

PHILOSOPHY 101

FALL 2017

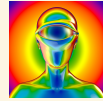
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PHYSICALISM & CONSCIOUSNESS

WHAT IS METAPHYSICS?



METAPHYSICAL QUESTIONS

- What kinds of things exist?
- What is fundamental?

PHYSICS AS METAPHYSICS

Physicalism:

Everything that is or could exist is ultimately physical in nature

ALTERNATIVES TO PHYSICALISM

Dualism:

Physical things exist but some things that do (or could) exist are not (or are not ultimately) physical in nature (e.g. minds, souls, God)

Idealism:

Everything that is or could exist is ultimately *mental* in nature

WHY BE A PHYSICALIST?

1. Against supernaturalism
2. Explanation

AGAINST SUPERNATURALISM

- Supernatural explanations are lazy explanations – they don't really tell us anything

THE ARGUMENT FROM EXPLANATION

1. If our physical theories are highly successful then they correctly describe the nature of reality
2. Our physical theories are highly successful at predicting and controlling our experience of the world
3. \therefore Our physical theories correctly describe the nature of reality (by 1, 2, MP)
4. If our physical theories correctly describe the nature of reality then physicalism is true
5. \therefore Physicalism is true (by 3, 4, MP)

PROVING THE TRUTH OF PHYSICALISM

- Show that our physical theories are not merely *coincidentally* true
- Show that our physical theories are *exhaustively* true

REDUCTIONISM

Deducing, explaining, or otherwise showing a dependence relation to exist between one set of properties, facts, or concepts, and another privileged set of properties, facts, or concepts.

REDUCING CONSCIOUSNESS

- Reduce features of conscious experience to matter/energy organized according to physical laws (reduction base)
 - Can we deduce, explain, or otherwise show that conscious experience depends solely on matter/energy operating under physical laws?
 - If the answer is “yes” then we have “reduced” or “given a reduction” of conscious experience in terms of physics

The "Hard Problem" of Consciousness:

Why do the physical processes that characterize (e.g. human) life result in conscious experience?

