

Philosophy 132
Philosophy of Mind
Handout 3
Wednesday, 5 September 2007
NOTE ROOM MOVE – 160 KROEBEL

1. *The Qualitative & the Intentional*

Supposed examples of non-intentional mental states:

(1) Bodily sensations—e.g. pains, tickles, orgasms;

Bodily sensations do not have an intentional object in the way perceptual experiences do... we distinguish between a visual experience and what it is a visual experience of; but we do not make this distinction in respect of pains. (Colin McGinn, *The Character of Mind*, p.8)

(But contrast David Armstrong, *Bodily Sensations* and Michael Tye, *Ten Problems about Consciousness*, Ch. 4.)

(2) ‘Undirected’ emotions and moods—e.g. depression, anxiety

Undirected anxiety, depression, and elation are not Intentional, the directed cases are Intentional. (John Searle, *Intentionality*, p.2.)

The obvious objection to defining the mental as the intentional is that pains are not intentional – they do not represent, they are not about anything. The obvious objection to defining the mental as “the phenomenal” is that beliefs don’t feel like anything – they don’t have phenomenal properties, and a person’s real beliefs are not always what they appear to be. The attempt to hitch pains and beliefs together seems ad hoc – they don’t seem to have anything in common except our refusal to call them “physical”. (Richard Rorty, ‘The Invention of the Mind’, Ch. 1 *Philosophy & the Mirror of Nature*, p.22)

2. *Our propensity to Distinguish Physical Objects and Minds*

Infants are sensitive to various aspects of physical objects: for example, the kinematic principles which govern their movements.

Infants are sensitive to the contrast between animate and inanimate objects from very early on.

For example:

- a.) infants will copy the expression of humans but not inanimate objects;
- b.) at 6 months infants have expectations about the goal-directed activity of humans but not of inanimate objects (they interpret adult movements as failed attempts to grasp an object; but do not so interpret the movement of a rod);
- c.) they have different expectations about how animate objects should move:

The present results suggest that while 5-month-old infants apply the principle of continuous motion to inanimate objects, they do not readily apply it to humans. There is evidence from prior studies that infants differentiate between animate and inanimate objects in appropriate ways (Poulin-Dubois et al., 1996; Spelke, Phillips, et al., 1995). However, the present study represents a situation in which they mistakenly differentiate between the two, suggesting that at 5 months, infants do not readily view humans as material objects. (Valerie A. Kuhlmeier, Paul Bloom, Karen Wynn, ‘Do 5-month-old infants see humans as material objects?’, *Cognition*, 2004, 94, 95-103, p.101.)

There is some empirical evidence that the contrast between animate and inanimate objects is fairly fundamental to human cognition. Why should it matter that we have the category of the animate, or of agents, or of humans? What impact does that have on how we think about ourselves and of others?

3. *This Course*

There are two inter-twining themes to this course:

- (A) How are we to conceive of how ‘qualitative’ aspects of mind fit together with ‘contentful’ aspects? Is Rorty correct to claim that there is something *ad hoc* here?
- (B) Given that the concept of an animate thinking thing, and possibly that of a human consciousness is one of the concepts we employ from very early in life, how do we come to know about the social world around us and what do we know?

That is, our focus in this course is on the question how are we to conceive of (human) mental beings within a natural world, but our starting point is not primarily metaphysical (is there a mind stuff distinct from physical stuff; if not, what is special about the mind) but epistemological: how is the category of mentality given to us?

FIVE THEMES:

Problem of Other Minds I: the Traditional Sceptical Scenario

Qualitative Aspects of the Mind: the case of Bodily Sensation

Functionalism and Qualia

The Problem of Other Minds II: the Subjective

Intentionality & Consciousness

4. *The Traditional Problem of Other Minds*

I conclude that other human beings have feelings like me, because, first, they have bodies like me, which I know, in my own case, to be the antecedent condition of feelings; and because, secondly, they exhibit the acts, and other outward signs, which in my own case I know by experience to be caused by feelings. I am conscious in myself of a series of facts connected by an uniform sequence, of which the beginning is modifications of my body, the middle is feelings, the end is outward demeanor. In the case of other human beings I have the evidence of my senses for the first and last links of the series, but not for the intermediate link. I find, however, that the sequence between the first and last is as regular and constant in those other cases as it is in mine. In my own case I know that the first link produces the last through the intermediate link, and could not produce it without. Experience, therefore, obliges me to conclude that there must be an intermediate link; which must either be the same in others as in myself, or a different one: I must either believe them to be alive, or to be automatons: and by believing them to be alive, that is, by supposing the link to be of the same nature as in the case of which I have experience, and which is in all other respects similar, I bring other human beings, as phenomena, under the same generalizations which I know by experience to be the true theory of my own existence. (J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, 6th edition (London, 1889)) pp. 243-244.

Some sceptical scenarios:

ROBOTS: unbeknownst to you, you are the last surviving human, but to make you life comfortable you have been surrounded by robots since birth to provide you with the simulacrum that you live within a normal Western community sharing feelings and values with those around you.

INVERSION: for some aspect of phenomenal experience, say your visual experience of red, or your feelings of pain, there is someone just like you who has a corresponding experience, say one of green, or a feeling of intense tickling, in the light of corresponding causes and yet reacts just as you do. How could you know that you don't see or feel things in the same way?

DECEPTIVE ACTORS: you have been brought up as in the *Truman Show*, you are surrounded by people who seem to have interesting inner lives and suffer great turmoil; in fact they are incredibly skilled actors who are nonetheless dull and boring in their ordinary lives; few if any of the feelings and thoughts they appear to you to have correspond to what they are really feeling.

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