

# Materialism

By Travis Roeder

# The Nature of Mind

By David M. Armstrong

# What is Materialism?

- “Man is nothing but a physico-chemical mechanism”  
(Armstrong 295)
- The mind is the brain
- This theory is also called the Identity Theory

# Why Should We Listen to Materialism?

- It is backed up by SCIENCE
- Why give science authority over religion, philosophy, morality, literature, or art?
- Scientists get stuff done. They can come to a consensus about disputed topics
  - When was the last time the other disciplines did that?
- “It is rational to argue from the best evidence we have” (Armstrong 296)

# Review of Other Theories

- **Dualism**

- The mind is distinct from the body
- It is an immaterial substance (the soul)

- **Behaviorism**

- The mind is behavior
- “The mind is not an inner arena, it is outward act”  
(Armstrong 297)

# Dualism is Probably Wrong

- Problem:
  - How does the mind interact with the body if the mind is not physical?
  - Any ideas?

# Behaviorism is Probably Wrong Also

- Problem:
  - People can have mental states without expressing an outward behavior
    - Example: I am angry, but I do not show it
- Solution:
  - Mental states are a disposition to behave
    - Example: I am angry, so I will have a tendency to behave in a certain way.

# Behaviorism Still Doesn't Work

- “When I think, but my thoughts do not issue in any action, it seems as obvious as anything is obvious that there is something actually going on in me which constitutes my thought. It is not simply that I would speak or act if some conditions that are unfulfilled were to be fulfilled” (Armstrong 298)
- Even with dispositions added to the theory, behaviorist still lack a mental causation for our thoughts and actions



# Behaviorists Had Some Good Ideas

- It is wrong to identify mental states as behavior
- But, maybe Behaviorists were right to realize that our mind and our mental states were correlated with behavior
- “Perhaps mind can be defined not as behavior, but rather as the inner *cause* of certain behavior”  
(Armstrong 298)

# Materialism

- The physico-chemical workings of the central nervous system are the cause of our thoughts and behaviors
- Mental states can be identified with physical states of the CNS

# Objection!

- What in our brains is responsible for consciousness?
- What about the chemical and physical workings of our CNS causes our sense of awareness that we call the conscious experience?

# Solution!

- A perception is an inner state of the nervous system that is apt for producing certain behaviors in response to the environment

# Solution!

- When you have been driving for a long time, you sometimes enter an automatic state. You don't realize you arrived at the destination until you get there
- This whole time, even though you were not conscious of it, you were still perceiving the environment or else you would have crashed

# Solution!

- “Consciousness, in this sense of the word, is nothing but *perception or awareness of the state of our own mind*” (Armstrong 301)
- Consciousness is just us perceiving our perceptions
- In the driving example, we perceive the road, but we do not perceive us perceiving the road