Proposal for This is Philosophy: Philosophy of Mind
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Overview
I propose to write a volume on philosophy of mind for Steven Hales's proposed series, This is Philosophy. In keeping with the mission of the series, This is Philosophy: Philosophy of Mind will be both accessible to the average student and technology oriented, integrating with supplemental online material. Also, while the proposed book will cover all of the topics one would expect in a traditional philosophy of mind course, it will be up to date and cover recent advances that are sadly missing from many competitor volumes. My proposed volume will not be limited to what has become a very old-fashioned approach to teaching philosophy of mind, which is to focus solely on the mind-body problem via Cartesian substance dualism and the twentieth-century reactions to it (behaviorism, identity theory, functionalism, and eliminativism). In recent decades philosophers of mind have made exciting progress toward, for example, explanations of consciousness, and explications of the nature of perception and emotion. It is increasingly clear that the progress made is now part of canonical philosophy of mind.

Market
The main competitor volumes—single-authored texts introducing philosophy of mind to undergraduates—are out of touch with the significant changes of recent decades and pitched at too high a level for most undergraduates. The main examples I have in mind here are Churchland’s 1988 Matter and Consciousness, Rey’s 1997 Contemporary Philosophy of Mind, Kim’s 2006 Philosophy of Mind, and Heil’s 2004 Philosophy of Mind.

Unfortunately, many textbooks introducing areas of philosophy tend to be written in the very same dry, pedantic, and academic manner in which professional philosophers write their articles for research journals. It is perhaps unfortunate that even the research articles are written that way, but this is clearly a disastrous approach in a text for students who will likely only take one or two philosophy courses in their life. The present volume will be written with the average undergraduate in mind.

One aspect of the proposed volume that will enhance its accessibility for the average undergraduate is an emphasis on self-discovery. In studying the philosophy of mind, you are in a real sense taking on a study of yourself. Arguably either you are your mind, or your mind is nonetheless a pretty big part of who you are. Like just about everyone else, and perhaps even more so, the average college student is very much interested in themselves. In the proposed volume, I will highlight the various way in which key ideas in the philosophy of mind shed light on the questions such as “Who am I?” and “What am I?”
Content
The proposed volume will be around 90,000 words and introduce students to the
philosophy of mind in 15 chapters. The projected word and chapter counts are
comparable to those of James Rachels’s widely used ethics text, The Elements of Moral
Philosophy, which is 14 chapters and 90,000 words.

In my proposed volume, six of the fifteen chapters will focus on the traditional
positions on the mind-body problem. The remaining chapters will take up topics such as
the problems of mental causation (chapter 9) and freewill (chapter 12), as well as theories
of consciousness (chapter 14) and intentionality (chapter 13). The number and order of
the chapters were devised with the typical fifteen-week semester in mind, but the chapters
will be sufficiently self-contained for professors and instructors to feel comfortable
selecting only the chapters that fit their own approaches to teaching philosophy of mind. I
present the chapter titles immediately below. A descriptive table of contents appears as an
appendix to this proposal document.

Chapters:
1. Meet Your Mind
2. Substance Dualism
3. Property Dualism
4. Idealism, Solipsism, and Panpsychism
5. Behaviorism and Other Minds
6. Mind as Brain
7. Nonhuman Minds: Thinking Machines, Animals, and Aliens
8. Functionalism
9. Mental Causation, Epiphenomenalism, Anomalous Monism
10. Eliminativism
11. Perception, Imagination, and Emotion
12. The Will: Willpower and Freedom
13. Intentionality and Mental Representation
14. Consciousness and Qualia
15. Personal Identity and Immortality

The proposed volume will not contain readings from the primary literature—it is,
after all, a single-authored text and not an anthology. However, many instructors like to
assign such readings to their students and the present volume will aid such instructors by
calling attention to relevant readings. Readers will be directed to readings via annotated
bibliographies at the end of each chapter. I will emphasize primary readings from the
historical greats. One advantage that comes along with such an emphasis (aside from the
obvious advantages of greatness) is that such works are in the public domain and widely
and freely available online.

In keeping with goals of Hales’s proposed series, This is Philosophy: Philosophy
of Mind will involve multiple tie-ins with instructive technologies, especially in the form
of online resources. Perhaps more so than other philosophers, philosophers of mind are
tech-savvy and have developed helpful and free online resources to which I will direct the
reader at relevant moments. Such resources include Chris Eliasmith’s Online Dictionary.
of Philosophy of Mind, David Leech Anderson’s Mind Project, and the PhilPapers online resource of David Chalmers and David Bourget. There are also many freely available videos and software applications that are too numerous to list here. Further, I will explore the possibility of creating a blog to serve as a companion to the text, modeled somewhat on the blog/book pairings for Mind Hacks (http://mindhacks.com/) and Your Brain and You: What Neuroscience Means for Us (http://yourbrainandyou.com/). I already have extensive experience with blogging, maintaining the long-running (and still-going) Brain Hammer (http://petemandik.blogspot.com/) and the more recent Alternate Minds (http://cogsciphi.blogspot.com/).

Appendix: Descriptive Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Meet Your Mind
This introductory chapter will have two goals taken up by two parts. The first and larger part will cover the main aspects of mind that philosophers have been interested in. Such aspects involve mental states such as thoughts and experiences, processes such as reasoning and imagining, and capacities such as will and consciousness. The second part will introduce the main problems that philosophers of mind tackle, problems such as the mind-body problem, the problem of other minds, and the hard problem of consciousness and qualia.

Chapter 2. Substance Dualism
Substance dualists hold that minds and physical objects are two separable and distinct sorts of thing. The bulk of the field of philosophy of mind grew around the mind-body problem and the substance dualism of Rene Descartes. This chapter will cover the main Cartesian ideas and arguments, as well as the main objections. Also covered will be the substance dualisms that one finds in the ancient philosophy of Plato and in many of the world's major religions.

Chapter 3. Property Dualism
The property dualist holds that a person is a single thing that has two sorts of properties: physical properties and irreducibly mental properties. Most of the arguments pro and con about property dualism focus on consciousness and qualia. This chapter will discuss core thought experiments concerning qualia-based property dualism: zombies, inverted qualia, and Mary the color-blind super scientist.

Chapter 4. Idealism, Solipsism, and Panpsychism
Against dualists, monists hold that there is just one sort of thing. The dominant monists, the materialists, will occupy chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, & 10. Less appreciated, but still interesting and important to discuss, are the monists who hold everything to be mental. The solipsist holds that everything exists in their own mind. Non-solipsistic idealists allow the existence of other minds, but not anything that isn’t inside of some mind or other. Closely related are panpsychists: they hold that mind is everywhere and that even simple physical systems like cells and atoms have their own minds.
Chapter 5. Behaviorism and Other Minds

Our main source of evidence concerning the minds of others is their bodily and verbal behavior. The problem of other minds is the problem of whether such evidence suffices for knowing that others have minds. Behaviorists hold that there's nothing to mind that can't be captured by behavior. Though few philosophers are behaviorists any more, behaviorism is interesting especially in the way in which it offers a solution to the problem of other minds.

Chapter 6. Mind as Brain

Materialist opponents of behaviorism fault behaviorism for focusing too much on the outer effects of mental states. These opponents offer that mental states should instead be viewed as the inner causes of behavior. This chapter focuses on the psychoneural identity theory, the view that mental states just are a kind of brain state.

Chapter 7. Nonhuman Minds: Thinking Machines, Animals, and Aliens

One of the most influential objections to identifying mental states with brain states is that perhaps creatures with very different brains or machines with no brains at all can nonetheless have the same sorts of mental states as humans. This chapter will explore the issues surrounding the possibilities of nonhuman intelligence and consciousness. Can so-called artificial intelligence be genuinely intelligent? Do nonhuman animals, perhaps even those as simple as worms and insects, have genuine consciousness? Might extraterrestrial beings, despite having bodies radically different from ours, have similar mental states like pain and happiness?

Chapter 8. Functionalism

The core idea of functionalism fits quite naturally with the idea of thinking machines from the previous chapter. Functionalists hold that the mind is what the brain does, and that the same sort of thing can be done by nonbrains like computers. Functionalists hold that the mind is a kind of software running on the hardware of the brain. One kind of functionalism holds that mental states can be defined by the sorts of causal roles that they play. That mental states can play such causal roles is somewhat controversial, however, and as will be discussed in the next chapter, perhaps mental states don't actually have any causal effects.

Chapter 9. Mental Causation, Epiphenomenalism, Anomalous Monism

Much common-sense thinking about the mind holds that things happening in our minds are both causes and effects. Events in the world cause perceptions and feelings to arise in the mind. Events in the mind serve as plans, intentions, and volitions that cause bodily motions and other changes in the world. However, many philosophers believe that the mind can't really enter into these sorts of causal relationships. Epiphenomenalists hold that mental states have no causal effects. Anomalous monists hold that mental events do not relate to each other via psychological causal laws. Against epiphenomenalists and anomalous monists, some philosophers try to defend common sense and spell out how there can be genuine mental causation.
Chapter 10. Eliminativism

Trying to explain core aspects of the mind in ways consistent with natural sciences like physics, chemistry, and biology is very difficult to do. Some philosophers hold that this is just a temporary difficulty. Other philosophers hold that the problem has to do with deep flaws in our ideas about the mind and that we should just give up taking seriously that there are such things as beliefs and experiences. Such philosophers are known as eliminative materialists or eliminativists. They hold that we should eliminate any reference to minds and mental states in favor of purely physical and physiological explanations of people and their behaviors.

Chapter 11. Perception, Imagination, and Emotion

What does it mean to perceive something? When you see an object or hear a noise, what sorts of relationship does your mind enter into with that object? One of the main theories of perception discussed by philosophers of mind is that perceptions must both represent and be caused by the objects perceived. What is imagination? Is it a kind of perception, or is it more like just thinking about something? And what are emotions? Are emotions a kind of perception? For example, is fear or anger a perception of the state of your body or a perception of things going wrong in the world? Or is emotion a kind of mental state all to itself, separate from sensory perception?

Chapter 12. The Will: Willpower and Freedom

Is there such a thing as the will, the part of your mind that makes things happen? Some philosophers hold will to be a kind of illusion: we seem to be in control, but our conscious minds are just along for the ride, enjoying the misperception of being in charge. If there is such a thing as the will, what is its nature? Is it free? Or is it instead a victim of fate? Is there such a thing as willpower, a reservoir of “oomph” that varies across times and persons? Some philosophers hold that the idea of willpower is a confused idea and that it makes no sense to think of the will having more or less power.

Chapter 13. Intentionality and Mental Representation

Intentionality is the “aboutness” of mental states: mental states like thought and belief are about things. We can think about and wonder about things. Our minds form mental representations of the ways things are and the ways things could be. This is a very weird and interesting aspect of our mind, allowing us to think about things that are in the future, things that are very far away, and things that do not even exist. Some philosophers of mind have developed theories of what intentionality is. Others are skeptical that intentionality can ever be explained.

Chapter 14. Consciousness and Qualia

Many philosophers hold that qualia—the “what it’s like” aspect of our conscious experiences—are what make the mind-body problem such a hard problem. Many of these philosophers, as discussed in chapter 3 on property dualism, are pessimistic about ever explaining consciousness in terms of physical things like brain states and causal processes. The present chapter focuses on more optimistic philosophers and the theories that they have sketched attempting to explain consciousness.
Chapter 15. Personal Identity and Immortality

What is it that makes you the very person that you are? Are you just a collection of molecules? If so, then you can't lose or gain any weight without thereby becoming an entirely different person. Theories of personal identity concern the factors that make you continue to be one and the same person. Such theories have direct consequences for the question of immortality: Are you something that can survive the death of your body? If so, then how might immortality work? Are you a program that can be uploaded to and kept alive on a computer? If a perfect functioning copy of your body (with brain) was always made right before your old body died, would the new copy count as a surviving you? And if two copies were made, could you be identical to both of them?