

Minds and Machines

spring 2003

Behaviorism, contd.

two problems for dualism

- mental causation
- how do I know that you have a mind?

(Ryle raises the second problem, which doesn't depend on his accusation of a "category mistake")

the measure of a man

behaviorism: first try

S is in mental state M iff S behaves in such-and-such ways

e.g. S is in pain iff S writhes, groans, etc.

from the philosophical toolkit:

dispositions (powers, tendencies)

- a special kind of property
- examples: fragility, solubility, elasticity
- a fragile object is (to a first approximation) something that *would* break if it *were* struck
- a wine glass is fragile (has the property of fragility) even when it isn't manifesting the kind of behavior (breaking) distinctive of fragility

behaviorism: second try

S is in mental state M iff S is *disposed* to behave in such-and-such ways

e.g. S is in pain iff S is disposed to (has a tendency to/is inclined to) writhe, groan, etc.

problems (I)

- Either the behaviorist describes “behavior” (a) in terms of mere bodily movements (e.g. “Smith’s arm is rising”) or (b) mentalistically (e.g. “Smith is raising his arm”, “Jones is shouting angrily”). If (a), it is hard to see how to state a plausible version of the theory; if (b), behaviorism doesn’t help explain how a merely physical thing could have mental states

problems (II)

- the special access we have to our own mental states is hard to explain on the behaviorist view
- aren't mental states the *inner causes* of behavior?
- a mental state doesn't have "a fund of behavioral consequences to call its own": what a person does depends on what mental states she is in

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- read Place, Smart, Kripke
- read the suggested sections from Crane