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Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy of Mind 7

Recapitulation

- The Mind-Body-Identity Theory says that each type of mental state is identical to a bodily state, each time of the same type as well.
- Arguments in favor of MDI are based on scientific explanation: physical explanations are best, and there is reason for optimism that we may explain the mental through the physical.
- MBI saves inner awareness kind of mental states > the hope is that they as well will be explained
- Perhaps MBI is too strict > do we need type-type identity?

Functionalist Alternative I

- Suppose you need a tool to do something, say to bring you from A to B
 - There are many alternative 'tools with the same function' available:
Your legs, a horse, a sledge with dogs, a bike, a car, a train, a boat, a plane, a balloon, and so forth
 - Each of these tools is a physical object, and each is a tool with the function to bring you from A to B
 - But there is **no type-correspondence** between *transport tool* and physical object
- Similarly, there is no need for the same **type** of mental state to correspond to the same **type** of physical state
 - It suffices if each **token** mental state is the same as a **token** physical state

Functionalist Alternative II

- There is a lot of variability in human beings, even within the same person, so it is quite likely that a mental state of **type** x (say, a desire for drink) one time corresponds to a physical state of **type** p and at another time to a physical state of **type** q; and that similar physical states may constitute different mental states at different times.
 - There are no regular correspondences between mental states and physical states, but only regular connections among physical states, and among mental states.
 - So in terms of explanations and regular connections there is **a kind of** dualism, but not in terms of substances and existence.

The Functionalist Alternative III

- The core idea of functionalism: bodily states can play a **functional** role by causing/ explaining behavior
 - To be a mental state = to have a certain functional/causal role
 - E.g. desire for drink is that bodily state which, at this moment, causes me to drink (in all the right circumstances)

Evaluation of Functionalism

- Functionalism manages to do justice to our idea that explanations in terms of mental states are often better than physical explanations, without paying the price of Dualism
- But there is one aspect of mental states Functionalism cannot capture: the experience which comes with mental states
 - What it feels like to have a desire, a pain, a perception, a belief
 - But must this feeling be accounted for? **A really Big Question!**



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