

1. What does it mean to say that introspection is incorrigible?
2. Explain one of Armstrong's reasons for thinking that introspection is not incorrigible.

1. What is behaviorism?
2. What's wrong with behaviorism?
3. Describe Armstrong's alternative to behaviorism.



D. M. Armstrong
**Is Introspective
Knowledge
Incorrigible?**

Introspection

The special process by which we become aware of our own thoughts, feelings, and other mental states.

“A statement is incorrigible when sincerity entails truth.”

In general: an incorrigible (or indubitable) belief or statement is one that I can't be mistaken about.

Armstrong's Main Question:

Are my purely introspective
beliefs (or statements)
incorrigible?

Argument 1

Memory is fallible.

Therefore, introspective knowledge can only be about the present moment.

This goes even for my memories of a few seconds ago.

Argument 2

Even my reports (and thoughts) about my present mental state take some time to make. What moment are they about?

If before (or during) my speech, then they're about the past by the time I finish speaking (or thinking).

But if I mean the moment after I speak, then I would need to have knowledge of the future when I start speaking.

Arguments 1 and 2 show that if we have any incorrigible introspective knowledge, it is very fleeting, and also not very useful.

Argument 3

Introspection is always an apprehension *that one's mental state has a certain property*. It is an act of *classification*.

But classification always brings with it the possibility of misclassifying.

Therefore, in introspection, we might get our mental states wrong.

Argument 4

Introspection involves saying or thinking something about one's thought. The introspective thought is here distinct from the introspected thought.

But any time there are two distinct things, one could exist without the other.

Therefore, you could have the introspecting thought without the introspected thought.

This would ,m

I wish to defend the thesis...that mental states are... states of the brain. Now if I accept the existence of introspection, as I also do, then I must conceive of both introspection and the objects of introspection as states of the brain. Introspection must be a self-scanning process in the brain. That it is logically possible that such a self-scanning process will yield wrong results is at once clear, nor is it possible to see how such a self-scanning process could yield a logically privileged access. (*Introspection*, pp.418–19)

1. Modern science should lead us to believe that humans are “physico-chemical mechanisms”.
2. We should generally believe the things that modern science tells us.
3. Therefore, humans are physico-chemical mechanisms

...the moral is clear. We must try to work out an account of the nature of mind which is compatible with the view that man is nothing but a physico-chemical mechanism.

(Nature, p.295)

Behaviorism, v1.0

“The mind [is] not something behind the behaviour of the body, it [is] simply part of that physical behaviour. My anger with you is not some modification of a spiritual substance which somehow brings about aggressive behaviour; rather it is the aggressive behaviour itself...” (*Nature*, 296)

Behaviorism, v2.0

Mental states are not identical to behaviors, they are identical to dispositions to behave.

- Dispositions are tendencies or liabilities.
- For example, brittleness is “the tendency or liability of the material to break or shatter easily” (297). The breaking or shattering of glass is a manifestation of this disposition. Dropping the glass is the triggering condition.
- Anger (for example) is the disposition to behave in angry ways, given the right triggers.

Armstrong's Materialism

A mental state is “the state of the person apt for producing certain ranges of behavior”.

- These states are the grounds of our behavioral dispositions,
- They may be identical to physical states of our brain.

The Mind-Brain Identity Theory

(not Armstrong's view)

Each kind of mental state is identified with a kind of human brain state.

- e.g., Pain is identical to the firing of C-fibers

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Problem:

- This rules out the possibility of pain in creatures with brains different than ours.

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Armstrong's Solution:

- Identify kinds of mental states by their *functions* (their roles in producing behavior), not by the brain states that realize them.
- Armstrong is a *functionalist*.

Functionalism

(Armstrong's view, now probably the most popular theory)

Each kind of mental state is defined in terms of the role it plays in producing behavior, causing other mental states, and being caused by certain perceptual inputs.

- e.g., A creature's pain is whatever state of its brain or body is (normally) caused by damage to the body (etc.) and is (normally) responsible for causing pain behavior and the desire to avoid the pain's cause.