The Mind-Body Problem

Consciousness and its relation to the brain

Nomological Danglers

- Are conscious experiences nomological danglers?
  - i.e., phenomena not accounted for by physical theories and laws.
  - Do physical theories and laws leave out conscious *experiences*?

Consciousness and the brain

- We know that conscious states are related to the brain. Evidence comes from a variety of sources:
  - Psychotropic drugs
  - Brain damage
  - Dementia, Alzheimer's, Down's Syndrome, etc.
  - Menstrual cycles
  - Diet and exercise
  - Blood pressure

What type of relation?

- How do the two relate?
  - Identical?
  - Causally?
  - Property dualism?
  - Supervenience?

Identity Thesis

- (J.J.C. Smart)
- Brain states are identical to conscious states.
  - The experience of *x* is identical to some neurophysiological state *y*.

Leibniz's Law

- Two Parts:
  - Indiscernibility of Identicals (aka Numerical Identity)
    - If *x* is identical to *y* then *x* and *y* have all and only the same properties.
  - Identity of Indiscernibles (aka Qualitative Identity)
    - If, for every property *F,* object *x* has *F* if and only if object *y* has *F*, then *x* is identical to *y.*
      - $\forall F(Fx \leftrightarrow Fy) \rightarrow x=y$

Which type of identity? Part 1

- Smart endorses "strict identity"…
  - Numerical identity
- Numerical Identity
  - A reductive relationship
    - Eminem is numerically identical to Slim Shady who is numerically identical to Marshal Mathers.
      - How many objects are there?

Type vs. Token Identity

- Type identity:
  - Any and all conscious experiences are numerically identical with neurophysiological states.
- Token identity:
  - A particular conscious experience (seeing start after being hit on the head) is identical to a particular neurophysiological state.

Which type of identity? Part 2

- Smart endorses Type Numerical Identity.
  - Problem: No two *homo sapiens* are exactly identical, not even identical twins. Yet we all have the same experiences.
  - Saving the theory: Endorse token identity. Each individual's experiences are identical to that individual's neurophysiological processes. Any two "normal" individuals (ignoring obvious exceptions like autism, etc.) are sufficiently similar enough to say they have the same experiences.

Science!

- Science increasingly demonstrates identity relationships:
  - Magnetism and electricity
  - Lightening and electricity

Evidence

- Science will eventually demonstrate that neurophysiological processes and sensory experiences are numerically identical (Indiscernibility of Identicals)
- Demonstrations:
  - Morning Star
    - Last star visible on the horizon after sunrise.
  - Evening Star
    - First star seen on the horizon after sunset.

Answering Objections

- Some objections Smart addresses have already been circumvented in the prior presentation of the positive argument.

Objection from Infallibility

- Conscious experiences are infallible. I could be wrong about my neural states or may not know anything at all about neural states. Ergo, conscious experiences aren't numerically identical with neurophysiological states.
- Reply:
  - Epistemology does not determine metaphysics. Metaphysics determines epistemology.

Objection from Perspective

- Conscious experiences are first-person; that is, only I know what I am thinking/experiencing. Neurophysiological states are third-person; that is, anyone with the proper tools can determine neurophysiological states.
- Reply:
  - Science will eventually demonstrate this or not.
    - Reading Cognitive Content

Stone Objection

- I can imagine myself turning to stone and still having conscious experiences, so the two aren't equivalent.
- Reply:
  - I can imagine all sorts of things, it doesn't make any of them true.
  - Logical possibility does not entail nomological possibility.

Beetle in the Box

- From Wittgenstein: Language provides rules for correct application of terms. How did phenomenal language take hold if the statements aren't true.
- Reply:
  - Phenomenal language and brain language has different logical structures.
  - Big deal anyway; we speak incorrectly all the time.
    - (This will come up again in personal identity and free will.)

Lack of Evidence Objection

- Its not clear what evidence would support an identity relationship over some of the other alternatives.

Smart's Final Remarks

- All the evidence for an identity relationship and for epiphenomenalism (property dualism or functionalism) may turn out to be the same.
- Parsimony (Ockham's Razor) favors the identity thesis.
- Reply on behalf of the critic:
  - Ockham's Razor does not give us truth.