



KEY TERMS

**IN PHILOSOPHY
OF MIND**



PETE MANDIK



Key Terms in Philosophy of Mind

Continuum *Key Terms in Philosophy*

The *Key Terms* series offers undergraduate students clear, concise, and accessible introductions to core topics. Each book includes a comprehensive overview of the key terms, concepts, thinkers, and texts in the area covered and ends with a guide to further resources.

Key Terms in Philosophy forthcoming from Continuum:

Aesthetics, Brent Kalar

Ethics, Oskari Kuusela

Logic, edited by Jon Williamson and Federica Russo

Philosophy of Religion, Raymond J. VanArragon

Political Philosophy, Jethro Butler

Key Terms in Philosophy of Mind

Pete Mandik

Continuum International Publishing Group

The Tower Building

11 York Road

London SE1 7NX

80 Maiden Lane

Suite 704

New York, NY 10038

www.continuumbooks.com

© Pete Mandik 2010

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-8470-6348-9

PB: 978-1-8470-6349-6

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Typeset by Newgen Imaging Systems Pvt Ltd, Chennai, India

Printed and bound in Great Britain by the MPG Books Group

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vi
Introduction: What Is Philosophy of Mind?	1
The Key Terms	11
The Key Thinkers	135
The Key Texts	162
Guide to Further Reading	170
<i>Index</i>	173

Acknowledgments

For valuable comments on early draft versions of several of the entries, I am grateful to the following individuals: Ken Aizawa, Anibal Astobiza, James Dow, Tanasije Gjorgoski, Peter Hankins, Bryce Huebner, Corey Maley, Marcin Milkowski, Liz Schier, Eric Schwitzgebel, Eric Steinhart, Eric Thomson, Gary Williams, and Chase Wrenn.

For love, support, and very serious and thorough assistance with the text based on a mastery of the English language that is far superior to my own, I thank my wife, Rachelle Mandik.

Introduction: What Is Philosophy of Mind?

The topics definitive of the philosophy of mind, such as the MIND/BODY PROBLEM, INTENTIONALITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, and THE PROBLEM OF OTHER MINDS, are problems of enormous importance to broader philosophical concerns in the main branches of philosophy: metaphysics, ethics, and EPISTEMOLOGY. Here are some brief descriptions of intersections of central concern between philosophy of mind and, respectively, metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology. (Note that small capital letters are used throughout this book for cross-referencing between the many entries.)

Metaphysics: Core questions of existence concern the nature and extent of both mind-dependent and mind-independent existence.

Ethics: Beings who have moral standing and to whom ethical obligations are directed are beings with minds, as are the beings with the obligations.

Epistemology: Various key means by which knowledge is gained, such as PERCEPTION, INTROSPECTION, and INFERENCE, are mental faculties. Further, special problems arise concerning minds as objects of knowledge: how, for example, can it be known whether there are minds other than my own?

Philosophy of mind thus plays a central role in the broad philosophical project of understanding reality, our place and (moral) status within it, and the means by which such understanding is achieved.

In addition to intersections with other key areas of philosophy, philosophy of mind has also enjoyed prominent interactions with various empirical sciences in recent decades, especially through interdisciplinary interactions with the cognitive sciences (see COGNITIVE SCIENCE). Thus, much recent work in philosophy of mind has been informed by (and to some extent, has informed)

advances in psychology, linguistics, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, neuroscience, and anthropology.

Because of the various interactions philosophy of mind has enjoyed, both inside the broader discipline of philosophy and outside of it, contemporary philosophers of mind employ a rich vocabulary of technical terms often borrowed and adapted from other fields. Such terminological richness can be more a burden than a boon to the novice. And even readers beyond the novice level may welcome guidance through the thicket of terms and ideas that make up the philosophy of mind. The remainder of this introductory essay lays out foundational problems that define the contemporary philosophy of mind.

The mind/body problem

Since so many of the historical and contemporary discussions in the philosophy of mind concern what has come to be known as “the mind/body problem,” we do well to start here with our introduction to the philosophy of mind.

An inventory of our world would likely mention the many physical bodies that apparently populate it. Such bodies include more than just the bodies of people and nonhuman animals, but stones, coffee cups, and crumpled pieces of paper count among the physical bodies as well. Physical bodies exemplify characteristically physical properties, properties such as their shape, mass, and electrical charge (see PROPERTY).

Arguably, physical bodies and their physical properties aren’t the only entities or phenomena that we encounter in attempting the world’s inventory. We are aware of much else besides, in particular, our AWARENESS itself may count among the existing things, and the properties of our own awareness may count among the properties instantiated (see INSTANTIATION). Perhaps each of us is identical to or at least in possession of a special nonphysical entity in virtue of which we are aware. Call this alleged entity a “mind.” As a first stab at characterizing the mind/body problem, it is the problem of specifying whether there are such things as minds, such properties as mental properties, and, if so, specifying the nature of any relations that mental things and properties bear to physical bodies and physical properties.

Some philosophers argue that minds and/or mental properties are radically distinct from physical bodies and their properties. Such positions comprise the

various kinds of DUALISM. One kind of dualism, substance dualism (see DUALISM, SUBSTANCE), involves viewing the world as populated by two radically distinct kinds of particulars. According to the substance dualism promoted by René DESCARTES, physical particulars are things that essentially have EXTENSION (the capacity to occupy space) and essentially lack the capacity for thinking, whereas mental particulars are things that are essentially thinking and unextended.

A little later, we'll examine two special aspects of mentality, intentionality, and consciousness, each of which results in distinctive sets of considerations regarding the mind/body problem. But for now, we can continue our focus on Descartes's approach to the mind/body problem. For Descartes, one of the ideas that helped prove the distinctness of his mind and his body was the idea that his own mind was known by him for certain to exist (since not even a powerful demon could deceive him about the truth of propositions like "I think," "I exist," and "I am a thinking thing"), while no such certainty, however, attached to propositions concerning the existence of *any* physical body (since, for all Descartes knows, a powerful demon may very well be fooling him about those propositions).

Problems raised for Cartesian substance dualism include the problem of whether there's any good argument for it and whether it is compatible with the commonsense view that there are causal interactions between the mental and the physical. Such commonsense causal interactions include when a physical event (such as an explosion) causes the (mental) perception of it or when a (mental) volitional or intentional state results in a physical event (such as a ball being kicked). This latter problem that arises for Cartesian dualism—the *problem of interaction*—is the problem of explaining how entities as allegedly diverse as differing in whether they even have spatial extent can nonetheless enter into causal relationships (see MENTAL CAUSATION).

Slightly different dualisms posit that instead of a mental/physical divide between kinds of particulars, a mental/physical divide between kinds of properties that may be had by a single particular. This latter variety of dualism—property dualism (see DUALISM, PROPERTY)—may nonetheless be prone to its own version of the problem of interaction, since questions may be raised in terms of the causal efficacy of properties, and thus, for example, the question arises of whether a particular's nonphysical mental properties can be causally efficacious with respect to the distribution of nonmental physical properties in the world.

While some philosophers attempt to either fix or live with the problems of dualism, others reject dualism, embracing instead one of the various forms of monism. One general form of monism—**MATERIALISM** or **PHYSICALISM**—embraces the view that everything is ultimately physical. Two kinds of physicalists are reductive physicalists (see **PHYSICALISM**, **REDUCTIVE**) who affirm the identification of mental phenomena with certain kinds of physical phenomena and eliminative materialists (see **ELIMINATIVE MATERIALISM**) who deny the existence of anything mental. Another kind of monism—**IDEALISM**—embraces the view that everything is ultimately mental and so-called physical bodies such as rocks, coffee cups, and crumpled pieces of paper have no existence independent of our perceptions or ideas of them. Noneliminativist physicalist monism is the most popular alternative to dualism embraced by contemporary philosophers of mind, though these physicalists are divided among themselves over how best to conceive mental/physical relations. One position in this area—**FUNCTIONALISM**—holds that mental states are multiply realizable in such diverse systems as biological nervous systems and appropriately programmed electronic computers (see **MULTIPLE REALIZABILITY**). In contrast, many *identity theorists* (see **TYPE-IDENTITY THESIS**) affirm that mental states are identical to brain states and thus nothing lacking a biological brain could instantiate the mental states instantiated by humans.

The discussion so far has made little mention of the properties alleged by some philosophers to be special properties of mental states, properties such as intentionality and consciousness. It is to such properties and their relevance to the mind/body problem that we now turn.

Intentionality

Intentionality may be characterized as the directedness of the mind upon its objects, but intentionality is too puzzling and this characterization too brief for justice to thereby be done. Many philosophers would offer as core examples of mental states with intentionality the various mental states that can be described as being *about* something. Thus would a **THOUGHT** about a vacation in Paris or a **BELIEF** about the average temperature on the surface of Mars exhibit intentionality or “aboutness.” The puzzling nature of intentionality may be highlighted by focusing on mental states that are about things or states of affairs that are so remote from us in space and/or time that we are unable to have had any causal interaction with them. How is it possible for us

to think about, for example, things in regions of space so far away that, given the limit of the speed of light, there is no sort of physical-causal relation that we can bear to things in those distant regions? The puzzling nature of intentionality may be even more acutely felt upon contemplation of thoughts about things and states of affairs (see *STATE OF AFFAIRS*) that don't even exist. On the face of it, it seems that people are quite capable of thinking of non-existent things like the fountain of youth and unicorns and nonobtaining states of affairs like Luke Skywalker's destruction of the Death Star or that one time when Barack Obama flew to the moon by flapping his arms.

One way to put a point on what's puzzling about intentionality is to regard the problem of intentionality as an inconsistent triad of propositions, each of which is compelling, at least when considered in isolation.

1. We can think about things that do not exist.
2. Intentionality is a relation between a thinker and a thing thought about.
3. We can bear relations only to things that exist.

It should be apparent that if (1) and (2) are true, then (3) must be false; if (1) and (3) are true, then (2) must be false; and if (2) and (3) are true, then (1) must be false.

If one is to eliminate contradictory beliefs, then one must deny the truth of at least one of these three propositions. However, it is difficult to see which is the most eliminable, since each is independently plausible. It's hard to see, for instance, how (1) can be coherently denied, since understanding the denial arguably involves thinking that *there exist no thoughts of things that don't exist*, which in turn involves thinking of things alleged not to exist—namely, a certain kind of thought.

The attractiveness of proposition (2) may be highlighted by focusing on thoughts of things that *do* exist. I take it as relatively uncontroversial that this book exists. At least on the face of it, it seems plausible that as I think thoughts like the thought that *this is a book written by me*, I am entering into a relation with this book. It is plausible to suppose that what makes it the case that I'm thinking about this book right now and not some other entity is that there is some special *relation* that I bear to this book and to no other entity. If proposition (2) is denied, then it is hard to see what sense can be made of claims like "this is the book I am thinking about."

Regarding proposition (3), it seems compelling especially when we focus on relations between physical objects. My coffee cup bears a relation of

containment to the coffee inside of it and bears a relation to my desk of being on top of it. My coffee cup, however, cannot contain nonexistent beverages (it would instead be empty and contain nothing) and cannot be set on nonexistent surfaces (it would instead be unsupported and fall to the floor).

The problem of intentionality has inspired some philosophers to embrace a kind of dualism whereby intentionality involves a special nonphysical relation that thinkers bear to a special nonphysical realm of entities that, despite not existing, have a different mode of being that we might call “*SUBSISTENCE*” or “*INEXISTENCE*.” Other philosophers have struggled to construct theories whereby intentionality is fully consistent with a physicalist worldview (see *CONTENT, THEORIES OF*).

Consciousness

Intentionality is not the only aspect of the mind that makes the mind/body problem especially problematic. We turn now to consider problems concerning consciousness. Many philosophers see consciousness as raising problems distinct from the problems of intentionality, and we can begin to appreciate this distinctness with the following remarks: You have likely believed for quite a long time, probably many years, that the English alphabet has twenty-six letters in it. This belief is a mental *STATE* with intentionality, since it is a mental state that is *about* something. It is about the number of letters in the English alphabet. While you were in possession of this intentional state for many years, it is highly unlikely that it was a *conscious* mental state for that entire duration. It is highly unlikely that you’ve been *consciously* entertaining the proposition that the alphabet has twenty-six letters during the whole time that you’ve believed this proposition.

For the above reasons, beliefs, which are prototypical instances of states that exhibit intentionality, are *not* prototypical instances of states that exhibit consciousness. According to some, prototypical instances of conscious states would include sensory experiences (see *EXPERIENCE*), such as feeling an intense pain, tasting a zesty lemon, or seeing a bright red light. Such states exhibit what philosophers call *QUALIA*, or phenomenal qualities. These philosophers characterize qualia as the properties of experiences in virtue of which there is *something it’s like* to have experiences (see *WHAT IT IS LIKE*).

Phrases such as “knowing what it’s like” and “there is something that it’s like” play a large role in philosophical discussions of consciousness. To get a feel for this role, contemplate the questions of whether (1) you know what

it's like to jump out of an airplane, (2) a person blind from birth can know what it's like to see red, and (3) tasting a lemon is more like tasting a lime than it is like tasting chocolate. Thinking about the questions raised here involves understanding the "what it's like" phrase in ways pertinent to discussions of consciousness and the qualities of experience.

The notion of what it's like has been marshaled in various lines of thought against physicalism. One line of thought is that knowing the physical properties of a conscious being can never suffice, no matter how many physical facts are known, for knowledge of what it's like to be a bat or what it's like to see red. If, for example, all physical facts can be known by a color-blind person who doesn't know what it's like to see red, then, arguably, facts about what it's like to see red can't be physical facts (see KNOWLEDGE ARGUMENT).

Another line of thought against physicalism based on *what it's like* involves thought experiments (see THOUGHT EXPERIMENT) concerning beings *physically* similar to each other but nonetheless dissimilar with respect to what it's like to be them. In the INVERTED SPECTRUM thought experiment, one is to imagine a being *physically* similar to oneself even though what it's like for the being when he or she visually experiences *red* objects is like what it's like for *you* to experience *green* objects and vice versa. In the ZOMBIE thought experiment, one is to imagine a being physically similar to oneself but for whom there is nothing it's like to be. That is, zombies are phenomenally vacant and there is no more anything it is like to be a zombie than there is anything it is like to be a rock.

Arguably, if inverted spectra or zombies are imaginable, then they are possible and if they are possible, then properties concerning what it's like must be distinct from physical properties. (See IMAGINATION; CONCEIVABILITY; POSSIBILITY.) Thus have zombies and inverted spectra figured in arguments against physicalism.

Considerable controversy surrounds the question of whether there are sound arguments against physicalism and contemporary physicalists have expended considerable effort in attempting to show how consciousness is consistent with a physicalist worldview after all. (See MODAL ARGUMENT; EXPLANATORY GAP.)

Other problems

While the mind/body problem looms large in the philosophy of mind, it is not the only problem. In the remainder of this introductory essay, we will review

problems concerning (1) perception, (2) other minds, (3) the relation of language to thought, (4) mental imagery, and (5) free will.

The problem of perception concerns questions such as “*What* do we perceive?” and “*How* do we perceive it?” The position of DIRECT REALISM is that *what* we perceive are physical objects such as coffee cups and crumpled pieces of paper and *how* we perceive them is via a *direct* relation between the perceiver and the perceived. Understanding this claim of directness is perhaps best done by appreciating the opposing view of INDIRECT REALISM aka REPRESENTATIONAL REALISM. According to this view, we perceive physical objects only indirectly via our direct perception of our *ideas* or mental representations (see MENTAL REPRESENTATION) of physical objects. According to one version of indirect realism, I directly perceive my *idea* of a coffee cup—an entity (the idea) internal to my mind—and then draw an inference that my current idea of a coffee cup is caused by a real coffee cup external to my mind. Such a view, however, leads to skeptical worries of whether we can ever *know* that there are physical objects (see SKEPTICISM).

No matter how the knowledge of physical objects is accounted for, it seems to be a separate problem altogether about how we know of the existence of other minds. One way of raising the problem of other minds is by starting with the presupposition that I know my own mind by direct awareness via introspection and when I turn my attention to the world outside of my mind, I seem restricted to perceiving various physical bodies; I don’t introspect or perceive any other mind. A serious question thus arises of whether any of those bodies, even the bodies of living humans, have minds. How do I know that they aren’t instead total zombies devoid of qualia and intentionality? According to the *argument by analogy*, I reason that since certain of *my* mental states, such as joy, are associated with certain of *my* bodily behaviors, such as smiling, it follows by analogy that when the bodies of *other* humans *act* joyous it is because they *really are* joyous (see ACTION). I reason, by analogy, that the other person, like me, has a mind. A big problem with the argument by analogy, however, is that it constitutes the hastiest of generalizations: It involves making a generalization about *all* humans based on an observation of only a single case, namely, my own case.

Some philosophers have sought to resolve the problem of other minds and avoid the pitfalls of the argument by analogy by questioning the premise that there is a disanalogy between our knowledge of our own minds and the minds of others. In particular, they question whether our minds are

constituted by private phenomena to which each of us has sole and direct access to. More broadly, some philosophers question whether we have FIRST-PERSON AUTHORITY regarding our own mental states. The philosopher Ludwig WITTGENSTEIN pressed such a line of questioning by developing what has come to be known as the PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT. While controversy surrounds the question of exactly what Wittgenstein's argument is, we may sketch it as follows.

If my mental events are private events of which I am uniquely aware, it ought to be possible for there to be a private language with which I refer to such events. However, the very idea of a language with which one can refer presupposes the idea of publicly evaluable norms of application (see NORMATIVE). In other words, it has to make sense to say whether I've correctly or incorrectly applied a term to something, and this can only make sense in a community wherein norms are devised and enforced. However, an allegedly private language is one for which it wouldn't even make sense for me, let alone anyone else, to raise the question of whether I've used it correctly on any particular occasion.

Whatever the merits of the proposal that there can be a *private* language, there are further questions concerning the relations between language and thought that have intrigued philosophers of mind. One interesting proposal is that thought itself is a kind of language. Part of what is involved in postulating a LANGUAGE OF THOUGHT is the claim that thoughts have their intentionality in a way that is distinctive of languages as opposed to, for instance, the intentionality that might be exhibited by pictures. Plausibly, pictures function by resembling what they are pictures of. However, items in a language, such as descriptions, do not need to resemble the things they describe in anything like the way that pictures resemble what they depict.

Relevant to the evaluation of such issues is the question of what the nature of so-called mental images is (see IMAGERY). Imagining an apple may be more similar to seeing an apple than saying "apple," but it nonetheless may be questioned whether the mental state is more like a picture (a thing that represents an apple in virtue of sharing certain properties with an apple) or a set of one or more words.

Another aspect of mentality that has been of special interest to philosophers concerns VOLITION and the will (see WILL, THE). Some of the things going on in the world are more than mere happenings. They are actions of AGENTS. Mindless entities may move and be moved, but, some philosophers claim,

only entities with minds do what they *will*. A central issue that arises here is whether there is such a thing as FREE WILL. Are we the authors of our actions? Are our actions caused and thus predetermined? If so, is determinism compatible with our actions being willed freely? The problem of free will intersects at various points with the mind-body problem. If physicalism is true and all physical events have only physical causes, what room is there in such a system for freedom and responsibility?

This introductory essay has barely scratched the surface of all that comprises the field of philosophy of mind. But in showing the key features of some of the field's main concerns, I hope to have provided some useful orientation for further explorations conducted by both students and experts.

The Key Terms

action, a kind of **EVENT**, distinctive for the essential role played by an **AGENT**—namely, that the event is something done or performed *by* the agent and *not*, for instance, something that merely happens *to* the agent. To illustrate: if I step out into the cold without a jacket and subsequently begin shivering, my stepping out into the cold without a jacket is an *action* I perform, whereas my shivering is something that merely *happens* to me. It is one of the central concerns of the area of philosophy known as **ACTION THEORY** to supply an account of what distinguishes actions from mere happenings. Part of what makes it difficult to supply a general account of action is the heterogeneity of what counts as an action: in addition to actions concerning bodily motions (climbing a ladder, arching one's eyebrow) there are also exclusively mental actions (calculating a sum "in one's head") as well as negative actions (refraining from doing something rude). Restricting attention to actions involving bodily motions, one way that has appealed to some philosophers of accounting for the distinction between actions involving bodily motions (deliberately kicking a ball) and bodily motions that are mere happenings (involuntarily sneezing upon inadvertently inhaling some dust) is that only actions are (directly) caused by mental states. For example, what makes the kicking of the ball an action is its having as a cause the pairing of a **DESIRE** to score a goal in a soccer game and a **BELIEF** that such a maneuver would help score a goal. However, such a causal analysis of action is not entirely uncontroversial. One sort of problem that such an analysis encounters concerns *deviant causal chains*: bodily motions that are the causal consequences of mental states yet do not thereby count as actions. In one such example, a mountain climber who is planning to kill his partner during an expedition gets sweaty hands as a result of contemplating committing the murder and accidentally loses grip of a rope, thereby sending the partner to his death. While there's a sense in which the death was a causal consequence of the would-be murderer's **INTENTION** to kill, the incident of the intervening sweaty hands seems to prevent

the caused death from counting as an intentional killing. See *also* INTENTIONAL ACTION; WEAKNESS OF WILL; WILL, THE.

action theory, an area of philosophy dedicated to the investigation of topics related to ACTION, such as being an AGENT; INTENTIONAL ACTION; WEAKNESS OF WILL; WILL, THE.

adverbialism, a theory of PERCEPTION consistent with DIRECT REALISM that attempts to avoid committing to perceptual intermediaries such as SENSE-DATA by giving adverbial paraphrases such as (1) "John sensed red-ly" in place of both (2) "John sensed a red datum" and (3) "John sensed a red thing." On the face of it, (2) and (3) each commits the speaker to the existence of two entities: John and the red thing he senses. But this is highly problematic, especially since (2) and (3) can arguably be true even though John is undergoing a hallucination of a red thing (see ARGUMENT FROM ILLUSION). One of the problems raised against adverbialism is the difficulty presented in accounting for statements such as (4) "John saw a red square and a blue circle." The problem here raised is that the most straightforward adverbial paraphrase is (5) "John saw red-ly, blue-ly, square-ly, and circle-ly," which seems inadequate to capture (4), since it may just as well be the adverbial paraphrase for the following statement logically distinct from (4), (6) "John saw a blue square and a red circle." See *also* SENSE-DATUM THEORY; REPRESENTATIVE REALISM.

agent, a being possessing the capacity for ACTION.

akrasia, Greek term roughly translatable as WEAKNESS OF WILL. Akrasia was one of the main topics discussed by ARISTOTLE in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.

anomalous monism, a variety of MONISM, specifically a kind of MATERIALISM or PHYSICALISM, due to Donald DAVIDSON wherein it is affirmed that each TOKEN mental EVENT is identical to a token physical event, but that while there are *physical* laws and nomic (i.e., lawful) relations that events enter into, there are no *psychological* laws or nomic relations that they enter into. See *also* PHYSICALISM, NONREDUCTIVE; TOKEN-IDENTITY THESIS; SUPERVENIENCE.

appearance, a way in which something *seems*, as distinct from the way it really *is*.