

The Nature of Mind according to David M. Armstrong

PHIL 100w (Introduction to Knowledge and Reality)

Nicolas Fillion

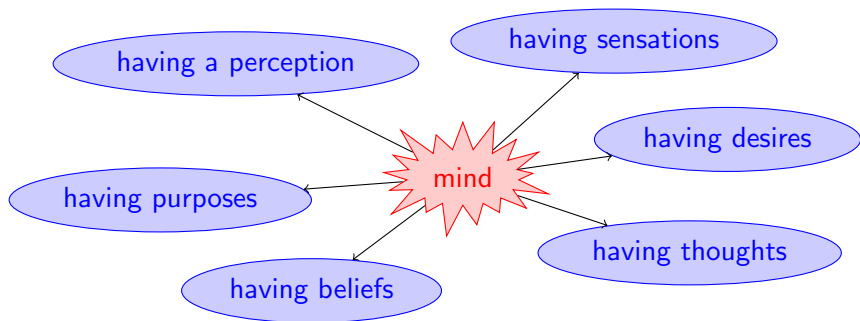
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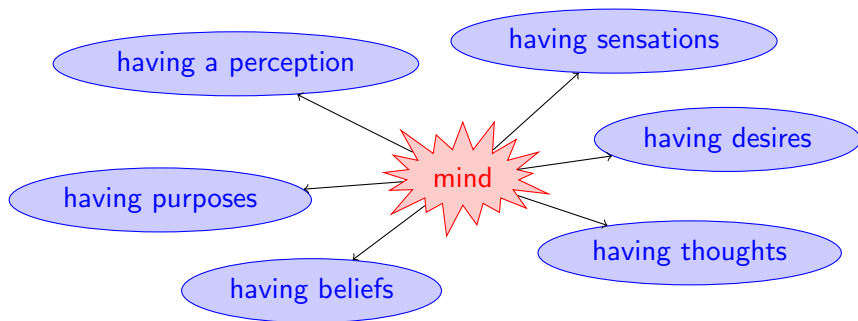
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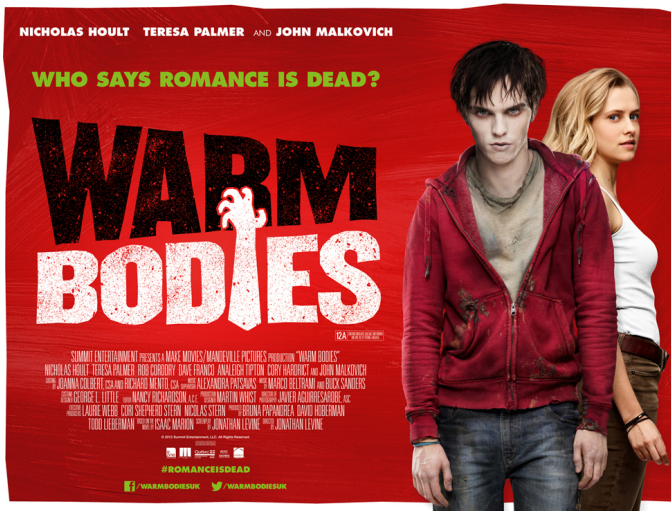
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So, the question 'what is mind?' is associated with

- what is it to perceive?
- what is it to have emotions?
- *etc.*

Now, of course, sometimes popular culture blurs things. . . Apparently, mindless zombies can now fall in love!



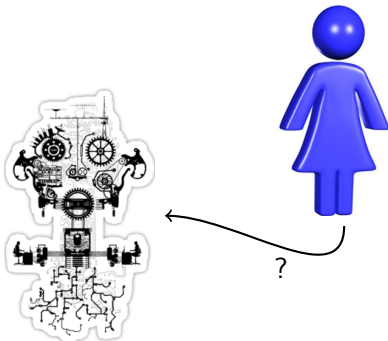
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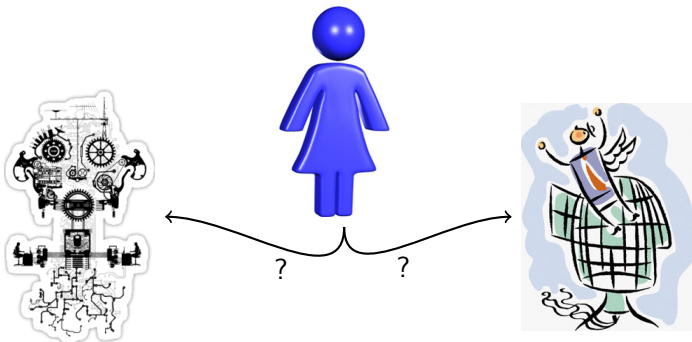
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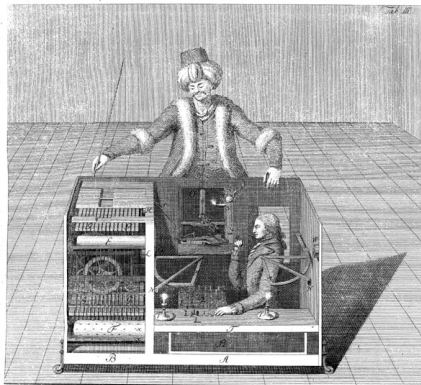
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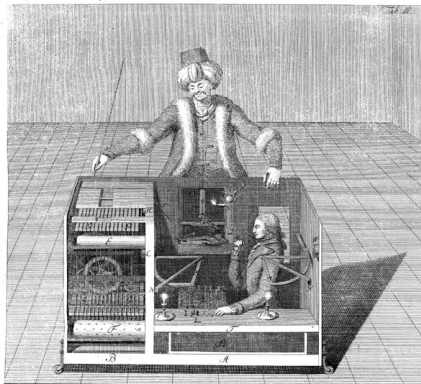
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Is there something else, a different type of 'substance'?

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The mechanism appeared to be able to play a strong game of chess against a human opponent.

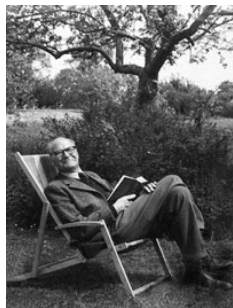
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The mechanism appeared to be able to play a strong game of chess against a human opponent. But it was a hoax.

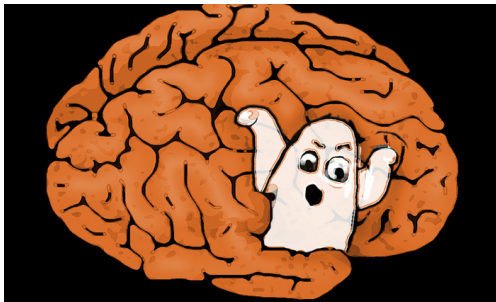
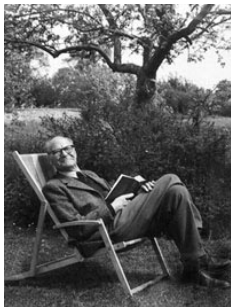
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Ryle's (1900-1976) analysis came up against that; he tried to naturalize our understanding of the mind by attacking the '**ghost in the machine view**', and replace it by a **behaviorist account**.

Today, we look at the contribution of the Australian philosopher D.M. Armstrong.



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- Naturalizing the mind is less of a controversy by then;

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We examine the paper

The Nature of Mind

from his 1981 book

The Nature of Mind and Other Essays.

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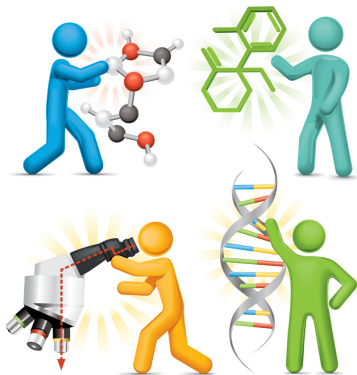
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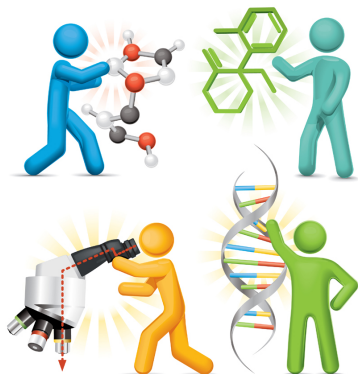
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Armstrong approaches physicalism from another direction; for him, it is not forced by logical analysis.

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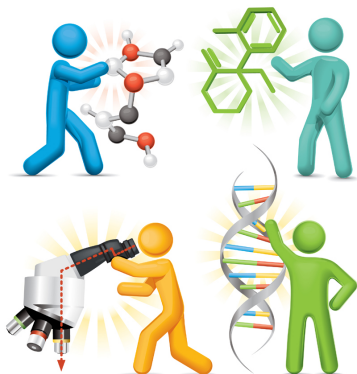


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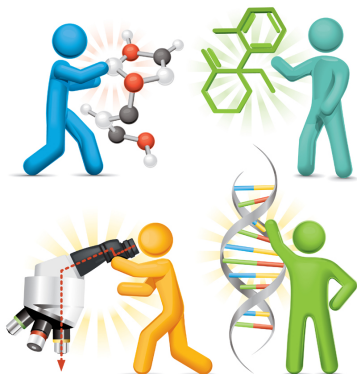
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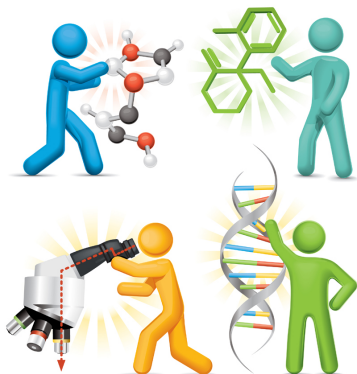
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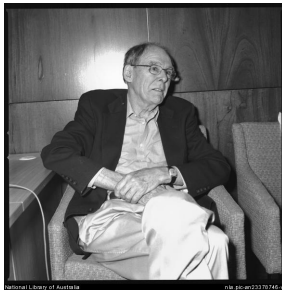
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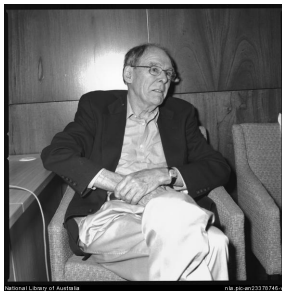


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hormonal effects on moods and
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Armstrong's argument for Physicalism/Materialism



“[...] the moral is clear. We must try to work out an account of the nature of mind which is compatible with the view that man is nothing but a physico-chemical mechanism.”



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But why **scientism**? Why concede authority to science about the nature of humans, and the nature of mind in particular?

Are not science,



Are not science, philosophy,



Are not science, philosophy, religion,



Are not science, philosophy, religion, morality,



Are not science, philosophy, religion, morality, literature,

TIM



Are not science, philosophy, religion, morality, literature, art, *etc*, all to be equally considered?

Tim



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Q: can it decide the right kind of question for our issue?

Ryle achieved Physicalism through Behaviorism.

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If mental processes are identical to their expressions, then there is no tension with a physicalist approach.

The main problem of behaviorism

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“To possess a dispositional property **is not to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change**; it is to be bound or liable to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change, when particular condition is realised.”

Example of a disposition: Brittleness

“Brittleness is a disposition, a disposition possessed by materials like glass. Brittle materials are those which, when subjected to relatively small forces, break or shatter easily. But breaking and shattering easily is not brittleness, rather it is the **manifestation** of brittleness.”



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We are still identifying states with outward acts: there is no ‘mysterious internal arena’ unidentified with behaviour.

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Is this satisfactorily facing the challenge?

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Now, is this a friendly or devastating amendment?

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Similarly, dispositions are to be identified with mental states.

However, conceptualized in this way, dispositions require talking about an internal arena of mental processes, and so they can't save Behaviourism.



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Then,

“[...] it becomes a scientific question, and not a question of logical analysis, what in fact the intrinsic nature of that cause is. The cause might be, as Descartes thought it was, a spiritual substance working through the pineal gland to produce the complex bodily behaviour which men are capable.”

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"But in fact the verdict of modern science seems to be that the sole cause of mind-betokening behaviour in man and the higher animals is the physico-chemical workings of the central nervous system."

So, based on science, we should identify mental states with physical states of the central nervous system, not with some other substance.

So, let's summarize:

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- ① We shouldn't identify mental states and behaviour.
"The mind is, rather, that which stands behind and brings about our complex behaviour."
- ② Dispositions, properly understood, are really state that bring about (or 'cause') behaviour under specified circumstances.
- ③ This view is compatible and indeed supports (but not in a purely logical way) physicalism.
- ④ The debate can be understood dialectically:
Thesis (non-naturalistic account), antithesis (Ryle's Behaviourism), synthesis (Armstrong position).

More discussion:

- A key point here is: what sort of thing can be shown by logical analysis, and what can be learned by scientific inquiry?
- What about consciousness? How does Armstrong approach this problem?