


PHIL 255  
**Week 5: Behaviorism and Other Minds**  
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Please turn off and  
 put away all  
 electronics.

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Behaviorism  
 Other minds



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## Varieties of Dualism

Christian (Cartesian): soul begins with fetus  
 Hindu: reincarnation  
 Ancient Greek: soul pre-exists  
 Algonquin: manitous (pan-psychism)





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## Varieties of Materialism

Mind-brain identity: mental states are brain states  
 Restricted mind-brain identity: human mental states are brain states  
 Functionalism: mental states are functions of input-output relations  
 Behaviorism: mental states are just patterns of observable behavior

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## Psychological Behaviorism



John B. Watson. B. F. Skinner. Dominated psychology 1920s-1950s.

Psychology should avoid talk of mental states and focus on patterns of behavior: stimulus + response.

Support:

- Successful explanations, e.g. conditioning
- Positivism: science should stick to observables

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## Cognitivism

George Miller, Noam Chomsky, etc. Revolutionized psychology 1956–now. Cognitive neuroscience.

Behaviorism failed to explain language, problem solving, etc.

Alternative view: mental states are representations with computational operations on them.

Support: explanations of problem solving, learning, language, etc.

Inference to the best explanation supports non-observables.

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## Philosophical Behaviorism

Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, W. V. O. Quine

Wittgenstein: there can't be a private language or private sensations

Response: internal states are the best explanation of external behavior

Ryle: dualists commit a category mistake in not realizing that minds are just dispositions to behave

Response: dispositions are mental mechanisms

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## Discussion Question

How plausible are philosophical and psychological behaviorism?


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## Embodiment Theses

Moderate (Gibbs):  
Language and thought are inextricably shaped by embodied action.



Extreme (Dreyfus):  
Embodiment refutes the computational-representational approach to mind.



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## Other Minds

Skeptical problem: Are there any other minds?

Response to solipsism:

The best explanation of your many behaviors analogous to mine is that you have mental states and processes analogous to mine as the result of your brain (soul) analogous to mine.



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## Other Minds: Theory

Psychological problem: How do we understand the minds of other people? What inferences to the best explanation can I reliably make about your mind?

Theory of mind: people have an unscientific but sometimes useful theory of why people act the way they do. E.g. desires + beliefs -> actions.

Questions: How accurate is human's theory of mind? Do other animals have a theory of mind?



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## Other Minds: Simulation

Psychological problem: How do we understand the minds of other people?

Simulation: you don't need to theorize about other minds, because you can emulate them.

Mirror neurons: my patterns of brain firing copy yours.

Emotional contagion: my facial expressions copy yours.

Action: put myself in your situation and imagine my actions. Imagery, not verbal inferences.

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## Other Minds: Empathy

Empathy is important for explanation, ethics, and politics.

Empathy: understand the emotion of others by putting yourself in their place.

Direct: use mirror neurons & emotional contagion to feel what someone else is feeling.

Inferential: use analogy to put yourself in someone else's shoes



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