

In-class notes (3/14-16)

PHIL 232

1 Materialism & Mechanism

Materialism a metaphysical view about what there is – viz. matter (i.e. stuff with properties of extension and perhaps impenetrability)

Mechanism an explanatory view about what explains what. Specifically, concerning how (sub)microscopic bodies with size, shape, motion, etc., interact and explain all manifest properties of macroscopic things

1.1 Galileo’s Conceivably Argument

Now I say that whenever I conceive any material or corporeal substance, I immediately feel the need to think of it as bounded, and as having this or that shape...[etc.]...From these conditions I cannot separate such a substance by any stretch of my imagination. But that it must be white or red, bitter or sweet, noisy or silent, and of sweet or foul odor, my mind does not feel compelled to bring in as necessary accompaniments. Without the senses as our guides, reason or imagination unaided would probably never arrive at qualities like these. Hence I think that tastes, odors, colors, and so on are no more than mere names so far as the object in which we place them is concerned, and that they reside only in the consciousness (Galileo, p. 274).

- Galileo espouses “eliminativism” about secondary qualities
- Thinking of a material object requires thinking of it as having a particular set of qualities (i.e. size, shape, location, motion, etc.)
- Thinking of a material object does not require thinking of it as having specific sensory qualities (e.g. color, taste, smell, sound)
- The only qualities possessed by a material object are those which we must attribute to it in thought
- Sensory qualities are not qualities of material objects, but rather features of our consciousness of those objects — i.e. “sensations” [from 2, 3]
- If there were no conscious beings there would be no sensory qualities (e.g. colors, tastes, smells, etc.). [from 4]

Determinate vs Determinable Qualities**Determinable** general class/genus**Determinate** specific species or member of a class**Inseparability argument**

1. Every physical change in an object is a change to its determinate qualities
2. Some qualities of bodies are present through all changes—viz., the determinates of size, shape, solidity, and motion
3. Size, shape, solidity, and motion are inseparable from any existing body

1.2 Secondary Qualities

- Sec qualities are “mere” powers
 - colors, tastes, smells

Problems with Locke’s distinction

- Aren’t all qualities powers?
 1. Shape is a primary quality
 2. If shape is a primary quality then it is a quality
 3. Qualities are powers to produce ideas
 4. Shape is a power to produce an idea—presumably the idea of shape
 5. But secondary qualities are also powers to produce ideas
 6. There is no primary/secondary distinction between qualities

Maintain that there is only one sense to “quality” but distinguish between real qualities and mere qualities

- “Real” qualities are qualities which are more than mere powers in things, and exist even in the absence of things they affect
- “Mere” qualities are no more than powers in things and cease to exist the things they affect are absent

Restating the distinction:

- Primary Qualities:
 - Qualities of bodies which are “really” in them in the sense of being both: (i) non-relational and (ii) of a determinable which must be had by any body (e.g. solidity, extension, size, shape)
- Secondary Qualities:
 - Qualities of bodies, which are “merely” in them, and determined by their primary qualities to produce sensory ideas in perceiving subjects. These qualities are both (i) relational and (ii) of determinables which need not be had by every body (e.g. colors, sounds, tastes)

Further, our ideas of primary qualities really “resemble” them while our ideas of secondary qualities do not (II.viii.15).

- Abstractionist theory of general ideas (abstract ideas)
 - There are no genuine kinds in the world, they are the “workmanship of the understanding”