

Philosophy 203
History of Modern Western Philosophy

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Spring 2016

Class #9
Hobbes
Materialist Theories of Language and Mind

Business

- Papers are due now
 - PDFs
 - Naming attachments
 - Comments?
- Hobbes today
- Spinoza on Thursday and next Tuesday

Topics for Today

Team Behavior Task

The Problems of Consciousness and Mental Causation

Hobbes on Language

Hobbes on Mental States

Team Behavior Task

Team Behavior

For Developing the Peer Review Criteria

- Pick the three characteristics most important to your team functioning.
- Rank the top three.
 - ▶ Demonstrates reliability
 - ▶ Communicates constructively
 - ▶ Actively participates
 - ▶ Exhibits flexibility
 - ▶ Shows commitment to the team
 - ▶ Treats others respectfully
 - ▶ Takes responsibility for own mistakes
 - ▶ Remains positive
 - ▶ Does not settle for mediocrity
 - ▶ Stays focused on team goals
 - ▶ Solicits input from team members
 - ▶ Empowers other team members

Topics for Today

✓Team Behavior Task

The Problems of Consciousness and Mental Causation

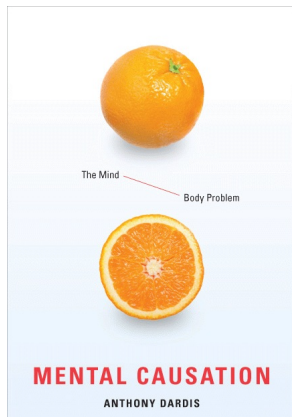
Hobbes on Language

Hobbes on Mental States

The Problems of Consciousness and Mental Causation

The Problem of Mental Causation

- The challenge for any materialist is to account for mental phenomena, especially mental causation.
- While my conscious states may not be thought of as real qualities of external objects, they are real qualities of my conscious mind.
- They seem to affect my actions.
 - ▶ If I am in pain, I will act in ways that I will not act if I am not in pain.
 - ▶ I judge whether to eat one apple over another on the basis of the sense qualities they appear to me to have.
- The problem of mental causation is to explain how thoughts can have causal powers.



Hobbes and Galilean Science

- Hobbes relies on Galilean mechanics to explain all phenomena, including mental phenomena.
- Galilean science
 - All that exists are particles in motion.
 - Objects are inert in motion or at rest.
 - Changes of motion are all explicable by transfers of momentum.
- No immaterial souls for our conscious experience.
- Advantage: all causation is physical causation.
- Disadvantage: Mental states like pain or color or texture seem to resist physical explanation.
 - They are private and privileged.

Team Activity

Hobbes and the Problem of Consciousness

“The cause of sense is the external body, or object, which presses the organ proper to each sense, either immediately, as in taste and touch, or mediately, as in seeing, hearing, and smelling; this pressure, by the mediation of nerves and other strings and membranes of the body, continues inwards to the brain and heart, causes there a resistance, or counterpressure, or endeavor of the heart, to deliver itself; this endeavor, because *outward*, seems to be some matter without. And this *seeming*, or, *fancy*, is that which men call *sense*... All...qualities called *sensible* are in the object that causes them but so many several motions of the matter, by which it presses our organs diversely. Neither in us that are pressed are they anything else but diverse motions (for motion produces nothing but motion).”

- Sort the given phenomena into two categories:
 - ▶ Those which are easily explained in terms of Galilean mechanics
 - ▶ Those which are more puzzling

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Hobbes, Empiricism, Language

Hobbes's Empiricism

- We started monism with an epistemological problem, the problem of interaction.
- Hobbes's work largely motivated by the desire to avoid substance dualism.
- But he also believes that other medieval, scholastic philosophy and Descartes's work is nonsensical.
 - Especially Descartes's innateness claims
 - Empiricism: rejection of innate ideas
 - See the Third Objections
- Descartes's criticisms of the Resemblance Hypothesis led to a disconnect between our conscious experiences and the world as it is in itself.
 - The wax argument: Objects as we experience them may be thoroughly different from how they are in themselves.
 - The Veil of Perception
- With Descartes, Hobbes embraces the veil of perception.
- Both philosophers ascribe a profound error to those, like Aristotle, who hold a resemblance hypothesis.
- We'll first look at Hobbes's claims about language and then closer at his view about mental states.

Hobbes, Sense Experience, and Language

- Hobbes defines truth and falsity in terms of the correspondence of language to the world.
 - Terms of language stand for our ideas.
 - Ideas are images left by sense experience in our brains.
- Absurdity arises from using words with no origins in the senses.

Hobbes on Language

- The goal of language is human flourishing.
 - ▶ “Without words there is no possibility of reckoning of numbers, much less of magnitudes, of swiftness, of force, and other things, the reckonings of which are necessary to the being, or well-being, or mankind” (*Leviathan* §1.4, AW 123b).
- Hobbes rejects metaphysical approaches to science.
 - ▶ “In many occasions they put for cause of natural events, their own ignorance, but disguised in other words, as when they say, fortune is the cause of things contingent - that is, of things whereof they know no cause - and as when they attribute many effects to *occult qualities* - that is, qualities not known to them, and therefore also (as they think) to no one else - and to *sympathy*, *antipathy*, *antiperistasis*, *specific qualities*, and other like terms, which signify neither the agent that produces them, nor the operation by which they are produced. If such *metaphysics* and *physics* as this be not *vain philosophy*, there was never any; nor needed St. Paul to give us warning to avoid it” (*Leviathan* §1.46, AW 136b).
- We should clean up our language.
 - ▶ “In reasoning a man must take heed of words, which besides the signification of what we imagine of their nature, have a signification also of the nature, disposition, and interest of the speaker - such as are the names of virtues and vices, for one man calls *wisdom* what another calls *fear*; and one *cruelty*, what another *justice*, one *prodigality*, what another *magnanimity*; and one *gravity*, what another *stupidity*, etc. And therefore such names can never be true grounds of any ratiocination. No more can metaphors, and tropes of speech; but these are less dangerous, because they profess their inconstancy, which the others do not” (*Leviathan* §1.4, AW 125b)
 - ▶ We’ll see similar claims in Hume’s work.

Team Activity

Hobbes on Language

- Match Hobbes's six errors of language with the examples provided.

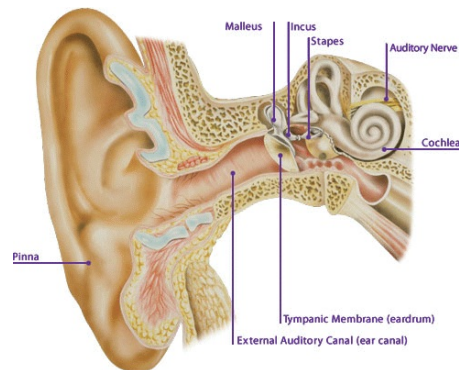
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Hobbes on Mental States

Descartes, Hobbes, Conscious Experience, and the Galilean World

- Descartes and Hobbes agree that the material world is Galilean.
- For Descartes, conscious experience occurs out of the world, in the soul.
 - ▶ Descartes thus accommodates the Galilean view with the reality of our sense experience.
 - ▶ The cost is substance dualism and the problem of interaction.
- Hobbes denies that we must posit a non-physical substance to account for conscious experience.
 - ▶ Our conscious experience just is the motion of particles.
 - ▶ Yellow is just retinal stimulation and neural firing.
 - ▶ The symphony really is the vibrations of my tympanic membrane (and neural firings)



Hobbes's Account of Mental States: A Metaphor

All fancies are motions within us, relics of those made in the sense, and those motions that immediately succeeded one another in the sense, continue also together after sense, inasmuch as the former coming again to take place and be predominant, the latter follows, by coherence of the matter moved, in such manner as water upon a plain table is drawn which way any one part of it is guided by the finger (*Leviathan* §1.3, AW 119b).

