

The Task of Metaphysics

Just as epistemology can be understood as the branch of philosophy dedicated to the nature of knowledge, metaphysics can be understood as the branch of philosophy dedicated to the nature of reality itself.

Metaphysical questions include:

- How many types of things exist?
- How are events caused?
- What's the difference between real and non-real things?
- How is free will related to fate?

We should be careful to distinguish between talking about “*a* metaphysics” and “metaphysics”, just as we must distinguish between talking about “*a* philosophy” and “philosophy”.

The Task of Metaphysics

To engage in metaphysics is to attempt to develop “a view of the world that seeks to be accurate, consistent, comprehensive, and supported by sound evidence.” (Gracia & Sanford, 56)

	Metaphysics	Science	Theology
Accurate	X	X	X (?)
Consistent	X	X	X (?)
Comprehensive	X		X (?)
Supported by Evidence	X	X	X (?)

How exactly does metaphysics differ from theology? It may not be as clear a distinction as some think—see if you can identify the difference as we go along.

The Task of Metaphysics

On one interpretation, metaphysics aims to achieve two things:

- 1) “First, develop a list of the most general categories and,
- 2) second, to categorize everything else in terms of these.”

(Gracia & Sanford 57)

Consider Hume’s view: What are the most general categories of things that Hume recognizes?

“There are *two types of people* in this world; Those that think the world can be divided into two types of people, and those who know better.” - *Tom Robbins*

Metaphysics in *The Matrix*

The film gives us two general categories to encompass everything in the world: *Appearance* and *reality*, or *real* and *unreal*

“The categories are presented as mutually exclusive” (Gracia & Sanford, 59), so anything that falls into one category *cannot* fall into the other.

“Moreover...the two worlds are described as jointly exhaustive” (ibid.), so anything that does not fall into one category *must* fall into the other.

Using this as a starting point, what would “a metaphysics” of the world of The Matrix involve?

Real or Not Real—What’s the Difference?

There are at least two possible methods for distinguishing between the real and the unreal.

-Ontological status: This has to do with the *way* things exist. We might determine whether something is real by looking at whether its existence depends upon something else

-What’s a more fundamental category of reality: “Beverage containers” or “Matter”? Why?

-Unreal things depend on real things for their existence in *The Matrix*. The relationship doesn’t work the other way around.

What do we mean by “depend” here?

Real or Not Real—What’s the Difference?

There are at least two possible methods for distinguishing between the real and the unreal.

- Sources and causes:** We can determine the category that something belongs to by asking where it *came from*
 - What causes the image I have of the cat on my lap?*
 - What causes the people on Morpheus’ ship to exist?*

In *The Matrix*, “the real and the unreal worlds have different causes.” (Gracia and Sanford, 61)

Dualism

Dualism is the view “that the world is made up of exactly two incompatible types of things.” (Gracia & Sanford, 63)

Dualists might reduce the world to *material* and *immaterial* entities, for example.

The most common kind of dualism holds that the world is made up of the *mental* and *physical*, and that the two categories are “irreducible, irreconcilable, and mutually exclusive” (ibid.)

Where do we encounter examples of dualist metaphysical systems?

Why should we think that the world is comprised of two incompatible types of things?

Arguments for Dualism

■ Arguments for dualism rely on a law of logic called **Leibniz's Law of Identity** or **"The Indiscernibility of Identicals."**

■ This is a simple law of logic that tells us that if two names refer to the same object, then the first name will refer to an object that has all of the same properties of the object referred to by the second name.

■ E.g., Mark Twain was the pen name for Samuel Clemens. So, by Leibniz's Law, every property that Mark Twain had, Samuel Clemens had as well, and vice-versa.

■ Leibniz's Law tells us that if x is identical to y , then every property x has, y also has and every property y has x also has.

■ *Are identical twin brothers identical according to Leibniz's Law? Why or why not?*

http://www.colorado.edu/philosophy/robertsm/10-20-05_files/frame.htm

Leibniz's Law applied to the Mind and Body

Dualists rely on Leibniz's Law to argue that the name "soul" and the name "brain" do not refer to the same thing because each has different properties. Therefore, the soul and the brain are distinct entities, not one and the same.

What are the different properties that dualists might have in mind? How might we argue in favor of dualism?