PH1102E

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NUS

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

This set of lecture summaries was done for the course in AY2011/12 S2 taught by ASSOC PROF Michael Walsh Pelczar.

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Lecture 2

**Hume**: considered desire determines moral responsibility. Did not consider determinism => suggested the two could co-exist.by acting on desires that are both considered and harmful, such people prove that they have blameworthy characters. For a person’s character is nothing but the sum-total of his considered desires.

**Determinism**: Every event has a cause, except for the first event, if there was a first event. Open question. Event A causes event B means the occurrence of A made the occurrence of B inevitable. Each state makes the next state inevitable. Once we fixed the initial state, i.e. sets the cue ball in motion, every subsequent state is inevitable. But we don’t know if it's true because we don't know exactly what’s the initial stage. Laplace’s demon: if someone knows the precise location and momentum of every atom in the universe, their past and future values for any given time are entailed. ink and water experiment. Determinism doesn’t mean that you never act on your own desires. it just means that those desires were predetermined to have and act upon, by forces beyond our control

**Indeterminism**: not every event has a cause. Indeterministic cause=> random event.

**Nietzsche**: determinism is true, therefore moral responsibility cannot exist.

**Richard Taylor**: determinism is false for moral responsibility to be true. Disagree with Hume. On top of Hume’s theory that moral responsibility resides on a considered desire, there must also be nothing else that makes us endorse a desire. Causally undetermined desire, Original to the person i.e. Miniature big bang.

**Galen Strawson**: Radical nihilism. He first proves that determinism negates moral responsibility. Strawson argues that an indeterminism universe too could not co-exist with moral responsibility as well because no one could be held accountable for events that occur at random. (It's the not statement of determinism: opposite of for-all is there-exists-at-least-one). so both determinism and indeterminism cannot coexist with moral responsibility. Since, either one have to exist, moral responsibility cannot exist. He says that no one deserves blame/praise for his action but acknowledges that there can be a good reason to praise/blame someone.

Lecture 3

Moral philosophy centers on 2 big values:

1. what is good for its own sake, in and of itself. What should I value above all else?
2. What may we do in our pursuit of what is good for its own sake(what lines can we cross)?

**Value**: absolute vs instrumental.

**Absolutely good**: good for its own sake.

**Instrumentally good**: it can lead to something that good for its own sake.

Hedonism does not say that pleasure comes from satisfying desires. What’s often the case isn’t always the case. What the hedonists says is that the most important thing is to have pleasure and avoid pain. It’s possible to satisfy desire but not feel pleasure.

**Egoistic hedonism**: The only thing absolutely good for its own sake is one’s own pleasure, and the only absolutely bad for its own sake is one’s own pain.

**Non-egoistic hedonism**: instead of being concerned with one’s own feeling, all pleasure is absolutely good and all pain is absolutely bad.

Hedonism says every pleasure is absolutely good and every pain is absolutely bad. Hedonist does not say that every pleasure is worth having (ie. Taking drugs) 🡺 An absolutely good thing can be instrumentally very bad. Conversely, absolutely bad things can be worth having as they can be instrumentally good (i.e. surgery). Hedonist will advise to go through the pain so as for one to maximize future pleasure.

Haydn and the Oyster:

Option1. Incommensurable pleasures. Pleasures between Haydn and Oyster incomparable by common measure. But this suggests that the two are non-differentiable which suggests that a hedonist could go with either choice.

Option2. Average Pleasure vs Total Pleasure. Pleasure per day from Haydn is more than Oyster. But this would suggest that a short-lived heroin addict’s life is more preferred than a normal life.

Option3. Pro Oyster. Out intrinsic fear of choosing oyster is due to us judging from a human perspective. Choosing Oyster is tantamount to giving up a human life, i.e death.

Life barely worth living: Life just a bit pleasure more than pain in the entire lifetime. A world with billions of people with life barely worth living is better than a world containing just one million people who are free from pain and feels only pleasure.

Non-egoistic hedonist values pleasure beyond his own life and his lifetime.

Lecture 4

Singer: It’s not charity but duty

What’s good for its own sake(value)?

How should we conduct ourselves(norm)?

Utilitarianism: our actions ought to have the most valuable outcomes possible (non-self-centered)

Flipside: utilitarianism sets a very demanding/unrealistic standard. I.e. imply that middle-class society members should forgo luxury and use that income to aid global relief efforts.

Counter from utilitarianism: we subscribe to utilitarianism when we are faced with the negative implications of not doing so. 🡺 we fall short of utilitarian standard because we lose sight/became insensitive to these consequences.

drowning child vs African child: Our intuition may lead us to think it’s straightforward to save the drowning child at nearly all costs however the case on African child is a tough one to tackle.

**Singer’s stand on drowning child vs African child: 1.no morally relevant difference between the 2**

* Objection: “African Child is too far away (distant)”
* Is proximity a relevant difference? Globalization 🡺 small practical distance. Saving the African child may even be more convenient than saving the drowning child.
* Objection: “if I don’t jump to the pool to save the child, that specific child will die. However, no specific child will die as a result of my failing to donate (personally unknown)”
* This is not valid, because in theory we could find the specific child that will die due to our lack of donation, just that current technology and resources would not recommend us to do so in view of productivity.
* Objection: “Failing to jump into the pond would demonstrate a lack of compassion. Not so failing to donate to relief efforts.”
* This is like the stance of a proverbial ostrich who pretend not to know of suffering beyond our sight. It’s easier to ignore and not relate to their existence but it does not justify the stand. Blissful ignorance.
* Objection: “Saving these miserable people now just creates more misery down the road”
* sowing the seeds of future human misery? However different theories exist. Alleviating the bad conditions may actually have a downward pressure on population. This is achieved via workforce efficiency and also with a healthier population, population replacement rates would logically decrease as mortality rates decrease.
* Objection: “Drowning child is a problem I can solve. But even if I donate everything I have, thousands of sick children will still die (numerous)”
* You may not aid all sick children but you could, and ought to be able to do something. Both are still equally relevant
* Objection: “Since so many others are also in a position to help, my personal obligation to do so is small”🡺 yes I might have some moral responsibility, but it is shared by so many people and therefore the gravity of it isn’t nearly as serious as killing the child under the humanitarian crisis.
* Each person can have a full share of moral responsibility (They know that the aid is not met and insufficient attempts are being made).

**Singer 2. It would be wrong for you not to save the drowning child**

* Objection: “That depends on how much it costs you to save the child, and how much the child’s life is worth.”
* How can you put a price on human life?
* Objection: “Human life may be more valuable than everything else but that does not mean it is priceless. If it were, there would be nothing wrong with sacrificing a million lives to save one. If we think our lives are infinitely valuable, we would be spending every possible penny to keep ourselves alive. Lifetime income is a good measure of a life’s value. This is a rough gauge of the net utility of happiness the person generates in his lifetime. If I were to invest the money instead of contributing it, I could earn more money to contribute in the future and therefore by utilitarian standards, I should not help the children now.”

Lecture 5

Perceptions towards eating meat:

* Involves killing an animal
* Promotes farming practices that damage environment
* Waste food resources that could be used to feed the less fortunate
* Alastair Norcross: eating factory farmed meat is wrong, because it causes a large amount of suffering for the sake of a relatively small amount of enjoyment. You should refuse to eat factory farmed products, even if you know that your refusal will not discourage factory farming.
* Objection: “what can I do? I won’t make a difference”
* Your choice can make a difference without determining the outcome, and it does. If nobody’s choice makes a difference then factory farms would continue to operate even if everyone converted to vegetarianism. Further argument: If my vote against abortion have a millionth chance of making a difference by saving a million lives, then there’s certainty that I’ll save at least 1 life.
* Objection: Loren Lomasky:“For non-human animals pleasure is all that matters. So long as animals on factory farms have more pleasure than pain in their lives, their lives are worth living.”
* But this is trying to say that we should eat animals because they have lives that are worth living?! Shouldn’t they keep on living?
* Objection: “That’s not the point because these animals are born and bred for us to consume; they wouldn’t be alive otherwise. By supporting factory farms, I am thus supporting animal lives that are worth living”
* so it’s correct for aliens to farm humans for food?
* Objection: “Hedonism is a correct theory for the lives of farm animals but not for humans. Value of human lives is more than that: liberty and freedom from ignorance. Humans farmed for food are not realizing their full potential of awareness, the fact they are farmed”
* hedonism the correct theory for all live. The only right one may have is not to be denied pleasure and be subjected to unnecessary pain. Crisp: Hedonism of value, Norcorss: Hedonsim of norms.

Lecture 6

1. **Theist**: believe that God exists.)
2. **Atheist**: believe that God does not exist.
3. **Agnostic**: neither believes that God exists nor believe that God does not exist.

**Argument from evil**

Some people think that the existence of such evils is a compelling reason to believe that there is no God.

The argument from evil is that the existence of all these evils proves that God does not exist.

1. It is bad not to prevent extreme and pointless suffering when you know that you can prevent it without harming anyone.
2. If there is an extremely powerful and knowledgeable being, then that being fails to prevent a lot of extreme and pointless suffering that it knows it could prevent without harming anyone.
3. So, if there is an extremely powerful and knowledgeable being, that being does something bad (by failing to prevent extreme and pointless suffering that it knows it could prevent, without harming anyone). (from 1 and 2)
4. If God exists, then he is, by definition, an extremely powerful and knowledgeable being.
5. So, if God exists, he does something bad. (from 3 and 4)
6. But God, by definition, cannot do anything bad.
7. So, God does not exist. (from 5 and 6)

**Bad things come in 2 forms**

1. Moral evils: result from wrongdoing
2. Natural evils: Natural disasters, acts of God

**4 Questions to consider: Evil exists…**

1. Because God created us with free will.
2. Because in order for there to be good things, there must also be bad things.
3. Because suffering is good for us.
4. Because these bad things have hidden good consequences that outweigh their badness.

**Free will defense**

* In order to create us as free beings, God has to endow us with wills over which even he has no control.
* Unfortunately, some people exercise their freedom of will to do great harm.
* This harm is the inevitable price of human freedom.

The free will defense is a limited response to the Argument from Evil, since it only tries to reconcile the existence of moral evils with the existence of God. Let’s assess the free will defense point by point.

* Objection: First of all, someone could deny that we have free will. (Strawson, Nietzsche)
* Objection: Second, someone might say that God could have endowed us with free will, but made us so that we would only use our freedom in good ways. (Hume)
* Objection: But let’s suppose, for the sake of argument, that we are free, and in a radical, non-Humean way.
  + Objection: If God gives us this radical freedom, why doesn’t he at least intervene to minimize the consequences of its harmful exercise?
  + If God always intervened that way, it would have a corrosive effect on our characters: we would become lazy and thoughtless, negating the whole point of giving us freedom of will.
  + Objection: Well, what’s worse: having a bunch of lazy and thoughtless people, or a bunch of people who burn out children’s eyes, rape their own daughters, and exterminate ethnic minorities? If this is the cost of unsuper-vised freedom, it’s not worth the price.

**Contrast defense**

* “Good” and “bad” are opposites, like “uphill” and “downhill.”
* You can’t have an uphill without a downhill, and likewise you can’t have good things without having bad things too.
* Objection: But not all opposites are like “uphill” and “downhill.” You can have dry things without wet things, or darkness without light. “Good” and “bad” are like “wet” and “dry,” not like “uphill” and “downhill.”
* Perhaps; but we would not *appreciate* the good things unless we were exposed to bad things too.
* Objection: But why do we need to be exposed to actual horrors, instead of vividly described fictional horrors, or horrible dreams, to remind us of how bad things could be, and make us grateful that they aren’t that way?
* Dreams and fiction are no substitute for reality.
* Objection: OK. But why do we need so much evil -- moral as well as natural -- in order to appreciate the good things in life?

**Spiritual Development Defense**

* The reason why God allows evil to take place is that this evil is good for us.
* When we are forced to come to grips with moral or natural evil, we grow stronger, humbler, kinder, and wiser.
* Objection: I agree that overcoming a great personal setback or tragedy can change a person’s life forever, and for the better. But it can also ruin a person’s life.
* Even though the sufferer himself may not benefit, other people who witness his suffering (or hear about it) may reap spiritual benefits from contemplat-ing it.
* Objection: It’s hard to see how these supposed third-party spiritual benefits could justify the terrible loss and suffering that is involved in many of these cases.
* Objection: Furthermore, if the point of suffering is that it promotes spiritual development, then why is it that some spiritually under-developed people never suffer at all -- or at least, not enough to promote spiritual development?

**Hidden Goodness defense**

* It is true that we cannot see how a loving, powerful, and wise God could let all these bad things happen. But maybe that is just because we have a limited point of view. E.g. A dog cannot understand why its master takes it to the veterinarian for its shots.
* From the dog’s limited point of view, nothing good at all comes of the innoculation -- it is just pure, pointless pain...
* Maybe all these horrible things that happen are somehow for the best -- albeit in a way that we cannot fathom.
* Objection: Where exactly is all this hidden goodness hidden?
* Some is hidden in us. The rest is hidden in the afterlife.
* Objection: But look: even if God gives the victims of Earthly evils afterlives that contain more than enough happiness to outweigh the misery they suffered in their mortal lives, wouldn't it still have been better for him to have spared them the mortal misery?
* We have to recognize that we don't see the really big picture, and that there might be considerations at work here that are, at least for now, beyond our ken.
* Objection: Well, if God only allows evils that are necessary for the greater good of all, then shouldn’t we be grateful for all the evils of our world? Shouldn’t we feel lucky to live in a world where children get raped and mutilated?
* For us to feel grateful for such things would do more harm than good. It is therefore also part of God’s plan that we abhor such evils, even though, in a sense, it would not be unreasonable for us to give thanks to God for them.
* Objection: *They have put too high a price on harmony; we can’t afford to pay so much for admission. And therefore I hasten to return my ticket. And it is my duty, if only as an honest man, to return it as far ahead of time as possible. Which is what I am doing. It’s not that I don’t accept God, Alyosha, I just most respectfully return him the ticket.* -- Ivan Karamazov. This is saying that if such is the price for accepting God, then it’s not worth it.

**Conclusion**

* The problem of evil is the most serious threat to rational belief in a powerful, knowledgeable, caring God.
* Attempts to overcome the problem by reference to freedom of will, the contrastive nature of good and evil, and the need for spiritual development all appear to fail.
* The most likely solution to the problem of evil is by appeal to hidden goodness.
* But the hidden goodness solution seems to imply that we should, on some level, be grateful to God for allowing all of the evils that we find in our world, and this is hard to accept.

Lecture 7

Philosophers divide their study of the human mind between the conscious and the cognitive.

1. We are conscious (**consciousness**) 🡺 feelings; perceptual/non-perceptual sensations; moods/emotions
2. We can think (**cognition**) 🡺 thought; memory ; decision; learning; language comprehension

Cognition and consciousness do have overlapping regions, such as desire. There exist both conscious and unconscious desires. Example of unconscious desire: Not to be eaten by a Bengal tiger (We wouldn’t be aware of this desire until it is made conscious). Conscious and cogntive desire: Morning coffee.

The computational theory of cognition.

It says that thinking is a computational process. We think because this kind of computational process occurs in our brains. Therefore, to think is just to have a brain that runs the right computer program.

Searl’s definition of a “computer program”

A computer program is any set of simple rules for the manipulation of symbols. Note this definition does NOT say a simple set of rules.

* Simple rule: requires no intelligence or creativity to apply – a rule that even a mindless mechanism can apply correctly. I.e. a fool proof rule.
* Symbol: intrinsically meaningless thing, in and of itself, that can be created, erased, copies, stored, transmitted or otherwise manipulated.

Brain as a computer

When neurons are networked together and following their inbuilt instructions on handling signals, they collectively form thought and understanding.

**Searle**

cognition is more than computation. Cognition->computation but not the other way round.

Searle’s argument against computational theory of cognition is based on three claims. If all three claims are true it follows that running a computer program is never by itself enough to understand language. If argument works, parallel arguments can be used to prove that no form of computation, however sophisticated, can be sufficient for genuine condition.

1. *Program equivalent thesis*: the person in Chinese room runs whatever programs a native Chinese speaker runs when understanding Chinese. **A true**
2. *Simple point of logic*: If the program equivalence thesis is true, then the person in the Chinese room understands Chinese **B**, provided that running a suitable program is sufficient for understanding Chinese **C**. **A and C -> B**
3. *Sad fact about Searle*: The person in the Chinese room has no knowledge of Chinese. **~B**
4. Therefore understanding Chinese is not simply a matter of running a program. **~C**

Statement 1 is prone to objections.

Robot objection: An ordinary Chinese speaker can do many things that the person in the Chinese room cannot. These additional things may be simulated by a robot that could do everything an ordinary Chinese speaker can do.

System Objection: Searle does not run every program that an ordinary Chinese speaker runs, only the system as a whole does so. Searle is just one part of this whole system. His inability to understand Chinese proves nothing against computational theory of cognition

No one single component understands Chinese. If this is the case then how can the system collectively be said to understand Chinese?

**Fallacy of composition**: the mistake that the whole cannot have any of the properties that it’s parts don’t have.

Lecture 8

Conscious aspects: aspects of the mind that are mental states and processes that have a conscious or subjective feel

Cognitive aspects: aspects of the mind that explains an intelligent being’s ability to perform complex problem solving tasks.

This lecture is on the conscious aspects of the mind.

**Psychophysical correlation** (established fact that everyone agrees upon): detailed correlations between physical processes that occur in the brain and the conscious experiences (feeling, sensations, moods, etc) that you have. While people agree with this theory, the nature of the correlation is hotly disputed.

2 main schools of thought: **Physicalism** and **dualism**

**Physicalism:** conscious experience is a purely physical phenomenon. Sensations = chemical recations in your brain.

* Environment🡺changes in sense organs🡺brain event=conscious experience

**Dualsim**: conscious experience is not a purely physical phenomenon. Sensations are caused by, but not the same as, chemical reactions in your brain.

* It is true that euphoria correlates with secretion of endorphins, and other sensations correlate with other physical brain processes. But euphoria and endorphin secretion are different things. They don’t equate, rather, the feeling is caused by the secretion.
* Environment🡺changes in sense organs🡺brain event🡺conscious experience

**Disadvantage of physicalism**: implies that chemical reactions in brain couldn’t occur when one is unconscious.

**Argument against physicalism: The knowledge argument**

1. Premise: You could know everything about the physical nature of some creature, and yet not know everything about the creature’s conscious experience.
2. If physicalism were true, this would be impossible
3. So physicalism is false

[1]

Bat argument:

Suppose you knew everything about the physical nature of a bat

* You know the gross physical traits
* Its anatomy
* Electrical, chemical and mechanical processed that occur in the cells of which the bat the composed
* Its genetic code
* Its behavior
* Atomic structure of every single organelle

Do you know how bat perceives using echolocation?

Mary argument:

Does mary learn anything when she sees the colorful object for the first time?

Jackson: Yes. She learn what is like to see something in the colour.

**Objections against knowledge argument** : mainly directed at premise 1

1. Imaginability objection
   1. It is true that humans cannot imagine what it is like to have a bat’s experiences
   2. It is also true that an ordinary colorblind person does not know what it is like to see in color.
   3. But we do not know every physical fact about bats, and an ordinary colorblind person does not know every physical fact about ordinary human vision.
   4. Maybe if we really did have all the physical information about bats, we would be able to imagine what it’s like to experience the world as a bat does.
   5. And maybe if a colorblind person had complete knowledge of the biology of color vision, she would be able to imagine what it’s like to see in color.

Jackson: if bat experience were nothing but some physical processes that occur in a bat, we should already have known all about bat experience, including what it’s like to have it, just by knowing all the physical facts about bats. Thus no farther efforts of imagination would be necessary. E.g. To know that a bat have a physical property of 10 grams, no imagination is necessary.

1. “Knowing what it’s like” objection
   1. It is true that Mary sees the red tomato for the first time, she learns something: She learns what it is like to have a red experience.
   2. The dualist account for this by saying that when Mary sees the tomato, she has her first red experience and a as result learns what it’s like to have a red experience
   3. In other words the dualists say that the fact that Mary has now a red experience explains the fact that she now knows what it’s like to have red experience.
   4. But why not say that the fact that Mary now knows what it is like to have red experience just is the fact that she has had a red experience.

The physicalist suggestion here is that

1. “Mary knows what it’s like to see red” is the same as
2. “Mary has seen red”

The truth of (2) doesn’t explain the truth of (1). Rather (1) and (2) are the same truth stated in different ways. (1)=(2). Thus the brain is just being in a state that it has never been in before.

So it is true that Mary didn’t know what it was like to see red, until she saw the tomato. But that just means that Mary never had a sensation of red, until she saw the tomato. And this is compatible with physicalism. Sensation and knowledge occur at the same time. There’s no new fact.

Dualist: When Mary has her first experience, she gains some information about the world. She gains some information about the nature of certain visual experiences.

This is precisely what I’m denying

Lecture 9

“I will die” means “I will not continue to exist forever”.

What do one hope for when one hope to continue to exist? What is the content of your hope?

What do you fear that your existence will not continue? What is the content of your fear?

**Bodily persistence**

* What does it take for your body to persist?
* Your body is a physical thing : a system that consists ultimately of network of interconnected molecules
* The persistence of your body does not require the persistence of any single molecule
* None of the molecules in your body today was present in your body at birth. Cells get replaced
* If aging cells that are excreted by my body are collected until they can form a human body. Is that person me?

**Persistence of Mind**

* Whatever bodily survival amounts to, it is not sufficient for the survival of the self.
* Your body can continue to exist even after you have ceased to exist. E.g. brain death
* You = your mind
* This is the mental conception of persona identity
* 3 versions:
  + Memory Theory
  + Psychological Theory
  + A consciousness based theory

**Memory Theory**

* John Locke: You will exist next year provided that someone next year will have memories of doing things that you are doing today.
* Memory is linked to existence; It’s the same mind so long as they possess the same memories.
* Objection: If we have memories A when we were young, B when we were mature and C when we are old. Suppose B remembers A and C remembers B but not A. Then a paradox ensues.
* Then we redefine it such that successive memory steps would suffice. I.e. Indirect memory links
* Objection: But suppose the person have sudden total amnesia such that not even a second ago could be remembered (Not even redefining the memory link both ways could justify/answer to this paradox).
* Thus it follows that memory theory states that complete loss of memory equate to death

**Psychological Theory (Quinton)**

* A “psychological profile” is a set of memories, beliefs, desires and character traits that can combine so as to give rise to specific forms of behaviors. (extends memory theory)
* 2 psychological profiles p1 and p2 are connected if p2 results from a small/gradual modification of p1 (changes cannot be too sudden and too great)
* Two profiles p and p’ are continuous with one another if they are related by a chain of connected profiles.
* Objection 1: How small is small?
* Objection 2: Split brains. E.g. Hemispherectomy (removing half the brain) as a resort to severe epilepsy. If someone divided my brain and placed it to 2 different bodies and thrown my body away after, each body with half my brain would share similar character traits and their combined traits would be what I had before the operation. So who am I?
* Derek Parfit: I survived both post-operative subjects; it’s just that I am not identical to either of them. I will survive as each, even though neither will be me.
* Objection 3: Supposed to live to be a billion years old. But a billion years from now, your beliefs, desires and character (thus psychological traits) might completely change. The billion year old might not remember a single thing from your present life. But according to psychological theory, you have survived according to psychological continuity.
* Derek Parfit: You do survive but it’s just that you survive to a very low degree. Survival comes in degrees.
* Object 4: Zombification. If sudden I lose all my consciousness but my body is intact. Surely I have not survived. E.g brain death

**Consciousness-based theory**

* Barry Dainton: If a futures person p has conscious experiences that belong to the same stream of consciousness as the experiences that you are having now, then you survive as p.
* Objection 1: How do I survive dreamless sleep such that a completely new stream of consciousness when I awake. No continuous stream? Sleep equates to death
* Modify the account. You will exist at future time t iff there will exist at t something capable of producing experiences belonging to the same stream of consciousness that your present experience belong to.
* Objection 2: Suppose you have offended a powerful wizard. For punishment the wizard decides to literally, completely and suddenly turn you into an octopus. The wizard explains to you that his intention is not to bring about some kafka-like situation (in which you find yourself as it were trapped inside an octopus’ body). All that will be left of you will be an ordinary octopus with only memories and consciousness of being an octopus. According to phenomenology, this is a credible threat. It equivalent is murder.
* But suppose the wizard gives 2 options. 1. After casting the spell, the wizard released the octopus into a nice environment to live out the remainder of its days. 2. The wizard sells the octopus to a sushi bar. We would intuitively pick option one which seems to suggest that we are in some way related to the octopus.

In every theory it seems that the mind could also outlast you. So what is you?

Lecture 10

**Temporal boundaries**: When did your mind come into existence? Under what circumstances, if any, will it cease to exist?

**Spatial boundaries**: Where is your mind located? Is it possible that some of your mental processes occur outside of your body? E.g. Clark and Chalmers: Could it be that some mental processes take place beyond the body?

**Conceptual boundaries**: Which of the activities that you engage in are mental activities? Which of your skills or capacities are mental capacities?

**The extended mind hypothesis**

* Many of our mental processes occur outside of our bodies (controversial claim)
* Note that this is NOT merely to say that many of our mental processes depend on what happens outside our bodies. (totally trivial/uncontroversial)

1. **Premise**: If a part of the world performs a function which we would have no hesitation in recognizing as art of the cognitive process, were it performed by something in the head, then that part of the world is part of the mind.
2. Otto’s notebook performs a function which, were it performed in Otto’s head, we would have no hesitation in recognizing as part of Otto’s mind.
3. Therefore, Otto’s notebook is part of Otto’s mind.

Begging the question against an opponent: tacitly assuming the point he’s arguing is false. (without proof or argument)

* Objection: The notebook is not part of Otto
* It begs the question, Our claim is precisely that it is part of otto
* Objection: Otto might lose the notebook (Memory can’t be lost as easily)
* Maybe Inga might suffer from sudden onset amnesia
* Objection: It takes longer to retrieve information from the notebook than from actual memory. (More effort, indirect and steps)
* Maybe Otto is very good with the notebook and Inga is very slow witted, so that they retrieve information equally quickly
* Objection: A prankster might tamper with the notebook without Otto’s knowledge. (Memory is more secure)
* A hypnotist or neuroscientist might tamer with Inga’s memory without her knowledge.
* Objection: Olaf has no teeth or salivary glands. But he takes a portable blender and a bottle of digestive enzyme wherever he goes. These perform the same functions as Inga’s teeth and saliva, which are parts of Inga’s digestive system. So are we to say that Olaf demonstrates the possibility of “extended digestion”?
* Sure why not?

**Other forms of extended cognition?**

* **Extended reckoning**: solving mathematical problems with the aid of instruments. Still working the calculation in the mind but just that it is not in the head.
* Objection: Then why is electronic aid banned in say, a math test?
* The purpose of the math test is to test on a restricted usage of the mind, i.e. without a calculator.
* **Extended language comprehension**: using an interpreter to converse with a foreigner. The understanding of a foreign language takes place in the interpreter.
* **Extended desire**: A desire for a good meal is simply tendency to do whatever you think would result in your getting a good meal. Your favorite waiter always knows what order you think would result in your getting a good meal, and he places this order as soon as you enter the restaurant. Desire could be located outside the body.
* **Other extended forms of mental states are thus also possible**

**A Contracted Mind Hypothesis?**

* Premise set by clark and chalmers points out that we should not apply a double-standard to intra-cranial (inside the head) and extra-cranial processes: if two processes perform equal functions, we cannot say that one of them, but not the other, counts as part of cognition.
* But there are two ways to avoid the double-standard and be consistent.
  1. By counting both the intra-cranial and extra cranial processes as cognitive (C&C’s stance)
  2. By counting neither the intra-cranial nor the extra-cranial processes as cognitive.
* Instead of saying that Otto’s notebook is a collection of memories, why can’t we say that inga’s memory is just a notebook she carries around in her head?
* Instead of upgrading status of notebook, we downgrade the status of memory.

**Taking stock: heads**

* C&C claim that it is possible for some of your mental processes to occur outside of your head.
* But what is “your head”?
* In one sense it is just the physical organ
* In this sense, it is obvious and uncontroversial that so ,indeed, all, of your mental processes could occur outside of your head.
* In another sense, “your head” is just the place where your mental processes occur.
* In this sense, extended cognition is impossible by definition. Contradiction.
* Hence the extended mind hypothesis is either obviously and uninterestingly true or obviously and necessarily false.

**Cognition and the self**

* “Is extended cognition possible” is not a very interesting question.
* The interesting question is what kinds of cognition are most essential to the self?
* All of the examples of extended cognition we’ve considered, the extended mental process occurs outside the subject’s sphere of conscious awareness. E.g. A person using a calculator have no conscious awareness of what goes on within it.
* How much of your mental activity could you delegate to external systems falling outside the range of your conscious awareness, before you simply cease to exist? (How much of your mental activity must occur within the scope of your conscious awareness, in order for you to continue to exist?)
* Example: Loss of conscious ability to perform long division is highly survivable; loss of perceptual recognition/creative thinking is highly unsurvivable.

**Conclusion**

* At first the extended mind hypotheses sounds controversial and intriguing
* On closer inspection it appears to be neither
* However the idea of extended cognition can be a useful heuristic for determining how central any given piece of conscious psychology is to one’s self identity.

Lecture 11

**Principle of sufficient reason**

There is nothing without a reason (classic formulations): every non-necessary fact has some explanation. I.e. if it is true that P, but did not have to be true that P, then there is some reason why it is true that P. necessary facts are always true.

1.

* It’s a non-necessary fact that life exists, at all, in any form
* By the PSR it follows that something explains this fact
* But the existence of life is not self-explanatory.
* Therefore, something non-living must explain why there is life

2.

* It is a non-necessary fact that space has three dimensions
* By the PST it follows that something explains this fact.
* This explanation cannot come from space itself. Because If explanation is contained within itself, then it must be self-explanatory, then it must be a necessary fact!
* Therefore something non-spatial must explain why space has three dimensions

Note: justification Vs explanation. I exists does not explain why there is something rather than nothing. It only justifies it.

**Cosmological argument (employs PSR)**

1. It is a non-necessary fact that there exists a world of things in time and space. There could be nothing at all. (Why is there something rather than nothing?)
2. Every non-necessary fact has some explanation
3. So, the fact that there exists a world of things in time and space has some explanation
4. This explanation cannot come from within the world of things in time and space
5. Therefore there must be something (being, force, entity) outside of time and space that explains why there exists a world of things in time and space. (from 3 and 4)

**David Hume**:

* If I explain each part of a whole, I explain the whole
* It is possible, in theory, to explain each event that occurs in time and space by reference to some earlier event that caused it.
* This assumes that the series of events extends back infinitely into the past. For all we know, it does.
* Hence Hume says that we can explain why there is a world of things in time and space, by explaining each part of this world in terms of a different earlier part of it. (disagrees with step 4 of cosmological argument: it can come from the world)

**Leibniz:**

* Hume says that if you explain each part of a whole, you explain the whole. But this is untrue in general.
* Suppose we discover a mysterious spherical object drifting through our space. We ask why does this object exist? Upon further investigation we discover that the object consists of a series of nested hollow shells. Each shell is half as thick as the next shell in, ad infinitum. Someone now offers the following explanation. The outermost shell A was generated by the next shell B and so on ad infinitum. It took 1 second for B to generate A, ½ for C to generate B and so on. So the whole process took 2 seconds.
* We have not explained why this whole process of generation take place.
* We have only explained each of the sphere’s parts by reference to another part of the sphere.
* Likewise we don’t explain why there is a world of things in time and space just by explaining each event in this world by reference to an earlier event. We must therefore get out of the system to realize a satisfactory explanation.

**Disproving PSR (Proving that the world contains some ultimate mysteries)**

Contingent :: non-necessary. E.g. a contingent truth is a truth that didn’t have to be true, a contingently existing being is one that exists but could have failed to exist.

**Question Q: is it a contingent fact that the world is the way it contingently is?** I.e. is it a non-necessary fact that the world has its optional non-necessary features that it has.

Suppose so,

* Then by PSR, something explains the fact that the world is the way it contingently is.
* Whatever explains this fact, it cannot be among the ways the world contingently is. (Circular ‘explanation’)
* In other words, only a non-contingent, necessary being can explain why the world is the way it contingently is.
* Moreover, the fact that this necessary being explains why the world is the way it contingently is must itself be a necessary fact.
* Otherwise, the fact that the necessary being explained why the world is the way it contingently is would be part of what was to be explained (i.e. part of the fact that the world is the way it contingently is)
* Hence, if PSR is true, then some necessary being necessarily explains why the world is the way it contingently is.
* But anything that a necessary being necessarily explains is itself necessary.
* So if PSR is true, it is a necessary fact that the world is the way it contingently is.
* This is a contradiction.
* Therefore there is nothing without a reason; some things happen for no reason at all, there exist ultimate mysteries. (absolute mysteries and not just mysteries limited to human understanding)

(Q true and PSR true)=>~PSR

Lecture 12

Metaphysics: What is the world fundamentally made of?

Epistemology: How can I know anything about it?

**The Matrix Hypothesis**

How do you know that you aren’t living in the Matrix?

* Objection: The technology required to set up the Matrix doesn’t exist yet.
* But how do you know? You may be existing in a Matrix of the past.
* Objection: The technology to create the Matrix is impossible. Not a logical possibility
* Using current technology, we could build a computer capable of reproducing all activities in the human brain. The Matrix thus could hypothetically be built.
* David Chalmers: You don’t know if you aren’t living in the Matrix.

**Metaphysics Vs Skepticism**

* Metaphysical hypothesis is a hypothesis about the intrinsic nature of reality. It is a claim about the fundamental, underlying nature of things as they are “in themselves.” E.g. your mass, physiological traits
* Extrinsic qualities are qualities by virtue of relating to other things. E.g. citizenship
* A skeptical hypothesis is one that if true, would render most of our beliefs false.

**Metaphysical Hypothesis (What’s the universe fundamentally consisted of?)**

* Ancient Greeks: separate schools of thought based on 4 elements - Earth, Air, Fire and Water.
* Lucretius: atoms
* Rene Descartes: Matter, minds, God. No empty space/void at all
* George Berkeley: Minds, God. God gives the mind its experiences
* Baruch Spinoza: God. We are just different aspects of God
* Modern Science: Fundamental particles and fields (no different from Lucretius)

None of the above metaphysical hypotheses is put forward as a skeptical hypothesis

A skeptical hypothesis is one that if true, implies that most of our beliefs are false.

**The Matrix as metaphysics**

* It is the hypothesis that reality fundamentally consists of various processes taking place within a powerful computer.
* The claim that one lives in the Matrix is just a claim about the fundamental underlying nature of things as they are in themselves.
* It’s a non-skeptical hypothesis.
* It does not conflict with the idea that you really do see trees, drink coffee etc.
* It just implies that trees and coffee consists of operations taking inside of a computer that is connected to a brain. It’s has an implication on the nature of these objects/processes and not object/processes themselves.
* Like Lucretius, but substituting computer operations for atoms
* Like Spinoza except with computer substituted for God.
* I don’t know if I’m not in the Matrix but it doesn’t change my beliefs of the world either ways
* Objection: Just because the computer causes realistic experiences of trees, coffee and flowers doesn’t mean that the computer literally contains trees, coffee etc.. In order for something to count as a tree, it must have the right kind of intrinsic nature. It must be made of wood ,not computer stuff.
* Immanuel Kant: The external world is nothing but that which causes or has the power to cause conscious experiences like outs. We cannot conceive of any object, expect as a potential cause of certain kinds of experiences.
* For a thing to be made of wood is simply for it to have the power to give us the sorts of experiences that we call “experiences of wood”
* We cannot perceive the causes of these experiences except by having further experiences. I.e. if a thing has the power to give us all the experiences that we associate with \_\_\_, then that thing is a \_\_\_.
* Objection: What if a fake object is perceived, like a plastic wax pear? It gives pear experiences when we see it.
* If a thing has the power to give us all the experiences that we associate with pears, then that thing is a pear.
* If a thing that has the power to give us some but not all of the experiences that we associate with pears, then it is not a pear.

**Further objections and replies**

* Objection: But if people running the computer look inside it, they won’t see any trees.
* They’ll see things that we call trees, they call them something else, like computer processes.
* Objection: If you escape from the Matrix, you’ll realize that you’re were wrong when you thought you saw trees.
* No, you’ll just realize that the trees you saw had a different fundamental nature from what you thought.
* Objection: Suppose that when you escape, you see trees growing next to the computer that runs the Matrix. Those are the real trees.
* They are both real trees, if they have the power to give you the right kinds of experiences. In this case different trees have different underlying natures: some are fundamentally computational, others not. Disjunctive nature.
* Objection: If God one day decides to change the fundamental nature of the universe into earth, air, fire, water.
* Existence will be preserved but the underlying nature is preserved.
* Objection: If all my experiences come from a computer, I have no contact with other sentient beings. Sentient beings are of a different sort than insentient objects like trees; they’re not completely exhausted by common experiences. Sentient beings have conscious experiences. In the Matrix, my experiences originate from a mainframe that’s devoid of conscious experiences. The mind is more powerful than being able to give me experiences. A mind is characterized by its own unique experiences. It follow that there’re no minds in the computer. In the Matrix I have no contact with other minds. Even if the Matrix hypothesis does not incur skepticism in the physical world, it incurs skepticism in minds.
* Such beings could exist as processed in the computer or as conscious effects of such processes.
* Objection: But the computer could easily give me experiences of other people acting like they have minds, without actually bothering to create the people or their minds.
* According the behaviorism, there’s no difference between having a mind and acting like you have a mind. Mind is your behavior: To behave is to have a mind.
* Objection: but behaviorism is clearly false

**Conclusions**

* If we leave out of account our beliefs about other conscious beings, it appears that the Matrix hypothesis is not a skeptical hypothesis, but rather a metaphysical hypothesis.
* But when we take our beliefs about other conscious beings into account, it is easy to find a version of the Matrix Hypothesis that is, indeed, skeptical.

Lecture 13

Newcomb’s paradox: when dominance reasoning and/or expected utilitarian reasoning give conflicting results

1. Box A: $1,000
2. Box B: $0 or $1,000,000

Choice of picking just box B or both Box A and Box B

Predictor is right 90% of the time.

If predictor predicts that you’ll pick box B, there’ll be $1,000,000 into box B.

But if predictor predicts that you’ll pick both boxes, box B will be $0.

Dominance reasoning: Argument for taking one box.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Predictor predicted choice correctly  Likelihood 90% | Predictor predicted your choice wrongly  Likelihood 10% | Expected value of your decision |
| Take box B | +$1,000,000 | $0 | +$900,000 |
| Take both boxes | +$1,000 | +$1,001,000 | +$101,000 |

Conclusion, take one box

Dominance reasoning: Argument for taking both boxes.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Predictor predicted that I’ll take one box | Predictor predicted that I’ll take both boxes | Expected value of your decision |
| Take box B | +$1,000,000 | $0 |  |
| Take both boxes | +$1,001,000 | $1,000 |  |

Conclusion, better off either ways by taking both boxes.

**Replies to paradox**

**Dominance reasoning does not apply**

* Dominance reasoning works only in cases in which your choice does not have an influence on which of the relevant possibilities gets actualized.
* Objection: Your choice can’t influence the predictor since he makes his predictions before you make your choice. To suppose otherwise would be to suppose that you could influence the past, which is impossible.

**The predictor is impossible**

* Utility reasoning and dominance reasoning are both valid decision-making procedures, they cannot give conflicting advice.
* If the predictor is possible the two procedures would have to give conflicting advice on how many boxes to choose.
* Therefore predictor isn’t possible!
* Objection: But humans are pretty predictable!