Chapter 2b Mind
According to Blackburn, the argument from analogy to the existence of other minds:

- **A.** is only available to the Cartesian dualist.
- **B.** is not available to the Cartesian dualist.
- **C.** is a fundamentally flawed argument no matter who is making it.
- **D.** is convincing from a Cartesian perspective, but less so from other perspectives.
Back to private experience

- Just like the problem of knowledge, the problem of other minds only arises when we, like Descartes, pick private experience as our starting point.

- An alternative view, defended by many philosophers today, is that our knowledge of mind does not originate in or knowledge of private experience at all.

- Rather, it comes from our early attempt to explain why people behave in different ways.
False-belief task

- Most children under the age of 3 cannot pass what is now known as the false-belief task.
- In the most common version of this task, children are shown a story involving two characters, Sally and Anne, playing with a toy like a marble. The dolls put away the marble in a box, and then Sally leaves.
- Anne takes the marble out and plays with it again, and after she is done, puts it away in a different box. Sally returns and the child is then asked where Sally will look for the marble.
In order to pass the false-belief task a child must be able to attribute beliefs to other people. When children develop this ability they are said to have a “theory of mind.”

The point for us is that a theory of mind actually seems to presuppose the existence of other people. This is because the principle use for a theory of mind is to understand the behavior of other people.

If this is the case, then it is not surprising that we will remain skeptical of the existence of other minds if we begin with the assumption that we know our own minds best.
One of Descartes’ errors may have been to suppose that

A. animals and children have no beliefs.
B. everyone has a theory of mind.
C. children can not grasp why other people have false beliefs.
D. knowledge of our own minds is prior to our knowledge of the minds of others.

A ∙ B ∙ C

D
Recall from last time that Blackburn is arguing as follows:

- From the point of view of Cartesian dualism, zombies are possible.
- Zombies are not possible.
- Therefore, Cartesian dualism is false.

To this you might say, “Hey, I actually think zombies and mutants might exist. So if dualism doesn’t have any problem with that, then I don’t have any problem with dualism.”
Zombiephilia

- That’s fine, but you need to understand exactly what it is you are buying into.
- If zombies do exist, it would mean that our conscious mental states (all of which zombies lack) don’t actually do anything at all.
- It would mean that when you bite into a habanera pepper, you don’t scream, start waving your hands and chugging your friend’s beer because of the pain you are feeling.
- After all, zombies will do exactly the same thing, and the chemical (capsaicin) stimulates the nerve endings in their tongues in exactly the same way, yet they feel no pain at all.
Ephiphenomenalism

- Blackburn notes (p. 57) that the view that mental states have no causal role actually has a name: epiphenomenalism.

- An epiphenomenon is basically a side effect that doesn’t play any significant causal role. For example:
  - The sound of your beating heart doesn’t pump your blood.
  - The train whistle doesn’t move the train down the tracks.
Epiphenomenalism 2

- But the sound of your beating heart and the whistle of the train are at least the results of causal processes.

- Cartesian dualism seems to be committed to a rather extraordinary form of epiphenomenalism in which our conscious mental states are neither causes nor the effects of the neurophysiological processes with which they are so intimately associated.

- They just somehow go along for the ride.
If, contrary to Blackburn, there were zombies and mutants in the world, might there also be mutant zombies?

A. Yes  
B. No, this is a contradiction in terms.  
C. It is possible but not very likely.  
D. Zombies can be mutants, but mutants can’t be zombies.
Locke and Leibniz

- In this chapter Blackburn introduces you to a debate between John Locke and Gottfried Leibniz.
- These two philosophers have been HUGELY influential. Leibniz was one of the inventors of calculus. Locke was the single most influential philosopher of the American revolution.
- Locke was a quite radical **empiricist**, whereas Leibniz was an equally radical **rationalist**.
- Interestingly, Locke was far more sympathetic to Cartesian dualism than Leibniz.
Why is it interesting that Locke is far more sympathetic to dualism than Leibniz?

A. Because Descartes was a rationalist. ✅
B. Because Descartes was an epiphenomenalist. ✗
C. Because Descartes was a skeptic. ✗
D. Because Descartes was a Catholic. ✗
God’s good pleasure and the Principle of Sufficient Reason.

Let’s read pages 58-61.

So, Locke believed that there is no reason why God made one set of nerve impulses result in a blue experience, and a different set result in a red one. God could have wired us up any way he wanted. It was just “God’s good pleasure” to do us the way that he did.

Leibniz, regarded this as tantamount to the claim that God had made a world that does not make sense. Leibniz thought this was incompatible with God’s nature. Leibniz subscribed to the Principle of Sufficient Reason, which is just the view that there is a good reason for everything that happens.
Based on what you know about Locke and Leibniz, who should be more willing to accept the possibility of mutants?

A. Locke  ✔
B. Leibniz  ❌
C. Both would accept this possibility.  ❌
D. Neither would accept this possibility.  ❌
Locke’s predicament

- Locke was not comfortable with the arbitrariness implied in the Cartesian conception of mind and body. But he also thought that it was simply impossible to provide the unified account Leibniz desired.

- Locke said:

  *For unthinking particles of matter, however put together, can have nothing thereby added to them, but a new relation of position, which it is impossible should give thought and knowledge to them.* (p.64)
Locke’s predicament

- Locke thought there was no way that a lump of “unthinking matter” could be made into a thinking, feeling thing, just by arranging the particles in a certain way.

- But how does Locke *know* this? Why is he so sure that particles arranged in a certain way can’t result in thoughts and feelings?

- The answer is that Locke, like Descartes, thinks that it is just part of the very concept of a physical thing that it is not a mental thing.
A priori vs. a posteriori

- On p. 33 you were introduced the term *a priori*. A *priori* knowledge is knowledge that can achieved “prior to all experience” by reason alone.

- Later, on p.164 you will be introduced to term *a posteriori*. This term means “on the basis of experience”.

- Rationalists are very big on *a priori* knowledge, whereas empiricists tend to stress the importance of *a posteriori* knowledge.

- But most empiricists believe that *some* knowledge is *a priori*. (e.g. mathematical knowledge).
Locke vs. Leibniz

- So, Locke doesn’t have to turn in his empiricist credentials just because he claims to know *a priori* that unthinking matter can’t be made to think simply by rearranging the particles.

- But is still quite fascinating, that Leibniz, the rationalist, rejects this view.
Resemblance

- Locke said that there is no resemblance between a knife cutting the flesh, and the pain that results from that event.

- His point here is that in normal causal relationships the cause and the effect resemble each other in some fundamental way.
  - E.g., if I kick a football, it makes total sense that the ball will move as a result: motion causes motion.
  - E.g., if you put fire under a pot of water, it makes sense that the water will get hot: hot things make other things hot.

- But in the case of the relation between the mental and the physical, that principle just doesn’t hold.
Leibniz’s rebuke

- Leibniz, however, thinks that Locke is just being sloppy and impatient.
- Think again about Leibniz’s example of the circle. He is saying that it is easy to conclude that a circle, an ellipse, and a line are three completely different shapes.
- But a circle will look like an ellipse or ultimately a line if you simply rotate it through the third dimension.
[Enter question here]

A. [Option 1]  
B. [Option 2]  
C. [Option 3]  
D. [Option 4]
[Enter question here]

A. [Option 1]

B. [Option 2]

C. [Option 3]

D. [Option 4]