

#### Mind and Matter Lecture 4

1. How was it that we ever came to believe that somebody else has beliefs? The answer, surely—and this applies as much to ordinary observation as it does e.g. to psychoanalysis—is their *behaviour*. If you behave in a certain way, if, e.g., you voluntarily do things like eating pies all day long, then that might be grounds for attributing a belief or desire to you (e.g. the desire for pies). This suggests the idea that propositional mental events are identical with particular patterns of behaviour. Suppose that I am expecting my friend to turn up at the pub. What more does that mean than the following: I order two drinks, I look at my watch, I look up expectantly whenever anybody comes in, etc.? But then in that case it seems plausible to *identify* the state of expecting my friend to join me with that pattern of behaviour.
2. Now the identification of propositional mental states with *actual* patterns of behaviour cannot be quite right. It is true that I have believed all my adult life that Cicero died before Voltaire was born, and yet I have never (until now) displayed any corresponding pattern of behaviour. And it is likely that most people go through their whole lives with beliefs like that without ever displaying them in behaviour. What it is natural to suggest is that we identify a propositional mental state, not with a particular pattern of behaviour, but with a *disposition* to behave in a certain way under certain stimuli. (G. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*).
3. A disposition is a state of an object that makes true certain counterfactuals about how that object *would* behave if it *were* subjected to certain stimuli. It doesn't just apply to people. A glass vase is fragile; that could be true even if the glass were never smashed. What it means when we say that it is fragile, is just this: if it had been dropped on a hard surface, then it would have smashed. That can be true even if it is never dropped. Similarly, we might say that my belief about Cicero and Voltaire is to be identified with a set of dispositions: the disposition to answer certain questions in certain ways, the disposition to draw certain inferences from historical records, etc. This view, that each propositional mental state can be analysed as a particular behavioural disposition, is known as *analytical behaviourism*.
4. Note the difference between functionalism and behaviourism. First, functionalism identifies beliefs etc. by their bodily causes *as well as* their behavioural effects, whereas for the behaviourist the beliefs etc. are more closely related to what we normally think of as their effects. But they are not effects on the behaviourist view: your beliefs don't *cause* you to give the response 'V' to the question 'Which of Cicero and Voltaire came later': if anything it is your disposition to respond that way. Second, according to functionalism your having beliefs (if you are human) requires your having a humanoid brain; as far as behaviourism is concerned, something that behaved the right way could have beliefs even if its head were stuffed with straw.

5. The difficulty with this view is that it cannot get the analysis right without being circular. Let us take, as an example, the expectation that my friend will join me in the pub. The idea was that that mental state is to be identified with particular behavioural dispositions, e.g. the disposition to answer certain questions in certain ways, the disposition to buy two pints if I have enough money etc. The difficulty is that these dispositions can only manifest that expectation if certain other mental states are specified. For example, even if I expect my friend to join me, it is not true that I will buy two pints unless I *also* believe that he likes to drink. So when analysing the mental state of expecting my friend to join me, I will have to write: I am disposed to buy two pints *if* I have enough money *and* I think that he likes to drink. But now this is not a reductive analysis: in order to say what it is to have one mental state (the expectation of my friend), I have had to invoke another mental state (the belief that he likes to drink). So I have not been able to analyse mental states in *purely* behavioural terms.
6. We can make a similar reply to this point as the reply that we made in connection with functionalism. Whilst it's true that you can't identify any particular belief / desire with any particular behavioural disposition, still you might be able to give a holistic analysis. You might be able to say that to have this overall set of beliefs and desires is to have such and such overall set of behavioural dispositions. But now it seems that there is no unique correspondence between totalities of belief and desire on the one hand and total dispositions on the other: many of the former could equally fit any one of the latter.
7. What behaviourism says about sensational phenomena is less plausible. For it seems possible that there are *zombies*—creatures that are behaviourally just like you and me but for whom all is dark within—and it seems possible that there are spectral inverts—creatures that are behaviourally just like you and me but who e.g. see red whenever you see green and vice versa. But there is a price to this: for what possible reason can you have for thinking your neighbour is not a zombie or spectral invert? Inductive reasoning is especially weak here: it would be like inferring, from the premise that there is a pair of trainers in your locker at the gym, to the conclusion that there is a pair of trainers in everyone else's.
8. Many philosophers *do* assert *some* relationship between one's physical state and one's mental life: that the latter *supervenes* on the former: it is impossible for there to be a difference in mental state without a difference in physical state. This is compatible with denying such reductive doctrines as analytical behaviourism. But the proponent of supervenience faces a challenge that has not yet been successfully met. He must show that the apparent possibility of zombies is indeed *merely* apparent. And even if we *could* vindicate supervenience, that would still not settle whether mental events *are* physical events. To *that* question, as we have seen, there appears to be no credible answer.