problem of Consciousness is the nature of subjective experience. Why and how do we have it?

C. Approaches

1. Consciousness is an illusion - Dennett (no problem - you're just imagining things!)

2. Materialistic theories

a) Crick and the 40 Htz theory. Dealt mainly with how the mind binds sense experience together to form a unified conscious experience.

b) Penrose and Quantum Mechanics - Consciousness occurs as a result of quantum indeterminism occurring in the microtubules of neurons.

c) The Hot theory - A mental state is conscious when there is a higher order thought about that state. Consciousness is thus a matter of the functional organization of mental states.

3. Boogley woogley theories - Chalmers' PanPsychism - everything has consciousness in the same way that everything has mass. Consciousness is one of the elemental principles of the universe.

4. Nagel - consciousness is subjective and thus cannot be objectively understood (what is it like to be a bat - I certainly don't know!)

III. Can Machines/Animals have minds?

A. Alan Turing and the Turing test

B. Objections to the idea of AI

1. Theological objections - Thinking is the product of our soul bestowed by God. No soul = No thinking.

2. Heads in the sand objection - Thinking machines would be too terrible to imagine so let's not. This objection sees machine intelligence as an affront to the human supremacy and can be thought of as an objection based on ego.

3. The argument from consciousness - Machines do not have consciousness and so they cannot have minds. But we don't know if other people have consciousness either! (This related to Searle's Chinese room argument - machines can process but cannot understand)

4. Arguments from various disabilities - machines cannot think because they cannot _____.

5. Lady Lovelaces' objection - machines can never do anything new, they cannot surprise us, they can only do what they are programmed to do.

C. Attempts at AI have gone down two paths

1. GOFAI - Human intelligence can be reduced to symbol manipulation. This is what computers do, thus, a sophisticated enough computer could do what humans do. This idea flounders when it becomes obvious that much of human intelligence is more than simple symbol manipulation.

2. Neural Networks and parallel processing - Attempts to mimic the organizational structure of the human brain. This is the frontier of AI research today.

D. Animal Minds (this section is useful as a case study for applied ethics as well)

1. Descartes - Animals are essentially furry machines. Neither animals nor machines have minds because:

a) They lack speech

b) Animals and machines act from the "internal disposition of their organs" and not from reason. Reason allows humans to contemplate tasks that machanimals could not. Humans have reason because they have a soul (reason cannot spring from mere matter) given by God

2. Carruthers - Animals lack higher order thought required by the modern understanding of consciousness. Thus animals have experiences but are not conscious of these experiences. Thus human suffering (which is conscious) is fundamentally different (both epistemologically and ethically) than animal suffering (which is not conscious).

3. Singer - Animals have interests and not to respect these interests amounts to speciesism (the irrational discrimination against another because it is a different species than your self). While animal interests may be different, they are still interests and must be respected. Singer compares the irrationality of speciesism to other irrational prejudices such as racism and sexism.

IV. Free Will and Determinism

A. Basic question - to what extent do we make free choices in life?

B. Varieties of thought on this issue

a) Hard determinism -

(1) Everything that happens is determined by prior causes. Position advocated by d'Holbach

(2) If true, it would be possible to predict any future state of the universe with 100% accuracy if we possessed complete knowledge

(3) Hard determinists believe that determinism denies man free will

(4) Problems - rejects common sense interpretation of our experience, no first mover, moral responsibility is denied

b) Indeterminism - The belief that nothing is determined by prior events. This is chaos and likewise does not allow free will

c) Libertarianism - The belief that many events are determined, but not some or all of the actions we choose to take. We looked at two varieties of libertarianism:

(1) Roderick Chisholm's Agent Causation - man is like God in the sense that we are the first causes of chains of cause and effect. Problem - based on assumptions, no logical basis

(2) Robert Kane's Quantum indeterminism and free will - Kane argues that in moments of extreme stress, the indeterminate noise at the neuronal level overwhelms deterministic forces and allows for agent choice (the business woman example).

Such instances are called self-forming actions. Note that Kane would argue that most of our daily actions are determined by prior events, but that through SFAs we control how our character is built and thus exert indirect control over daily decisions.

d) Compatibilism - The idea that all events are determined, but this does not deny free will.

(1) Classical compatibilism - advocated by John Locke and David Hume - An action is free if it meets the following criteria:

(a) it is caused by the will of the agent

(b) the action is not forced

(2) The weakness of this position is that Hume would say that a drug addict exercised free will when he chose to shoot up. This seems an odd form of free will and was addressed by Harry Frankfurt's Deep Self Compatibilism. Frankfurt distinguishes between our first order desires (I want to eat lots of cake) and our second order desires which are desires about desires (I don't want to want to eat cake because I want to be healthy). According to Frankfurt, we act freely when our actions accord with our second order desires.

e) In this unit we also discussed fatalism, predestination and divine foreknowledge. While these are not philosophical theories, it is worth knowing their broad outlines.

V. Theories of Personal Identity - The key question here is what constitutes the self.

A. Substance theories - the self is defined by substance

1. Body theory - same body = same person. Intuitive and based on common sense. But Locke argues that it is logically possible for people to switch bodies (ala Freaky Friday) what then?

2. Soul theory - same soul = same person. (Aside from American presidents who can "look into" the souls of foreign leaders, people cannot see souls - so how do we know when we are dealing with the same person, requires a dualist perspective with all of its baggage)

3. Illusion theory - Advanced by David Hume. Hume proposed that our identities constantly change from moment to moment. That who we are is the collection of experiences at a particular moment. Given that these experiences are constantly changing, so are our identities - thus a permanent self is nothing but an illusion. This position is supported by the Buddhist perspective. Problems - Much of our lives are spent planning for our future selves, punishment becomes grossly unfair (since it is carried out on a different person than committed the crime). There are no logical problems with this perspective, however.

4. Memory theory/Psychic continuity theory. Advanced primarily by Locke. The person remains the same so long as there is a continuous chain of memories linking that person at various points in their history. Supporting thought experiment - King of China. Problems - memory loss, false memories, Thomas Reid's objection. Strengths - this is how most of us conceive of our selves

VI. Existentialism

A. Context - Early 20th century, traditional pillars of meaning - Church, reason, social hierarchy - crumbling. Life seems increasingly meaningless

B. What it is - Not a formal system, equally a literary movement, most existentialists would not have called themselves existentialists

C. Common themes of existentialist thought:

1. Absurdity of existence

2. Primacy of subjective experience

3. Strong emphasis on the individual

4. Life must be lived passionately

5. Insistence of human freedom

6. Emphasis on living an authentic (self-authored) life

VII. Major thinkers

A. Kierkegaard - The first existentialist, Christian, emphasized rejecting the crowd and following one's passion. Notable for advocating the "Leap of Faith" (he and Sartre are probably the best to study for the exam).

B. Dostoevsky - Russian writer and author of *The Brothers Karamozov*

C. Martin Heidegger - German Philosopher. Wrote *Being and Time*. Put the idea of authenticity at the forefront of existentialist concerns. Nazi sympathizer.

D. Jean-Paul Sartre - French Philosopher. Atheist. Key idea "Existence precedes essence". Described humans as condemned to be free and emphasized that this freedom means that people are ultimately responsible for all they do. Described humans as having three modes of being:

1. en-soi: Being in itself - facticity

2. pour-soi: A being of consciousness, something that is self-aware and capable of projecting oneself into the future. (I am what I am not)

3. Being for others - That part of one's identity that is shaped by the observations of others

4. Mauvaise-foi (bad faith) results from having the three modes out of balance