

What is the mind all about?

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◆ What is a mind and what is it for?

- ◇ A mind is the control system of an animal.
- ◇ A mind enables an animal to develop goals and achieve those goals, the most fundamental of which is to maintain its life by maintaining the integrity of its body.
- ◇ A mind is a means of representing information and of making decisions.
- ◇ A mind is a component of a biological, analog system.

◆ What is consciousness and what is it for?

- ◇ Consciousness is the portion of a person's mental activity that they are aware of and, hence, can directly control.
- ◇ Consciousness is a means of representing information. Consciousness is a biological, analog means of representing information.
- ◇ Consciousness is a singular, centralized, focusing process for the purpose of concept/skill development and decision-making.

◆ What are the basic components of a mind?

- ◇ Four basic components: volitional conscious; automatic unconscious; sensory; motor. See figure.
- ◇ Most mental activity is automatic unconscious, as per psychological theory before Freud.
- ◇ Mental activity is organized hierarchically, and conscious focusing/attention fosters its development.
- ◇ Practice makes perfect. Practice is a volitional, conscious activity, while becoming perfect is an automatic, unconscious activity.
- ◇ The intelligence of a mind resides in the automatic component.
- ◇ Ex: standing, walking, sitting, driving, locking door without remembering, blindsight (toad, alligator, shark), bladder evacuation, visual perception (vibration, colors, depth), illusions, memory, discomfort, anesthesia, impulsive vs. restrained decision-making, sleeping on problem, differing abilities, understanding chess configuration, failing to see typos, inserting missing words, correcting incorrect speech, emotions, habits (behavioral habits, emotional habits)

◆ What is sleep and what is it for?

- ◇ Sleep constitutes standby mode for the volitional, conscious component.
- ◇ Sleep causes volitionally driven muscles to rest, allowing the body to engage in rejuvenation and repair.
- ◇ Conjecture: In placing the volitional component in standby mode, sleep gives the automatic component freedom to pursue its own activity without volitional restraint, and this entails enhancing the concept/skill development that was begun by the volitional component while awake.
- ◇ A dream is the result of the volitional component going from standby mode to awake mode when the automatic component is highly active (REM sleep) and before the volitional component takes control.

◆ What is emotion and what is it for?

- ◇ Emotion is undirected energy, like gunpowder.
- ◇ Emotion comes in a variety of flavors: hunger, thirst, sexual passion, drive to exercise, joy, sorrow, love, anger, hate, etc.
- ◇ It is the responsibility of the volitional component to put emotion to wise use: satisfying hunger and thirst to enhance physical health, behavior, and relations; expressing anger productively; satisfying sexual passion with wise consideration to all of its ramifications.
- ◇ Freud's theory of the mind is unnecessarily complex to an extreme, making it inept. We can modify undesirable habits — automatic, learned behavior — through practice.

◆ What are the basic activities of a mind?

- ◇ Content activities — sensational (input), intellectual (thinking), emotional (energy)
- ◇ Control activities — focusing/attention, decision-making

◆ How does decision-making work?

- ◇ Continuous flow of propensity from the time of sufficient neural development before birth.
- ◇ Propensity flows into alternatives identified by the mind.
- ◇ Volitional component influences propensities through exposure to relevant info and stimuli.
- ◇ At time of decision, alternative having greatest propensity is chosen.

◆ Why does the mind seem mysterious?

- ◇ The mind seems mysterious because conscious experience is private, not sensible by the five senses.

◆ Why is the mind-body problem a bogus problem?

- ◇ The mind-body problem is bogus because mental activity is necessarily private.
- ◇ Ex: It is logically impossible for one person to experience the pain of another person.
- ◇ Public objects and activities are sensible so they seem tangible, physical
- ◇ Private objects and activities are not sensible so they seem intangible, immaterial

◆ What is knowledge?

- ◇ Knowledge, skill, wisdom. See handout.

◆ Why do we assume other minds exist?

- ◇ Assumption of other minds doesn't increase predictive accuracy
- ◇ Assumption of other minds increases simplicity
- ◇ Ex: people, animals, computers

◆ Could we create a conscious creature?

- ◇ Direct creation is too complex.
- ◇ We could do so indirectly in a biological system through evolution and individual maturation. Evolution by natural selection is goal-directed process, hence entails progress.

◆ What is my personal identity?

- ◇ Public — body is public object
- ◇ Private — mental activity is private

◆ Kinds of objects

- ◇ Biological — animals, plants
- ◇ Non-biological — computers, cars, rocks

◆ Are we responsible for our decisions?

- ◇ Yes, to graded extent depending on situation
- ◇ Prove indeterminism
- ◇ Scale reductionism — untenable
- ◇ Scale extensionism — intuitive, implies personal responsibility