

Philosophical Theology 1 (TH5)

Philosophy of Human Nature

**Ross Arnold, Summer 2014
Lakeside institute of Theology**



Philosophical Theology 1 (TH5)

Aug. 15 – Intro to Philosophical Theology; Logic

Aug. 22 – Truth & Epistemology

Aug. 29 – Metaphysics

Sept. 5 – ***No Class***

Sept. 12 – Philosophy of Religion

Sept. 19 – Philosophy of Science; Human Nature; Philosophy of Politics


Sept. 26 – Ethics: What is Right?; Aesthetics: What is Beautiful?

October 3 – Philosophy of Human Nature; Final Exam

What is philosophy?

- Literally, it is *a love of wisdom* – *phileo* is Greek for “love,” *sophos* means “wisdom.”
- Philosophy is the critical examination of our foundational beliefs concerning the nature of reality, knowledge and truth; and our moral and social values.
- Philosophy is the means and process by which we examine our lives and the meaning in our lives.
- **Philosophy is the attempt to think rationally and critically about life’s most important questions in order to obtain knowledge and wisdom about them.**

Philosophy of Human Nature – What am I?

- Perhaps the most basic questions regarding human nature are: ***What makes us human?*** and ***What gives each of us our distinct personalities?***
 - Or, ***What makes me, ME? What makes me human, and what makes me distinct from other humans?***
 - **Mind-Body Dualism** – proposes that people have two distinct aspects or parts: their physical bodies; and their immaterial, non-physical souls.
 - **Physicalism** – proposes that everything – including the human consciousness – can be fully described in terms of physics and physical processes. (based on philosophical materialism)
- 

Philosophy of Human Nature – Mind-Body Dualism

- **Descartes** argued for mind-body dualism, saying:
 - Mind and body have very different and distinct properties.
 - The body is divisible while the mind is indivisible.
 - The activity of the mind is private, while the activities of body are observable and so public.
- **Argument from Subjectivity**
 - The human mind has a sense of subjectivity, and can perceive subjectivity in other cognitive creatures, so that we can imagine being in the place of other cognitive creatures, but never of non-cognitive objects. This suggests the mind is fundamentally more than physical.
- **Argument from Qualia**
 - Humans constantly are perceiving “qualia” – phenomenal qualities of things – in all perceptual experiences, but no physicalist description of the brain can account for this aspect of perceptual experience.

Philosophy of Human Nature – Mind-Body Dualism

➤ **Argument from Intentionality**

- The recognition that mental states refer to things outside themselves in a way that requires no sense of physical relationship – we simply think “about” things in meaningful ways – which no merely physical object could ever do.

➤ **Criticisms of Mind-Dualism**

- Problem of *Casual Overdetermination* says that the entire “chain” of perceptual experience involves concrete objects and processes – so how is the “soul” involved?
- The *Interaction Problem* says that for the soul to be separate from and yet causally interact with the physical body it would have to create energy, but where would such energy come from? (The 2nd law of thermodynamics says energy cannot be either created or destroyed.)

Philosophy of Human Nature – Physicalism

➤ **Philosophical Behaviorism**

- The insistence that we are only physical beings, and that functions and qualities normally associated with the “mind” are in fact simply behaviors or tendencies to behave in certain ways.

➤ **Criticisms of Philosophical Behaviorism**

- Some thoughts, feelings and desires are never expressed as behaviors. In fact, some behaviors may be contrary to feelings. Other thoughts (such as abstracts) have no possible manifestation in behavior.
- This denies the subjective – that is, interior and hidden – first-person aspects of the mind that go beyond behavior.

Philosophy of Human Nature – Physicalism

➤ **Strict Identity Theory**

- Mental states are synonymous with brain states; sensations, beliefs, awareness are nothing more than chemical events and processes within the brain.

➤ **Criticisms of Strict Identity Theory**

- This theory insists that brain states and mental states are the same, but this cannot be true – there are mental states which cannot be directly equated to concrete events, locations, shapes or other physical criteria. There is not hard evidence to support that ALL mental activity – such as subjective awareness, perception of qualia, intentionality – is physically specific within the brain. (*Eliminativists* insist that science will eventually show this connection...)

Philosophy of Human Nature – Physicalism

➤ **Functionalism**

- Focuses not on what the brain *is*, but on what it *does*. In effect, the human mind is simply a very sophisticated computing device, so that there will (so they say) someday be Artificial Intelligence systems that will also be able to demonstrate beliefs, intentions and self-awareness.

➤ **Criticisms of Functionalism**

- Critics insist that reduction of mental states to causal or computational operations within our brain does not adequately account for the qualitative facts of human mental life – especially the perception and evaluation of qualia such as colors, flavors, smells, tastes, etc. (Searle and his *property dualism*, which regards mental states as properties of the brain.)


Philosophy of Human Nature – Personal Identity

- **What makes a person distinct from all other persons? What constitutes personal identity?**
- **And what happens if a person *significantly* changes – are they still the same person?**
- **Is a changed person still the same person if...**
 - He retains the continuity of his memories?
 - He has the same body and same relevant physical characteristics? (motivated by a materialistic worldview)
 - He has the same brain?
 - He has the same soul? (the resurrection question)

Or, perhaps...

- He has the same character, as reflected in his motivations. (“a new creation”)

Philosophy of Human Nature – Free Will

- **Are we free agents?**
 - **Are we able to make our own choices, to do good or bad, to act or refrain from acting as we wish, and so to be held morally responsible?**
 - **What is the relationship between *human freedom* and *determinism* (the materialistic idea that all things must act according to unchangeable natural laws)?**
 - **Compatibilism** says that human freedom and determinism are logically consistent.
 - **Incompatibilism** says that human freedom and responsibility are NOT compatible with determinism.
- 

Philosophy of Human Nature – Incompatibilism

- **Hard determinism** accepts the *consequent argument* – our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and the past, and so we are not free or morally responsible for our actions.
- **Libertarianism** – the idea that humans have *the power of contrary choice, or the ability to do otherwise*, as a necessary requirement for moral responsibility. (most consistent with orthodox Christianity)
- The *libertarian's dilemma* is a false argument that a person's actions must either be determined, or else happen by a chance occurrence of factors, and so either way are not under that person's control.
- This is false because it fails to realize factors may exist that *influence* a person's actions without *requiring* them, and so still allow free choice – so determinism and chance are not the only two options.

Philosophy of Human Nature – Compatibilism

- **Compatibilism** insists that human actions can be determined in some ways, without this constituting a threat to human freedom and moral responsibility.
 - When we speak of free action, all we mean is that a person is able to do what he wants to do, and that what the person does (as long as not coerced or constrained) *is* what they wanted to do.
 - Freedom is the ability to act according to one's desires and intentions, and this is compatible with determinism, as our choices occur *within* the parameters of natural law, and so we are morally responsible for our actions.
- 