

Philosophy 101

Science & Subjectivity

January 16, 2014

Appearance and Reality

The Scientific vs. the Manifest Image

the philosopher is confronted...by two pictures of essentially the same order of complexity, each of which purports to be a complete picture of man-in-the-world, and which, after separate scrutiny, he must fuse into one vision. Let me refer to these two perspectives, respectively, as the manifest and the scientific images of man-in-the-world. (Wilfred Sellars, Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man)

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Contrast two ways of thinking about the world:

The Manifest Image: The world of perceptible things as it appears to us in our everyday experience

The Scientific Image: The world of unperceivable things and the laws governing them which we postulate in our scientific theories to explain the world as it appears to us

Galileo on Sensory Qualities

Galileo – “Natural Philosopher”



Galileo's 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; as being large or small in relation to other things, and in some specific place at any given time; as being in motion or at rest; as touching or not touching some other body; and as being one in number, or few, or many. 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 (Assayer, 274)

Galileo's Argument

...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. Hence if the living creature were removed, all these qualities would be wiped away and annihilated. (Assayer, 274)

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- sensory qualities are “no more than mere names” that “reside only in consciousness”.
- if there were no conscious beings, no sensory qualities would exist.

Argument Extraction

- What support does the conclusion have?

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- ⑤ \therefore If there were no conscious beings there would be no sensory qualities (e.g. colors, tastes, smells, etc.). [from 4]

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 - required for the scientific or causal explanation of why material beings are the way that they are
 - conceptual requirements of our thinking of material beings (e.g. being extended → being located)

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- the fundamentally explanatory features of the physical world are captured by mathematics
- mathematical knowledge is acquired purely by reason, not by experience

Relativity Arguments

Since the same bodies are sweet to some men, and bitter to others, it may reasonably be inferred that they are neither sweet nor bitter in their own nature, and absolutely speaking. The modern philosophers, though they are no sceptics...teach that all these qualities are perceptions of our mind, and do not exist in the objects of our senses. (Bayle's Dictionnaire, 1730)

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- ② No physical object can have opposing properties at the same time
- ③ \therefore Physical objects do not have the sensory qualities we naïvely attribute to them