

Cesar A. Santiago

Introduction to Philosophy, PHI2010

Essay Exam Two: The Truth; Mind and Body; and Self

Truth

The correspondence theory of truth is an epistemological theory in philosophy which states that truth is in nature a definition of reality. That truth coexists with, and has a close relation to, reality. This theory of truth is often associated with metaphysical realism which refers to the theory that all objects in reality behave independent of our thoughts. This theory of truth dates back to Aristotle which wrote in his Metaphysics book about the nature of truths in relation to reality. Plato was also found to have such ideas as well written on several of his writings.

Coherence theory refers to the epistemological theory in philosophy which though closely related to the Correspondence theory of truth, it still differs in some essential points. For one, Coherence says that a proposition which might attempt to cover proportion values in reality must have the values within a specified set of related proportions, given in the proposition. This is in contrast to the coherence theory which does not allow for proportions to count as propositions as they tend to be too vague and inaccurate to give truth to.

A Pragmatic truth is that which represents truth as a tool to solve a practical issue. Attributed to philosopher William James around the 1870s which came up with the idea that thought had no meaning to explain reality, and that therefore thought should only be used with practical purposes. The idea of this theory became known as Pragmatism. The theory of Pragmatic truth attempts to eliminate all of the propositions and declarations of truth that are altogether impractical for human use.

The Semantic theory of truth deals with the idea that all truths are only given by a proposition. That within the same certain scenario of a same truth different propositions can be argued, some which might give different meaning to the truth. It is related to the correspondence theory of truth in that the propositions it analyses use the real world to search for truth values.

There is reason to believe certain of these if not all, all of the four theories of truth which I covered above seem to be related to each other. The Correspondence theory above all seems to stand

out as being the most complete and most understandable out of the four although it lacks the fact that all knowledge in this universe seems to relative except for very few things. The theory that displeased me the most out of the four, though not entirely, is the notion of the pragmatic truth. The idea that within a tautology giving a truth value is impractical is incorrect and there are several ways within mathematics to prove that there is reason for this action.

Mind and Body

Substance dualism, or Cartesian dualism is a considerably different theory to the mind that one might be used to. Rene Descartes came up with the idea that the mind and the body are two entirely different substances, one being physical and one being spiritual. Descartes argued that the mind could exist without a physical substance and that the body within itself does not function without a spirit. The theory goes on to explain that physical things have no thought on their own and that spiritual things have no physical aspect on their own and therefore must be connected somehow. This appears to be a strictly ontological argument for the solution of mind and body connection.

However philosophers in an earlier era also dealt with the idea that the mind might just not exist within the realm of reality. Plato himself speculated that the mind which was able to formulate thought does not exist within the physical spectrum, and that the mind goes on as the body reaches it's end.

Descartes does not go on to speculate on which form connects the body and the mind. E. J. Lowe, a philosopher on substance dualism goes on to state that the two states aren't spiritual and physical but instead personal and physical. The substance of spirit being substituted with the substance of personality. The idea that personality does not exist within one's body but is in itself an idea that isn't tied to a physical realm. And also that the body is not tied to this personality and that is might let it go at will.

The problem with the different forms of substantive duality that I see is that the physical body is built with the capabilities to hold a mind and perform though. It is seen through microscopic beings that even without brains they may formulate responses to the environment. It is very difficult to believe now with modern technologies and advancements that such theories may occur in the real world. Thus I believe just as Plato that this theory is only perfect within the idea and that there might be some nuance that philosophers could have overlooked when questioning duality.

Self

John Locke's idea of the identity of self is that our personality is tied directly to the memories we hold and due those experiences we may perform and action according to our identity. This argument seems logical, mostly everyone may recall certain memories and therefore give a response. It is indeed the basis of our modern education, without memories we would not be able to perform tasks such as writing an essay or give an integral of a complicated mathematical formula. Our voice does seem in it's own way tied to our experiences rather than an inherent personality given from birth.

There is a problem with this view however, that of people's forgetfulness. It is almost impossible to recall a specific scenario picture perfect after you have experienced it. It is even more difficult to trust these memories because the mind tends to fill in the gaps with something else. For example the name of an old friend, you might remember it being one thing but then turns out it was another and that by association your brain replaced it with that of another friend. Therefore, it might not be possible to say that all of our identity is tied to memories, because if it was then we would be bland or random, or something else, but we do not seem to change all that much through the years. Our thoughts change but all in all, most people from the past can recognize us easily.

Also, the problem of brain malfunctions that might cause people to forget more than usual. Issues such as Alzheimer's Syndrome or Amnesia, which can be inherited from our ancestors or achieved via an injury to the head severe enough. People such as these still give a sense of personality and can be distinguished. This seems to be the flaw in the logic of Locke, the fact that even without trustful memories we might still present ourselves in a recognizable manner.

The solution to the problem might therefore be the fact that the brain creates memories to replace ones that it lost. As I mentioned earlier, it might do so because of a circumstance in which it needs to decisively perform an action. Whether or not this circumstance's consequences are severe or

not the mind fills the gap with what it believes is the best guess to get control of the scenario. I might also be brought up that identity can be perceived as an illusion made by the general consensus of how a person behaves on most situations, and therefore attempts to predict through past experiences how they might react next. It could be that it was an evolutionary trait that we got because it was more advantageous to act with society, rather than against, to survive. And as such created illusions of one another to see if they were trustworthy or not based on their past actions.

It is as such that the problem relies on the solution. It is the reason why we still perceive personality on people that might not hold memories. Because the sense of self is given by the observer and not the observed. It is just within the observed person's actions that an observer might reach a conclusion on which to base their personality. However we are still left with the problem of the memory-less mind holding a sense of identity to itself. Still being able to recall that they might be good people or not, without recalling the reason for their predicate. The only answer I can conceive of for this issue is that within memory, the only parts that are not erased are those which give sense to the self.