

The Mind–Body Problem

What Is the Mind–Body Problem?

- The mind–body problem owes its modern formulation to Descartes
- The general question is:
 - How do two fundamentally different substances interact?
- The mind seems like its a very different thing than the body.
 - How can these apparently conflicting entities causally influence each other, much less exist together?

Properties of

Minds	Bodies
Unextended (nonspatial)	Extended (spatial)
Indivisible	Divisible
Private	Public
Nonphysical/Immaterial	Physical/Matter
Immobile	Mobile
Thinking	Non-thinking

The Mind-Body Program

- Provide an adequate account about the nature of minds and bodies in such a way that one can explain:
 - How mental events cause physical events
 - and
 - How physical events cause mental events.
- What is the interaction between these two substances?

Candidates for a Solution to the Mind–Body Problem

- Dualism
 - Substance Dualism
- Monism
 - Idealism
 - Materialism
 - Property Dualism
 - Identity theory
 - Functionalism
 - Eliminative materialism

Dualism

- **Dualism:** the view that there exists two kinds of distinct substances
- **Substance Dualist Theory of Mind:** a theory that claims the mind is a different substance than and independent of the body
 - Descartes' dualism holds that these two different substances are capable of existing independently of each other

Substance

- **Substance:** something which exists in such a way as to depend on nothing else for its existence
 - "Primary" substance: God – an infinite thinking substance
 - "Secondary" substances: depend on God for their existence but don't depend on other created things
 - Minds: finite thinking substances
 - Bodies: finite material substances

Monism

- **Monism:** the claim that there is only one kind of substance
 - **Idealism:** the only kind of substance is mental
 - **Materialism:** the only kind of substance is material/physical

Dualism



Descartes

Three Arguments for Dualism

1. Argument from Doubt
2. Argument from Conceptual Distinctness
3. Argument from Divisibility

1. Argument from Doubt

1. I cannot doubt I am a thinking thing.
 2. I can doubt I am a body.
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3. Therefore, thinking is an essential property to my being.

Flanagan's Missing Premise Response

- Owen Flanagan argues that the Argument from Doubt works only given the following assumption:
 - If a thing, P, is known for certain to have some property, M, and is not known for certain to have some other property, B, then M is essential to P but B is not.
- But, this assumption is false
 - You do not doubt that the desk in the front of the room is rectangular
 - But, you may doubt that the desk is mostly open space when viewed at the atomic level
 - Given the Missing Premise, you must conclude that rectangularity is an essential property of the desk but atomic structure is not

Argument from Conceptual Distinctness

1. "Everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it.
 2. "The fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct since they are capable of being separated, at least by God.
 3. "I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing.
 4. "I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing."
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5. "Therefore, it is certain that I [my mind is] am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it."

Problems with the Argument from Conceptual Distinctness

- @ 2: Is it true that because one can conceive of two things as distinct that they are distinct?
 - What's conceptually possible may not be physically actual
- @ 3: How can one know that one's self is nonphysical when all that one can know is the physical?

3. Argument from Divisibility

1. The body is divisible.
 2. The mind is indivisible:
 - (i) I cannot distinguish parts to my thinking self;
 - (ii) Loss of a body part does not result in a corresponding loss of mind;
 - (iii) Willing, understanding, and sensing are not separate parts of the mind but are three capacities of one mind.
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3. Therefore, the mind and the body are not identical. They are different kinds of things.

Problems with the Argument from Divisibility

- @ 2: Why think this premise is true?
 - Just because one perceives one's mind as unified, does that mean it is?
 - There's no contradiction in thinking the mind is divisible.
 - So, we need an argument supporting the claim in premise 2
 - Without such an argument, Descartes merely assumes the indivisibility of mind when that is what he is supposed to be arguing for.
- Does empirical evidence support the indivisibility of mind?
 - Stay tuned for Parfit in the Personal Identity section
 - The question raised in this premise about one's sense of self and its apparent independence from the body is a key issue in personal identity