

Philosophy 101

Consciousness & Physicalism

September 2, 2014

Review

Review Questions

① A valid 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

Why be a Physicalist?

- ① Explanation
- ② Causal closure

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 The best explanation of why physical theory is so successful is that it correctly describes the nature of reality
- ③ If our physical theories correctly describe the nature of reality then physicalism is true
- ④ \therefore Physicalism is true

Why be a Physicalist?

Causal Closure: Every event that has a cause has *only* a physical cause (or physical causes)

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

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?