

# Philosophy 101

## Consciousness & Physicalism

January 22, 2015

# Review

## Review Questions

- ① A valid deductive argument is:
- A. *An argument with a true conclusion*
  - B. *An argument that is always true*
  - C. *An argument with true premises and true conclusion*
  - D. *An argument in which, if the premises are true, the conclusion must be true*

## Review Questions

② Is this argument form valid?

- $P \rightarrow Q$
- $Q$
- $\therefore P$

A. Yes

B. No

## Review Questions

③ Is this argument form valid?

- $P \rightarrow Q$
- $\sim Q$
- $\therefore \sim P$

A. Yes

B. No

Philosophy 101

Consciousness  
& Physicalism

Review

Physicalism &  
Reduction

# Physicalism & Reduction

# Metaphysics

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

# Physicalism

**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

# Why be a Physicalist?

## Against Supernaturalism

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

# Why be a Physicalist?

## The Argument from Explanation

- ① Our physical theories are highly successful at predicting and controlling our experience of the world
- ② If our physical theories are highly successful then they correctly describe the nature of reality
- 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)

## Assumptions of the Argument

- ② If our physical theories are highly successful then they correctly describe the nature of reality
  - Assumes that the correctness of our theories is required for/best explains their success
    - What if the success of physics is a mere coincidence?

## Assumptions of the Argument

- ④ If our physical theories correctly describe the nature of reality then physicalism is true
  - Assumes that our physical theories are *exhaustive*

# 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

# Reducing Consciousness

The “Hard Problem” of Consciousness: Why do the physical processes that characterize life result in conscious experience?