

MIND: Animal Minds (Part 1)

Lecture 13

Phil 1000, Fall 2008
Prof. Bryan Benham

Quick Review

- Review: Problems of Knowledge
 - Skepticism?
 - Rationalism and Empiricism
 - Foundationalism and Coherentism
 - Fallibility of Science: Falsification and Auxillary Hypotheses
- Today: Problem of Other Minds – Animal Minds
 - Argument by Analogy (Russell)
 - Inference to Best Explanation (Descartes)
 - Mind, Language, and Complex Behavior

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Problem of Other Minds

- How do we know others (humans and animals) have a mind? (Epistemology)
- But, the answer will also have to answer the question: what is a mind? (Ontology)

Question:

So, what is a mind and how do you know others have a mind?

Discuss

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Russell's Analogy

"The behavior of other people is in many ways analogous to our own, and we suppose that it must have analogous causes. What people say is what we should say if we had certain thoughts, and so we infer that they probably have these thoughts... They behave in ways in which we behave when we are pleased (or displeased) in circumstances in which we should be pleased (or displeased)... As it is clear to me that the causal laws governing my behavior have to do with "thoughts," it is natural to infer that the same is true of the analogous behavior of my friends... The abstract schema seems to be as follows. We know, from observation of ourselves, a causal law of the form "A causes B," where A is a "thought" and B a physical occurrence. We sometimes observe a B when we cannot observe any A; we then infer an unobserved A... It is evident that my confidence in the "inference" is increased by increased complexity in the datum and also by increased certainty of the causal law derived from subjective observation, provided the causal law is such as to account for the complexities of the datum."

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Russell's Analogy

- P1:** Others are like me in behavior, etc.
- P2:** From subjective observation I know my thoughts (mind) cause certain behaviors in my body.

- C:** Others probably have thoughts (a mind) like mine that is the cause of their behavior.

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Evaluating the Analogy

- Hasty Generalization:
 - Inference from a single case is notoriously unreliable inference.
 - Reply?
- Introspection of Causal Connection:
 - Introspection is suspect as a reliable source of information about the causes of our behaviors.
 - Reply?
- Multiple Causes of Behavior:
 - Alternative explanations of behavior don't always appeal to thoughts.
 - Does the argument by analogy apply to non-human animals?

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Descartes' Argument

- Descartes recognizes the similarity between humans and animals, but also points to dissimilarities. The analogy is anthropomorphizing animals.
- Instead, Descartes wants to compare competing explanations for animal behavior. Two Principles:
 - Appeal to minds (incorporeal principle)
 - Appeal to non-mental operations (mechanical principle)
- Descartes thinks animal behavior is best explained by non-mental (mechanical) principles. Why?

Discuss

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Descartes' Argument

Why animal behavior is best explained by non-mental principles:

- Variability (flexibility) of behavior
 - Human behavior much more flexible
 - Humans have created automatons, nature can create more splendid ones.
- Animals don't have "real speech"
 - No language, or symbolic communication.

Why is language so important?

Discuss

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Why Language?

- Language expresses a complex and systematic structure that underlies behavior, so it is considered an indicator of complex mental abilities, thoughts and behavior.
- Two main features
 - **Units of Meaning:** words or symbols that represent ideas or concepts.
 - **Productivity:** A structure of grammar that allows various combinations to generate various complex meanings.
- Human language has infinite possibilities in creating new, grammatical, and complex meanings; so human mental capacity is far more complex than any animal.

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Levels?

- Morgan's Canon: "In no case may we interpret an action as the outcome of the exercise of a higher psychological faculty, if it can be interpreted as the outcome of the exercise of one which stands lower in the psychological scale." (1909)
- A principle of parsimony to avoid anthropomorphism
 - For example: Clever Hans Phenomena and Blind-sight
- Suggests "levels" of explanation or a psychological scale

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Psychological Levels?

- Mere Mechanism
 - Physical operations that don't require any consciousness
(For example: reflexes, stimulus-response behaviors, and automatisms.)
- Sentience
 - Mere awareness of the environment; feelings of pain or pleasure; sensation or mental representation.
- Sapience
 - Self-awareness or self-consciousness; awareness of one's self as an entity, experiencing pain/pleasure, sensation, etc.

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Next Time

Other Minds (Part 2)

Consciousness, Intentionality, and Thoughts:
Looking for a Theory.

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