

## ***PHIL 2207 – Philosophy of Psychology***

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### ***Today***

- ⇒ The course website
- ⇒ Overview of the course
- ⇒ Organization of the course
- ⇒ How to survive this course (and benefit from it)
- ⇒ Readings for this week:
  - Descartes' automaton theory
  - Huxley on Descartes' automaton theory
- ⇒ Question time

### ***The course website***

- ⇒ <http://psych.dbourget.com/>
  - The readings
    - Either references to the reader
    - Or electronic copies
    - Or both
  - These slides
  - The essay questions (in due time)
  - And more
- ⇒ The website takes precedence over the outline.
- ⇒ The class survey

### ***Overview: the subject matter of the course***

- ⇒ What is philosophy of psychology?
  - An inquiry into philosophical questions about the mind which arise in the context of empirical studies.

### **Overview: topics to be studied (possibly)**

- ⇒ Mind as mechanism
- ⇒ Science and folk psychology
- ⇒ Cognition and perception (?)
- ⇒ Free will (?)

### **Organization of the course**

- ⇒ Structure of lectures
  - Summary of previous week
  - Summary of new material
  - Questions
  - Team exercise
- ⇒ Assessments
  - 2 Exams
  - 2 Essays
- ⇒ Read the outline..
  - More details on assessments
  - Schedule
  - Plagiarism

### **Survival strategy**

- ⇒ Use the lectures well:
  - Read the material ahead of the lectures
    - Try to reconstruct the structure of the articles: what are the key claims? how do they relate to each other?
  - Write a Sketchy Summary of your findings.
  - During the lecture, listen, don't take lots of notes.
  - Review the lecture notes (slides) after each lecture, and correct your Sketchy Summary as appropriate.
  - Ask questions during the question time.
- ⇒ Essays:
  - Start working on them early. Philosophy is easy, but you can't do it fast.

### **Summary of this week's readings**

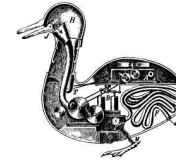
- Readings:
- Descartes, excerpt from his *Discourse on Method*, Part V, reproduced on the course website.
  - Descartes, excerpt from his *Réponses* reproduced on pages 216-218 in Huxley's essay.
  - Huxley's essay in course reader.

## René Descartes (1596-1650)



## Descartes' automaton theory (AT)

- ⇒ The theory: non-human animals are mere automata (machines) without minds, souls, or reason.
- mind = soul = the faculty of reason
- ... we shall be forced to conclude, that we know of the existence in them [animals] of no other principle of motion than the disposition of their organs and the continual affluence of animal spirits ... (from the Reponses excerpt)



## Descartes' argument for AT

- ⇒ The difference between humans and other animals: human are capable of Reason. (P1)
- ⇒ Faculties other than Reason are based in mechanisms. (P2)
  - Passions, reflexes, and homeostatic processes are mechanical.
- ⇒ So non-human animals are automata.
- ⇒ Further, automata have no minds, because
  - Mind is not physical. (P3)

## Why the difference is Reason (P1)

- ⇒ P1: The difference between humans and other animals: human are capable of Reason.
- ⇒ Two features distinguish humans from other animals:
  - The complexity and versatility of human speech
  - The adaptability of human behaviour
- ⇒ This is not a difference in degree. It requires a special faculty of Reason (minds).
- ⇒ See excerpt from the *Discourse*.

### **Why mechanism (P2)**

- ⇒ P2: Faculties other than Reason are based in mechanisms.
- ⇒ Progress of neurological research.
- ⇒ The example of hydraulic and spring-based automata.
- ⇒ Both excerpts are relevant, as well as the background discussion in Huxley's essay.

### **Why mind/reason is not physical (P3)**

- ⇒ P3: Mind is not physical.
- ⇒ Descartes can't imagine the power of computers. (in the *Discourse*)
- ⇒ Also, the *argument from disembodiment* in *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

### **Criticism**

- ⇒ P1: The difference between humans and other animals: human are capable of Reason.
- ⇒ It could be argued that this difference is only a matter of degrees.
  - Huxley argues for this.

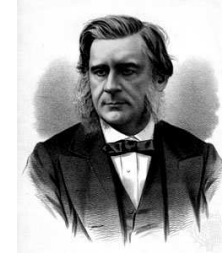
### **Criticism**

- ⇒ P2: Faculties other than Reason are based in mechanisms.
- ⇒ Descartes at best had a little bit of evidence for this claim, not a complete mechanical explanation of animal behaviour (we don't even have that).
  - Descartes was impressed by the discovery that it was possible to simulate animal minds.

## Criticism

- ⇒ P3: Mind is not physical.
- ⇒ Descartes ran out of imagination when he couldn't imagine automata with language.
- ⇒ The argument from the Meditations is controversial.

## Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895)

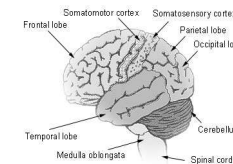


## Huxley's "modern evidence"

- ⇒ The case of the frog
- ⇒ The case of Sergeant F

## The frog

- ⇒ The "anterior division" (AD) of the brain is the organ of consciousness.
  - What does he mean by "consciousness"? Mind? Conscious rational thought?
  - What is AD?
    - Probably the frontal lobes.



- ⇒ Some complex purposive actions in frogs can be performed without AD.

### ***Sergeant F***

- ⇒ In his abnormal state, Sergeant F performs numerous purposive actions of complexity at least as great as those performed by any animal.
- ⇒ In his abnormal state, Sergeant F is unconscious.
  - Analogy with the Frog.
- ⇒ Therefore, the most complex purposive actions of animals could be performed unconsciously.

### ***Huxley's epiphenomenalism***

- ⇒ Disagrees with Descartes on whether animals have consciousness. They do have it, but it plays no role in controlling their behaviour. (p. 236)
  - Argument from gradualism about evolution.
- ⇒ This leaves two possibilities:
  - Parallelism: consciousness and matter never interact.
  - Epiphenomenalism: they interact one way only (matter -> consciousness)
- ⇒ Humans are like animals: they are automata. (pp. 243-244)

### ***Criticism***

- ⇒ Not clear that Huxley and Descartes are talking about the same thing. Descartes talks about mind and reason, Huxley about consciousness.
- ⇒ The frog's behaviour is highly anomalous, so why think consciousness plays no role in normal behaviour?
- ⇒ Same for Sergeant F.
- ⇒ Little evidence is offered that Sergeant F is even unconscious.
  - In particular, Huxley doesn't say F's AD was damaged. In fact, the damage was in the left parietal lobe (toward the back of the head).

### ***For next week***

- ⇒ To read:
  - Descartes and Huxley
  - William James' article.
- ⇒ Homework:
  - Complete the class survey on the website.