

The Mind-Brain Argument

- Descartes held a dualistic view of mind-body
 - People have *mental* and *material* substance
 - Mental substance is what makes us human

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The Mind-Brain Argument

- Other views of Mind-Brain
 - Reductive materialism (Identity Theory)
 - Mental states are physical states of the brain
 - Functionalism
 - Mental states “do” something (they have a function)
 - E.g., pain
 - Eliminative materialism (Churchland’s view)
 - No mental states/cognitive processes, only brain states.

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Pros & cons RE: Eliminative Materialism

- Neurological & Alzheimer’s patients
 - Damage to brain leads to cognitive changes
- Introspection
 - *cf.*, Scientific Realism-scientific theories give a true account of the world, even if we can not perceive the postulated entities. We just have to learn to perceive things that way...like a musical prodigy.

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Pros & cons RE: Eliminative Materialism

- Parallel Distributed Processing models describe cognitive (symbolic manipulation) processes very well
 - Chinese Room Argument (Searle)
 - Intentionality can only be held by objects with a conscious mind, like a speaker of Chinese, but not a “Chinese translation program”
 - Luminous Room Argument (Churchland)
 - Light may not be perceived, but it’s there...
 - Intentionality may not be perceived, but it’s there...

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Pros & cons RE: Eliminative Materialism

What is it like to be a bat?

- Nagel argues that the intrinsic character of another creature's felt experiences (subjective character of the contents of consciousness) can never be known.
- Churchland counters that only the manner of knowing is different; perception in bats is still physical in nature.

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The implications of Elim. Mat.

1. Destruction of an Ontology of Consciousness
2. Simplistic and fallacious view of causality
3. Loss of free will
4. Renunciation of the self
5. Questionable value judgments regarding social practices

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The implications of Elim. Mat.

1. Destruction of an Ontology of Consciousness
 - If psyche = matter, then there is no unique way to explain consciousness, intentionality, individuality, personality, etc.
 - Mind doesn't direct action, matter does
 - We are biological machines controlled by the environment.

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The implications of Elim. Mat.

2. Simplistic and fallacious view of causality
 - *Psychic reality is caused only by directly observable, measurable, quantifiable material.*
 - Should we strongly claim that things we can't observe don't exist?
 - Although embodied physically, by its very nature MIND is intangible (can't dissect it or locate it).
 - "The environment made me do it!"

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The implications of Elim. Mat.

3. Loss of free will
 - Free will = ability to choose or be otherwise
 - Free will is a mental process and no physical system is free, so we do not possess free choice & are not free.

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The implications of Elim. Mat.

4. Renunciation of the self
 - *The “self” is a conditioned illusion*
 - No “afterlife” because the physical substance ceases to be at death.
 - Even “reproductions” of matter would not be the same self.

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The implications of Elim. Mat.

5. Questionable value judgments regarding social practices
 - *The human being is a biological machine that can be controlled, predicted & manipulated.*
 - Medicalization of mental illness (pills = panacea)
 - But are all forms of depression the same?
 - Bio-pharmaceutical prax that are questionable
 - No empathy--simply neurons firing
 - Dehumanizing language/communication

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