

I turn now to the most fundamental problem facing the Psychological Approach: If we accept that view, we must deny that we are human animals. Not only are we not essentially animals; we are not living organisms at all, even contingently.

We can see this if we consider a puzzle. Imagine you lapse into a persistent vegetative state, in which your mind is destroyed but those vegetative functions that keep you alive continue. According to the Psychological Approach, that is the end of you. However, no human animal ceases to exist when this happens! "Your" human animal – the one you point to when you point to yourself – continues to live and breathe; it simply loses its psychological features. From this it follows that you are not an animal. For there is only one human animal sitting in your chair and wearing your shoes right now, not two, and that animal, being able to outlive you, is not you.

I want to argue that since you and I are human animals, the Psychological Approach must be false.

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I said I would argue that you and I are animals. This might seem a strange thing to argue for, given our assumption that you and I are material objects. We can understand how someone might deny that we are animals by rejecting materialism – that we are material objects. Many philosophers have argued that we are not material objects of any kind, but immaterial souls, or abstract objects akin to computer programs, etc. But once it is conceded that we are material beings of some sort, it seems quite obvious what sort of material beings we are: we are living animals.

But the friends of the Psychological Approach have a subtle reply to this. They will concede that we are animals, and obviously so. They will even agree that no animal ceases to exist when you become a human vegetable. Nevertheless, they claim, the Psychological Approach is consistent with the fact that we are animals: The claim that each human person is an animal (the reply goes) is ambiguous. The source of the ambiguity is the harmless-looking word "is": we must distinguish the "is of identity" from the "is of constitution". Of course, you are an animal. But insofar as this is an undeniable empirical fact, it does not entail that you are numerically identical with any animal. Rather (as Shoemaker puts it), "a person 'is' an animal, not in the sense of being identical to one, but in the sense of sharing its matter with one." When you look in a mirror you see an animal. It is easy to believe that you and that animal are one and the same, and that is indeed the way it appears. That is because you are connected with that animal in a particularly intimate way: you and the animal are made of the very same atoms and occupy exactly the same region of space. But when we attend to that animal's modal and dispositional properties (and perhaps its historical features as well), and compare them with your own, we see that the animal must be numerically different from you. Human people appear to be identical with human animals because the relation of complete spatial and material coincidence is easily mistaken for identity.

However, this view faces a general metaphysical difficulty. You and the animal are now made up of the same atoms, arranged in the same way. This would appear to make you and the animal exactly alike: you are, now at least, perfect duplicates of one another. This raises an apparently unanswerable question: How can we destroy just one of two qualitatively identical objects by applying the same forces to both of them? That is, why does the destruction of your mental contents or capacities destroy you but not the human animal connected with you? And why does destroying all of you but your cerebrum destroy the animal but not you? What is it about the animal that enables it to survive such a thing, and what is it

about you that prevents you from surviving it? What is the difference between you and the animal that gives it different persistence conditions from yours?

You may think that the animal survives the adventure in question while you do not because the animal is an animal and you are a person; and being able to survive the loss of all mental features is part of the nature of animals, while being unable to do so is part of the nature of people. That is, the animal survives and the person does not because each has a different criterion of identity. This might be a perfectly good way to explain why some particular animal survived, and some particular person did not survive, on some particular occasion: this particular animal survived brain damage today because it had the capacity to survive it, and that particular person didn't survive the very same brain damage because it lacked that capacity. But that leaves us wondering why the animal can survive that adventure and why the person cannot. What gives the person and her coincident human animal these different capacities or dispositions? We cannot answer this question by appealing to the difference between people and animals and the fact that the person is a person and the animal is an animal. For all that makes one of the two things in question a person and the other an animal is this dispositional difference; the only difference between you and the animal is modal or dispositional.

To be sure, you and the animal might have different histories, as we saw in the previous chapter. You might have come into existence several months or even years after the animal associated with you did, perhaps when the animal became rational. But the mere fact that two things were once different cannot by itself explain why one of them can now survive an adventure that the other cannot survive.

We can illustrate the problem with a thought experiment. Imagine a machine with the power to make a perfect duplicate of any material object. When you put something into the "in" box of the machine and press the button, the machine "scans" the object, recording the precise state and location of every atom, and then sends this information to the "out" box, where it gathers from its stock of raw materials the same number of atoms of the same kinds and arranges them in precisely the way that the original object's atoms are arranged. When the machine has done its work there appears in the "out" box an object that, though numerically different from the original, is exactly similar to it in all of its momentary, physical properties, and in those properties that are fixed by its physical properties.

Now imagine that you crawl into the "in" box of the duplicating machine and press the button. What should we expect to find in the "out" box? Well, we should find atoms exactly like the ones that composed you a moment ago, arranged in just the way that your atoms were arranged then. Let us suppose that those atoms would compose two different things, a person and living organism. Which is which? The animal, the friends of the Psychological Approach will say, is the one that can survive as a vegetable, and the person is the one who cannot. But what did the machine do to give those two objects different persistence conditions? It must have done something more than simply arrange atoms, for the arrangement of atoms is the same in both objects. If the machine did nothing beyond arranging atoms, the same causes acting in the same way would have produced both the person and the animal, and there would be nothing to account for their difference – for the fact that one but not the other can survive the destruction of its cerebrum, for example.

Úkoly

1. Charakterizujte text.
2. Popište problematiku, kterou text řeší (základní pozice, argumenty, cokoli víte)

3. Parafrázujte argumentaci obsaženou v textu.

4. Zhodnoťte argumentace, doplňte své vlastní úvahy, komentáře.