

Editor's Introduction

This month's issue of *Philosophical Pathways* features articles that participate in the interaction between philosophy and empirical research. What can philosophy contribute in such interactions? Philosophy has long been interested in clarifying concepts that we rely on, notably by giving definitions. One way in which philosophy can contribute is by clarifying concepts and conceptions that empirical researchers rely on. Another way is by raising puzzles that arise in relation to such a concept or conception, puzzles that can be raised without doing empirical research.

The first article in this month's issue is about the superego. The superego, as it is usually conceived, is a part of a person's psyche which develops in childhood through internalizing the authority of one's parents. When a person violates a prohibition they accept or fails to live up to an ideal of theirs, the superego is that part which says that the person should feel bad because of this and must do better next time. The superego develops at a time when a person is much less rational. According to Sigmund Freud, it retains an irrational character later in life: demanding too much of a person and causing excessive guilt within them.

In the first article, Ching-wa Wong presents two conceptions of the nature of the superego: a conception rooted in the work of Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein versus a rationalist conception, developed by David Velleman. The more irrational the superego is conceived to be, the more psychoanalytic theory is a threat to the view that human beings are capable of being rational moral persons. Velleman's conception is intended to provide a conception of the superego which reduces this threat and makes it compatible with being a rational moral person. But Wong poses a challenge to Velleman, which he calls the problem of authority.

My article in this issue is also about an effort to make sense of human psychology. Much has been said about whether there are psychological differences between male and female human beings, and if so what they are. Let us focus on those with XY chromosomes and those with XX chromosomes, though this leaves out some people. A simple position is that male and female human beings constitute two distinct psychological kinds. A more complicated position is that there are trends regarding the psychological features of one sex and the other, trends that cannot be accounted for as outcomes of cultural upbringing. Simon Baron-Cohen adopts this position. He says that males are on average better at systematizing than empathizing and females are on average better at empathizing than systematizing, while allowing for a significant number of cases which do not

conform to the average. To understand this claim, we need to understand what Baron-Cohen means by systematizing, or a similar term he uses in its place, ‘systemizing.’ My article draws attention to an ambiguity in his work as to what he means by this, an ambiguity that also features in the secondary literature on his position.

The final article in this issue discusses an argument for substance dualism. According to Descartes’ substance dualism, there are two basic kinds of substances (or entities) in the world: thinking, mental substances or minds; and unthinking, physical substances. Jani Koskela presents and evaluates an argument for substance dualism. The argument is as follows. Mental states are generally about something. For example, a person’s impression that there is something interesting happening next door is about events next door. Being about something is the property of having ‘intentionality,’ in the specialist language of philosophers (not to be confused simply with having intentions). It does not seem that we can say what it is to have intentionality in purely physical terms. It does not seem that a natural science project of trying to define intentionality will succeed. So it seems that mental states are not physical states, rather states of a non-physical substance. Koskela objects that this argument is not compelling. There is a way of resisting its conclusion.

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