

Philosophy of Mind and Metaphysics

Lecture IX: Mind as Behavior: Behaviorism

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I. BEHAVIORISM

- a. Behaviorism is, in general, a view according to which behavior is constitutive of mentality. It maintains that to have a mind just is to exhibit, or to have the propensity to exhibit, certain appropriate patterns of observable behavior.
 - i. Two ways to call Behaviorism into question
 1. Locate something that *does* qualify as mental, but that does *not* exhibit certain appropriate patterns of observable behavior
 - a. Perhaps there are super-Spartans, who feel pain, but who behave in no way at all. (Response: "But they have the *propensity* to exhibit certain appropriate patterns of observable behavior, in fact, the *same* patterns of behavior that we exhibit.")
 - b. It seems that there are different sorts of creatures, each of which *does* feel pain but then exhibits a *different* pattern of behavior than any of the other creatures.
 2. Locate something that *does* exhibit certain appropriate patterns of observable behavior, but that does *not* qualify as mental
 - a. Here's an example: robots on an automobile assembly line. Does this example show that behaviorism is mistaken? Even if it does, commentators rarely chose this critical path. Usually, they begin with something that has a certain mental feature, and then they try to show that we can associate no particular pattern of behavior with that mental feature. That is, commentators usually opt for the *first* sort of response to behaviorism.
 - b. Behaviorism "attempts to construe the meanings of our mental expressions not as designating some private inner events and states accessible [only] to a single person but as referring to publicly accessible

and intersubjectively verifiable conditions and facts about people. According to the behavioristic approach, ..., the meanings of mental expressions , such as ‘pain’ and ‘thought,’ are to be explained by reference to facts about publicly observable behavior, not inner episodes in private minds” (pp. 27-8).

II. LOGICAL BEHAVIORISM

- a. According to this view, every meaningful psychological expression can be defined solely in terms of behavioral and physical expressions, that is, those referring to behavioral and physical phenomena.
- b. Why think that Logical Behaviorism is true? Here’s an argument provided by Carl Hempel and summarized by Kim:
 - i. Psychological statements have public, shareable meaning and serve as vehicles of interpersonal communication.
 - ii. This can be true only if psychological statements have meanings that are specifiable by conditions that are intersubjectively accessible (that is, only if they have meanings that are specifiable by conditions that I can, at least in principle, know to obtain).
 - iii. Therefore, psychological statements have meanings that are specifiable by conditions that I can, at least in principle, know to obtain (and what could these conditions be if not behavioral/physical conditions).
- c. We can call Logical Behaviorism into question by finding a meaningful psychological expression that cannot be defined in terms of behavioral and physical expressions. Try to define ‘Paul has a toothache’ solely in terms of behavioral and physical expressions. Difficult, ain’t it? We’ll try this to do this in class, and we’ll try it for other meaningful psychological expressions as well. If you can’t make it to class, Kim lets us know, on pages 31-35, just how difficult it is to define ‘Paul has a toothache’ solely in terms of behavioral and physical expressions. Have a look at Kim’s discussion.