

Reading Guide #4: Behaviorism

These reading guides are provided to assist you in your reading. I encourage you to read the material through, first, then go back to answer the questions. You are not required to hand in written answers. You are expected to have responses ready for class discussion. Page numbers refer to Peter A. Morton, *A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, Broadview Press, 1997.

B.F. Skinner, from *Science and Human Behavior*, pp 160-3.

1. How do people using ordinary language refer erroneously to inner explanations of behavior? How do physiological psychologists make similar errors?
 2. Why are neurological explanations of behavior unlikely to be useful?
 3. How do Freudian explanations of behavior refer erroneously to an inner man?
 4. "Any mental event which is unconscious is necessarily inferential and the explanation is therefore not based upon independent observations of a valid cause (161)." Explain.
 5. Why are explanations which refer to minds and ideas spurious? What additional reason does Skinner provide for rejecting them?
 6. Why is, "He eats because he is hungry," a redundant description?
 7. What kinds of variables are legitimate to consider in describing and predicting behavior?
 8. Why do descriptions of inner states fail to serve as explanations?
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Carl Hempel, "The Logical Analysis of Psychology," pp 164-173.

1. What were the tools used by philosophers in the Vienna Circle (logical positivists)?
2. How are psychology and physics supposed to differ?
3. How does the behaviorist attempt to link psychology and physics?
4. Why does Hempel consider the relation between physical statements and psychological statements?
5. Why do we translate technical terms, like 'temperature', into longer statements? What do these longer statements look like?
6. How, according to Hempel, do we determine the meaning of a statement?
7. According to Hempel, how can we determine the meaning of a psychological sentence, like, 'Paul has a toothache'?
8. Why does Hempel call psychology physicalistic?
9. How does Hempel respond to the criticism that behavioral manifestations of mental processes are merely symptoms?
10. Why does Hempel call the claim that a person could lack a mental state but pretend to have it a contradiction?
11. Explain Hempel's analogy between a watch's running and psychological states. How does the analogy show the mind-body problem to be a pseudo-problem?
12. How does Hempel's logical behaviorism differ from psychological behaviorism?
13. What is the thesis of the unity of science? What differences among the science are there?
14. How would adopting Hempel's methods change the focus of philosophers?

Gilbert Ryle, from *The Concept of Mind*, pp 187-197.

1. By what methods does Ryle attack Descartes' myth?
2. What does Ryle call the official doctrine? Why does he claim that this leads to two lives for every person?
3. How is the internal/external idiom meant to be metaphoric?
4. What are the "theoretical shuttlecocks"? Why is this a difficulty for the official doctrine?
5. How do minds and bodies differ regarding causal connections with other minds and bodies?
6. How does Freud's work oppose the official doctrine? How can a proponent of the official doctrine accommodate the unconscious mind?
7. Why is introspection supposed to be superior to sense perception? (Consider the role of privileged access.)
8. How does privileged access lead to the problem of other minds?
9. What is a category-mistake? How is the official doctrine a category-mistake, according to Ryle? Be specific.
10. How might reference to the average taxpayer involve some one in a category mistake?
11. Why did Descartes, according to Ryle, conclude that mental-conduct words, "[M]ust be construed as signifying the occurrence of non-mechanical processes (p 193)"?
12. How, for Descartes, were minds spectral machines?
13. What is the problem of free will? How is it supported by the category mistake?
14. Why, according to Ryle, can proponents of the official doctrine not claim that they are sane, or consistent?
15. What are conjunctions and disjunctions? Why does Ryle think it is a mistake to conjoin or disjoin 'minds' and 'bodies'?
16. How does Ryle intend his solution to the mind/body problem to differ from those of Hobbes and Berkeley? Why, according to Ryle, are their solutions illegitimate?
17. How does Ryle's solution depend on there being two senses of 'exist'?
18. What are dispositional concepts? How do they relate to laws?
19. How are mental-state dispositions indefinitely heterogeneous?
20. How does analyzing mental states as dispositions help avoid the Cartesian, "para-mechanical" error?