

Issues Facing Dualism

What you need to know:

Issues facing dualism, including:

- The problem of other minds

Responses including:

the argument from analogy
the existence of other minds is the best hypothesis.

- Dualism makes a "category mistake" (Gilbert Ryle)
- Issues facing interactionist dualism, including:
 - the conceptual interaction problem (as articulated by Elisabeth, Princess of Bohemia)
 - the empirical interaction problem.

Issues facing epiphenomenalist dualism, including:

- the challenge posed by introspective self-knowledge
- the challenge posed by the phenomenology of our mental life (ie as involving causal connections, both psychological and psycho-physical)
- the challenge posed by natural selection/evolution.

The Conceptual Interaction Problem

1. Physical things are only moved if they are pushed.
2. Only something that is extended and can touch the thing that is moved can exert such a force.
3. But the mind has no extension, so can't touch the body.
4. Therefore, the mind can't move the body.

The Empirical Interaction Problem

1. The physical universe is a closed system.
2. In any closed system, energy must be conserved.
3. Mind and body causally interact
4. But causation involves the transfer of energy
5. Therefore, the mind must be physical.

Possible Exam Questions

What did Ryle mean when he said dualism makes a 'category mistake'?

Briefly outline the problem of other minds for dualism (5 marks)

Briefly outline Mill's argument from analogy (5 marks)

Explain the problem of other minds facing dualism and how the argument from analogy responds to this. (12 marks)

Explain the problem of other minds facing dualism and responses to it. (12 marks)

Explain the problem of other minds facing dualism and Ryle's response to it. (12 marks)

What is interactionist dualism? (3 marks)

Explain the conceptual causation issue and the empirical causation issue as problems facing interactionist dualism. (12 marks)

What is epiphenomenal dualism? (3 marks)

Briefly outline the problems facing epiphenomenal dualism (5 marks)

Briefly outline epiphenomenal dualism and the issues relating to it. (12 marks)

Briefly explain how the argument from introspective self-knowledge might challenge epiphenomenal dualism. (5 marks)

Briefly explain the challenge posed by the phenomenology of our mental life might challenge epiphenomenal dualism. (5 marks)

Briefly explain the challenge posed by natural selection/evolution to epiphenomenal dualism. (5 marks)

What are the similarities and differences between interactionist dualism and epiphenomenalist dualism? (12 marks)

Does epiphenomenal dualism give the correct account of mental states? (25 marks)

Key Terms

Solipsism: The view or theory that self is the only thing that is real.

Introspection: the process of looking into your own mind. The direct awareness each of us has of his or her own mental state.

Analogy: to compare two things

Interactionist dualism: the view that mind and body mental states can cause bodily states and bodily states can cause mental states

Epiphenomenal dualism: the view that mental states are caused by brain states, but mental states do not cause brain states. Mental states are by-products of the physical processes that go in the body which govern our actions.

Issues facing Dualism

The Problem of Other Minds

The problem of other minds questions whether knowledge is possible of minds other than one's own.

- I have direct and privileged access to my own mind via introspection
- By contrast, I am not able directly to inspect the contents of anyone else's mind.
- Because I cannot directly observe other minds, I must infer the mental states of others from what I can observe from their behaviour.
- However, the behavioural evidence is insufficient to establish for certain what others' mental states are, or indeed that they have minds at all.

Dualism makes a 'category mistake' (Ryle)

- Substance dualism is the view that the mind and the body (brain) are two separate 'substances' or 'things'
- To make a category mistake is to assign a concept to a logical category to which it doesn't belong (eg...)
- Ryle claims that substance dualism (a) assigns 'mind' (and mental states) to "the categories of 'thing,' 'stuff,' 'attribute,' 'state,' 'process,' 'change,' 'cause,' and 'effect.'" and (b) conceives of them as non-physical and 'ghostly.'
- Ryle gives a number of analogies to explain his point. For example, he gives the example of a foreigner visiting a university. He sees the colleges, lecture theatres and libraries, but asks 'where is the university?'. In this instance, the foreigner is making a category mistake.
- Each of Ryle's analogies have the following feature: once one has a complete description of the component parts of some designated phenomena and how they work together (eg the 'colleges', 'lecture theatres', and 'libraries' of a university) it is a mistake to look for something 'over and above' those constitutive features.
- Ryle argues that to talk about 'the mind' and 'mental states' is to talk about publicly observable behaviour or behavioural dispositions.

Evaluation of Philosophical Zombies Argument

- a 'philosophical zombie'/a 'zombie' world is not conceivable
- what is conceivable may not be metaphysically possible
- what is metaphysically possible tells us nothing about the actual world.

The Argument from Analogy

Mill argues that we can infer that other people have mental states by use of analogy.

P1: I observe that I have a mind

P2: I also observe that my mental states are systematically connected with my behaviour and the states of the body (e.g. acts of will cause bodily movements and damage to my body causing pain).

P3: I observe that other people who have bodies like mine behave similarly to me.

C1: It is likely that their bodies and behaviour are connected to mental states too.

C2: It is likely that others have minds.



Evaluation of Mary/Knowledge Argument

- Mary does not gain new propositional knowledge but does gain ability knowledge (the 'ability knowledge' response).
- Mary does not gain new propositional knowledge but does gain acquaintance knowledge (the 'acquaintance knowledge' response).
- Mary gains new propositional knowledge, but this is knowledge of physical facts that she already knew in a different way (the 'New Knowledge / Old Fact' response).
- There is more than one way of knowing the same fact
- Qualia do not exist and so Mary gains no new propositional knowledge.