

Introduction to Modern Philosophy

Lecture §9

End of RD: Med 6: The Mind/Body Problem

-->D's arg. for the "real distinction"=mind/body dualism="substance dualism"

--conseq. 1: immortality of soul?

-->conseq. 2: "property dualism"=irreducibility of mental to physical: Body has divisibility, mechanism, determinism, and mind has indivisibility, teleology, freedom

-->Big Problem: mind/body "intimacy" (causality: outside-in/inside-out)

WHY A PROBLEM?: RD's appeal to likeness of causes and effects.

-->D's solution: "contingent interactionism" (3 cheers for the pineal gland!)

--->Gilbert Ryle: the ghost in the machine

--other solutions: materialism (Hobbes); neutral monism (Spinoza); panpsychism (Leibniz)

RD has a pos marker (C&D) and a neg marker (indubitability) for certainty.

In Med 5-6 RD is recovering what was doubted in Med 1.

The nature of the ext. world is extension (which is geometricality--capacity to be char'd by geometry).

After proving the existence of the ext. world in early Med 6, RD attempts to address a problem: mind/body problem, broadly. He argues for the real distinction betw the mind and body: by 'real' he means a distinction in being, not merely in words. Mind and body are essentially different, i.e., are different substances. How he argues for it:

1) I C&D intuit the mind to be thinking thing.

proof: intuit is C&D and God isn't a deceiver. QED.

2) I C&D intuit that body is extension.

proof: same as above.

3) If mind and body are distinct essentially, they do not depend on each other for their existence. Hence, mind can exist on it's own (an implication of the cogito, under the EDH).

Has RD shown the immortality of the soul via 1,2,3? No, since he has only shown that the mind exists independently, not that it exists forever. Immortality is possible, but not yet established (BH).

RD wants more than substance dualism. He wants property dualism: you cannot explain the mind by appealing to the properties of the body (and vice versa). Body has divisibility, is mechanistic and is fully determined. Mind is indivisible, teleological (its purposes are its own, not driven by mechanical principles i.e., and are free (undetermined).

JP: this means man is internally free and externally determined.

But there is a huge problem: we are beings which are both minds and bodies. How do we explain the intimate unity that our mind and body seem to have (if they are so different, how can they be so intimately related)? How can I cause things in the physical world, and how can things in the physical world cause things in the mental world? RD's answer: God made it so (it is a contingent fact establ'd by God). If you look carefully at the physiology of the brain, you will see this is so. He thought there was a part of the brain (the common sense part--otherwise called the Pineal Gland) which produces physical images, and then has physical effects (raises my arm). Outside objects produce activities in the pineal gland, which are converted into mental images.

JP: this is an entirely unsatisfactory answer. But, lucky for him, we don't have a better answer, either. RD thought of this as a kind of interface, a doorway thru which physical becomes mental, and mental becomes physical.

Ryle was correct to note that this was like a fairy story about a ghost which lived, but need not, in a machine. But current psychological theory has the same problem, despite all that.

Other solutions than dualism: materialism (throw out the mind--Hobbes; problem, implausibly reduces mental stuffs), neutral monism (there is a third substance which is in one respect mind, in another body--Spinoza; problem, how to characterize this other substance. God was the third substance in BS. Upset the Jewish elders, since implied pantheism), 'panpsychism' (really, all things are mental [deep down]--Leibiz; problem, implausibly reduces physical stuffs).