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**PART V**

**Philosophy of mind and  
mental health**

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## Introduction to Part V

### Introduction: philosophy of mind is a central discipline of philosophy as a whole

The philosophy of mind is the area of philosophy that has the closest connections to mental health care. Much of what gives psychiatry its character turns on the fact that human minds are its main focus and thus the philosophy of mind is a central aspect of its philosophy.

Philosophy of mind has also been a growth area over the twentieth century. Much detailed work has been done on central aspects of our understanding of mind. A wide variety of models of the general relation of mind and body have been articulated and assessed. Theories of how mental states can possess intentionality or aboutness have developed. Competing accounts of how we can have knowledge of other minds have been assessed in the light of empirical evidence. Specific work has been carried out on action, free will, and consciousness.

Some of the key debates in philosophy as a whole can be found echoed in debates about the mind. The general debate between reductionists and antireductionists is reflected, for example, in the opposition of those who think that the mind, meaning, and consciousness can be understood in, for example, causal relational terms and those who think that it has necessarily special experiential and intrinsic qualities that cannot be explained in other terms. In Louis Armstrong's phrase (about jazz): if you have to ask what it is you'll never know. This latter group of philosophers have been called the 'New Mysterians' because they take consciousness to hold an essential mystery. Thus philosophy of mind is, currently, a central and influential part of philosophy as a whole.

### The growth of philosophy of psychiatry

During the last two decades there has also been a growth in philosophy of mind influenced philosophy of psychiatry. Psychopathology presents a challenging set of test cases for philosophical understanding. Thus there have been sustained attempts to shed light on the general nature of delusions, drawing on different broader approaches to meaning. More specific cases such as thought insertion or Cotard's delusion have been the subject of more specific interpretations. One view of such philosophical interpretation is provided by the Warwick-based philosopher of mind Johannes Roessler: '[T]he philosopher takes the part of an explorer charting certain remote regions of the "space of reasons". For example, John Campbell has argued that reports of thought insertion "show that there is some structure in our ordinary notion of the ownership of a thought which we might not otherwise have suspected"' (Roessler, 2001, p. 178).

### The selection of material for this part and its overall aim

Consistently with the general approach of this book, we will not attempt to give an overview of this rich field. We will not, for

example, summarize the recent philosophical work on the nature of delusion. (In Chapter 3, by contrast we have summarized key philosophical work in a number of areas of psychopathology.) Rather than attempting to summarize the many, detailed debates on specific topics in philosophy of mind and its application to psychiatry and psychopathology, the chapter instead gives a broader overview of some important higher-level themes in the philosophy of mind that have a clear connection to the conceptual structures that underpin practice.

Briefly then the chapters run as follows. The first two chapters (Chapters 22 and 23) examine models of the relation between mind and body and the significance of the mind for ascriptions of responsibility, experience, etc. in mental health care.

The next two chapters (Chapters 24 and 25) examine the place of meaning and intentionality in our scientifically informed picture of the world in general. This is again a return to one of the central themes of this book as a whole: the relation of reasons and causes. That theme returns again in the discussion of freedom and action in Chapter 26. Can reasons play a causal role in free action?

The final chapters (Chapters 27 and 28) examine knowledge of other minds and autism and then personal identity and schizophrenia.

The part thus serves as an intellectual primer to the more specific debates that grow from these broad themes. (Reading Guides are provided to specific issues.)

### The central role of rationality

A theme that will recur throughout the part is the central role of rationality both in our understanding of minds and mental states and in marking off the mind as different from other aspects of the natural world.

Rationality is most apparent in arguments about the ascription of meaning and mental states based on the work of Daniel Dennett and Donald Davidson. Such arguments emphasize the constitutive role of rationality for the possession of a mind. However, if sound, those arguments also suggest an argument against the reduction of mental states to brain states, which does not turn on the intrinsic feel of experiences and such like. This suggests that the distinction between the space of reasons and the realm of law, introduced in Part III Chapter 15, also plays a part in understanding the subject matter of this part.

### More detailed chapter summary

- ♦ *Chapter 22 Mind, brain, and mental illness: an introduction to the philosophy of mind.* This chapter looks at the connection between mental descriptions in psychiatry and the role of experience, subjectivity, and values. While psychiatric practice and broader scientific discovery emphasizes the importance of descriptions of physiological and neurological processes, the mind cannot be eliminated without the loss of what is valued in psychiatric care.
- ♦ *Chapter 23 The mind-body problem and mental health, a philosophical update.* This chapter brings the discussion of

the relation of mind and body up to date. Starting with the question of what is shown in brain imaging, the chapter looks at two influential models of mind and body (functionalism and Davidson's anomalous monism) and at some more general relations that might hold (supervenience, type, and token identity). The analysis suggests that no model successfully accords with all our intuitions about mind and body.

- ◆ *Chapter 24 Reasons and the content of mental states: 1. Reductionist theories.* Starting with a conventional textbook account of different pathways through the mind postulated to explain our understanding of speech, this chapter digs deeper into what kind of explanation can be given of meaning or intentionality in the mind. It looks at two influential philosophical models of how meaning might be underpinned by mechanisms and the grave difficulties they still face.
- ◆ *Chapter 25 Reasons and the content of mental states: 2. Antireductionism and discursive psychology.* This chapter looks at a very different approach to meaning found in discursive psychological work. Again it explores philosophical models that might underpin a discursive approach and argues that the claim that both meaning and minds are necessarily public should be distinguished from the claim that meanings are socially constructed.

- ◆ *Chapter 26 Agency, causation, and freedom.* This chapter starts with a recent work on Libet's empirical arguments against the possibility of free will. By looking both at philosophical models of action explanation and at an influential paper by Strawson on our reactive attitudes it aims to sketch a reconciliation between increasingly deterministic neurological understanding and our standing assumption that we possess free will.

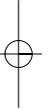
- ◆ *Chapter 27 Knowledge of other minds.* Mental health care is premised on our ability to understand other minds. However, there has been a long-standing puzzle about how this is possible. The chapter outlines both the recent history of the Problem of Other Minds and three proposed solutions, and looks to how empirical evidence from autism bears on the issue.
- ◆ *Chapter 28 Personal identity and schizophrenia.* This chapter examines the connection between philosophical models of personal identity, including philosophical doubts that identity is a real feature of the human mind, and the psychopathology of schizophrenia.

## References

- Roessler, J., (2001). Understanding Delusions of Alien Control. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 8/2/3, 177–188.



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