

Transcript - Short

Richard Swinburne:

Much of the time, our intentions are caused fairly automatically by our desires and our beliefs. But when we have a serious moral problem, when we are having to decide, shall I tell the truth when I don't want to tell the truth, here, we realize it's up to us, and it's a basic epistemological principle that we should believe that things are the way they seem to be in the absence of counterevidence. So, we should believe it really is up to us, unless you've got any reason to suppose it isn't. Now, what would the reason to suppose it isn't consist in? Well, it would consist in having a deterministic mind-brain theory, saying that these brain events cause these intentions. Now, I don't think you can have such a theory, because the only reason you can have a successful deterministic cause, semi-deterministic theory of the physical world, is because you can establish general laws by repeating experiments. But once you come to the mental life, you come to things which can't be measured, because there's only one person that has privileged access to them. You can't measure whether a pain is twice as painful as another pain. And yet, what one, what somebody does depends on whether the pain is twice as painful as another pain. The beliefs and intentions we have, all of these concepts have no numerical relation to each other. So, the only kinds of laws you could establish for the mind brain interaction, would concern what a particular person, with a particular sort of mental life, does in a particular situation. But, you won't have more than one instance of this situation, and it won't be a kind of situation which is repeated, and therefore you can't have the evidence that this is a deterministic system, and therefore, you should believe that things are as they initially seem to be, that is to say, that your intentions are affecting your actions. My argument is the counterevidence couldn't ever be produced.

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