Is the Mind Material?
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1. Introduction

**Materialism:** (Roughly) the view that all aspects of the mind are reducible to physical processes in the brain.

**Normative Arguments against Materialism:** Arguments against materialism that rely on one or more *normative* premises.

**Main Goal of the Talk:** Argue that materialism coheres very badly with our normative beliefs (and we therefore have reason to reject materialism).

2. Free Agency Arguments

*Basic form*

1. Normative premise.
2. (1) is true only if we have free will (= the ability to choose among two or more mutually incompatible courses of action)
3. We have free will only if materialism is false.
4. So, materialism is false.

*Candidates for (1)*

- Someone has done something he ought not do.
- Some bad outcomes are somebody’s *fault* (or somebody is *blameworthy* for some actions or outcomes)

*In support of (2)*

- Ought implies can
- It is S’s fault that *p* (variant: S is blameworthy for the fact that *p*) only if S could have acted in such a way that *p* would have been false.

*In support of (3)*

- If materialism is true, our choices are constituted by the motions and interactions of atoms in my brain, atoms whose behavior is governed entirely by laws of physics over which I have no control.
3. Personal Identity Arguments

1. Normative premise.
2. (1) is true only if there is real personal identity over time.
3. There is real personal identity over time only if materialism is false.
4. So, materialism is false.

Thomas Reid: The idea of personal identity through time “is the foundation of all rights and obligations, and of all accountableness.”

Candidates for (1)
- Some people are responsible for (or: deserve punishment/blame/praise/reward for) past actions
- Some people ought to feel guilt/shame/remorse for past actions.
- The moral gravity of murder.
- People are morally bound by past promises/commitments/etc.
- It is rationally appropriate to fear/look forward to bad/good things that will happen to us in future.

How the non-materialist avoids the problem
- Your persistence through time is grounded in the identity of your soul over time—-an immaterial part of you that (unlike your body) does not gain or lose parts.

4. Moral Status Arguments

Absolute moral status arguments
1. Xs have a certain moral status.
2. (1) is true only if materialism is false.
3. So, materialism is false.
Comparative moral status arguments

1. Xs have greater/lesser moral status than Ys
2. (1) is true only if materialism is false.
3. So, materialism is false.

A comparative moral status argument against materialism

1. (All) humans have greater moral status than non-human animals. (“Human moral exceptionalism”)
2. (1) is true only if materialism is false.
3. So, materialism is false.

In support of (1)

- Domesticating/killing/consuming animals for human benefits is not as bad as comparable treatment of humans would be.

Can the materialist accommodate (1)?

The Intelligence Strategy: Humans are more intelligent than non-humans.

Problem: Do high-IQ humans have greater moral status?
Problem: Human infants and the severely mentally disabled

The Teleological Strategy: All humans are teleologically ordered toward a certain kind/degree of intelligence (even if they don’t achieve it).

Problem: Robust teleology probably incompatible with materialism.

The Constructivist Strategy: Humans have more value than animals because we value humans more.

Problem: All the standard problems with relativism/constructivism.

The Special Relationship Strategy: Humans aren’t objectively more important, but we rightly give them special treatment because they are “our own kind.”

Problem: We repudiate this type of thinking for other domains (e.g., race, gender).
Problem: Yields implausible verdicts about the moral obligations of rational non-humans.
5. Axiological Arguments

**Reductive materialism:** For any phenomenal state, there is a true “reduction” of the form “Q = P,” where “Q” expresses a phenomenal concept for that state and “P” expresses a purely physical/functional concept.

*The Perspicuity condition on reductions:* A true identity statement of the form “Q = P” is a reduction of Q to P only if the concept P more perspicuously captures the nature of the property under consideration than does the concept Q.

*The Axiological Argument against Reductive Materialism (rough form)*

1. Some conscious states (e.g., a euphoric experience of aesthetic delight, the experience of extreme pain) have a degree of intrinsic value (or disvalue) that is not shared by any of their purely physical correlates.
2. Therefore, some conscious states are not identical to any of their purely physical correlates.

*Plausible background assumption:* The value of a purely physical state is best assessed by conceiving of that state in terms of its true physical nature.

*Caveat:* This assumption is only plausible if value itself cannot be reductively analyzed in non-evaluative terms.

*Official conclusion:* If non-reductionism about value is true, then reductive materialism about consciousness is false.