



With explicit reference to the stimulus, discuss a philosophical issue related to the question of what it means to be human.

This picture shows a robot holding a trumpet. The robot has been built to resemble a human, with for example human-like arms and legs. The robot also looks as if it is playing a trumpet, which is an activity usually associated with humans. The robot is presented as having many of the same features and capacities as a human, which raises the question of what the differences between a robot and a human really are. In particular, it raises the question of whether the robot in the picture could be said to be a person, or if not why not, and therefore the wider question of whether personhood is a feature unique to humans. One of the things which is often argued to differentiate humans from non-humans is that humans are regarded as being persons, but if it is possible to have non-human persons then this clearly cannot be regarded as the defining feature of being human.

In order to explore whether only human beings can be persons, or whether computers or machines such as the robot in the picture could also be persons, it is important to try to define what a person is. Lacey created criteria of what it is to be a person, putting emphasis on the ideas of consciousness, reason, language and self-awareness. Using these criteria it would seem that the robot in the picture is not a person, as it, for example, does not have consciousness. Dualists claim that consciousness requires an immaterial mind as well as material body whereas the robot is a purely material thing, so they would argue that the robot cannot be regarded as having consciousness or as being a person. Although I am not a dualist, personally I believe that at the present time it would not be possible for robots to be considered persons, or for there to be any artificial intelligence at the moment, because robots such as the one in the picture are simply simulating or mimicking human behaviours rather than actually behaving or thinking as a human does.

However there are some philosophers who disagree. Alan Turing was one philosopher who advocated that computers had the potential to be considered persons if they passed the "Turing test". In this test, a man would speak to both a computer and to another man from behind a screen. The man would ask questions to the computer and to the other man, and if at the end of the test the first man was unable to differentiate between the second man and the computer, then the computer could be considered a person, as it would have shown the ability to be adaptive and to use language. Therefore, we see that Turing believed that some computers or machines could be considered persons, and so it would be possible to have virtual friendships with artificial intelligence. In addition to Turing, functionalists also believe that there is the potential for artificial intelligence, as they say that mental states are multiple realisable, meaning that the mental states (software) can be the functions of many different brain states (hardware). As a result, there is the possibility for artificial intelligence that can also be considered to be persons.

However, I believe that this isn't possible due to the fact that computers are unable to master the semantics of language, but they only master the syntax, and so they simulate consciousness, but are not actually conscious. This is also what Searle argued. He used the analogy of the Chinese Room to show that computers cannot ever be considered to be persons. The analogy describes a man in a room with nothing but a Chinese dictionary. People outside the room keep passing him messages in Chinese characters, and so he manipulates these characters using the dictionary and then forms a reply. To the people outside of the room it seems as if the man on the inside knows and understands how to speak Chinese, yet in reality he is simply manipulating the characters. As a result, he is only manipulating the syntax, or the grammar of the language, but he cannot master the semantics, i.e. what it actually means. This is the same in a computer, and so Searle argues that the computer merely simulates the behaviour of a person, and so cannot be considered to be a person.

In addition to Searle, a big criticism of functionalism is that it leaves no room for qualia, the "what it is like-ness" of an experience. As Nagel argues with his analogy of the bat, we are unable to have the qualia that a bat has, and so it can be argued that a robot cannot have the qualia of being a person. As a result, computers cannot be considered to be persons. Personally I think that qualia is an important factor in order to be a person, and if computers don't have qualia then they cannot be considered persons at all. Furthermore, Lynn Rudder-Baker also argued that computers couldn't be persons at the moment because they lack a first person perspective on the world, which is similar to Lovelace's idea that computers cannot be persons because they lack self-awareness. Both argue that having beliefs and desires, and having the ability to evaluate them and anticipate the future according to them, and so being able to respond creatively, are very important to be a person, and computers lack this and so cannot be considered persons at the moment.

I believe that robots such as the one in the picture cannot be considered persons at the moment due to the fact that they lack qualia, first person perspective and self-awareness, and merely simulate human behaviour. If these criteria are seen as being too strict, then the next step would be to extend the notion of personhood to animals which have sophisticated cognitive abilities, perhaps Koko the gorilla or dolphins. At a conference in Helsinki in 2010 a group of academics proposed a "Declaration of Rights" for whales and dolphins, where they argued that these mammals should be regarded as non-human persons because of their abilities relating to language, etc. If our definition of personhood was loosened to include these non-human persons, then it might pave the way for one day the notion being expanded to include machines with sophisticated abilities, such as the robot in the picture. However, at the moment personhood is something which I think only applies to humans.

In conclusion, despite having many of the features that humans have, the robot in the image is merely simulating a human rather than actually being human. In particular, the robot cannot be regarded as being a person, because personhood is something which requires features such as consciousness, language, first person perspective and self awareness. It is very difficult to find a single defining feature of being human, but personhood seems to me to be the closest we can find.

STIMULUS

Who Or What Am I? I am a living, breathing organism signified by the words 'human being'. I am a material or physical being fairly recognisable over time to me and to others: I am a body ... However, there is another aspect of me not directly visible or definable. This is the aspect of me which thinks and feels, reflects and judges, remembers and anticipates. Words used to describe this aspect include 'mind', 'spirit', 'heart', 'soul', 'awareness' and 'consciousness'. This part of me is aware that I can never be fully known or understood by myself or by others; it notices that although there may be some unchanging essence which is 'me', this same 'me' is also constantly changing and evolving. So I am a physical body and an emotional and psychological (or spiritual) being. The two together make me a person.

Source: Kathleen O'Dwyer, http://philosophynow.org/issues/84/Who_Or_What_Am_I

With explicit reference to the stimulus, discuss a philosophical issue related to the question of what it means to be human.

The stimulus provided is a thoughtful passage deliberating on the nature of being human. The text starts from the most fundamental question of personhood: 'Who or what am I?' One of the specific philosophical issues that can be derived from this stimulus is the mind/body problem, and another is that of what makes us a person. The passage comments that '... I am a physical body and an emotional and psychological (or spiritual) being.' This raises the issue of whether it is our body and our physical characteristics that make us who we are, or whether it is our minds. It makes us question whether we are at our very core just a soul independent of our physical body, or even more radically, even independent of our mind. The following essay will explore different philosophical perspectives on the mind/body problem and personhood stimulated by the passage.

Descartes, a 17th century French philosopher, started his exploration of what constitutes a human person from an epistemological question: What can I know for certain? By applying his famous method of investigation he arrived at an interesting answer to an ontological question: What am I, most fundamentally? His answer was that what makes me who I am and what constitutes me as a human being is that most fundamentally I exist as a thinking substance, an immaterial mind, so to speak. Descartes expressed this view in his famous phrase 'cogito, ergo sum' or, in English, 'I think, therefore I am'. Therefore, whenever I think, I know that I exist as a thinking substance. The text reflects the Cartesian perspective when it states: 'This is the aspect of me which thinks and feels, reflects and judges, remembers and anticipates'. The mind, therefore, is the irrefutable foundational characteristic that defines me as a person, as a human being.

Cartesian philosophy commits us to substance dualism. Just as the passage indicates, the mind is not identical to the body and certain non-physical attributes exist independently of physical substance. Under these circumstances, any empirical perceptions are potentially prone to doubt and error. The only route to clear and certain knowledge must proceed from rational thinking. Cartesian dualism creates a very significant problem when I try to conceive of myself as a being composed of both material and spiritual dimensions. This kind of dualism does not allow me to see myself precisely in my humanity as incarnate in a physical world in any meaningful manner. In fact, at this point I must choose between dualism which affirms that I most fundamentally exist with a physical side and a non-physical side and monism which claims that either I am most precisely a physical being OR I am a spiritual, non-physical being. Are there any other philosophical perspectives which can help resolve this philosophical dilemma? In the spirit of the passage, can I find an approach to the relationship between matter and spirit that helps me to understand that 'The two together make me a person.'

Lynne Rudder Baker approaches the mind/body problem spurred on by her examination of existing dualistic and monistic philosophical perspectives. She developed a philosophical approach which she called 'The Constitution View' according to which a human person is constituted by a human body with a physical brain which is able to maintain a 'first-person perspective'. Baker's view allows us to argue that a human person is not identical to his or her body, but without that body and the brain encapsulated in it, there could be no human person since there would be no living 'first-person perspective' to maintain my experience of personhood. Therefore, the essential characteristic that makes me a human being – or more precisely – a human person, is my sense and experience of my 'self', the complex ability to think of oneself from the inside as well as from the outside.

Lynne Baker Rudder's attempts to resolve the mind/body problem by acknowledging the tension between my

physical self and my immaterial, spiritual self are supported by the arguments of some existentialist philosophers. For example, Martin Buber posited the tension between 'I-Thou' and 'I-It' relations in a person's attempt to be an authentic human person. Emmanuel Levinas claimed that every individual strives to break the bonds of material objectivity by meeting other persons in the encounter with 'the naked face of the other', the encounter with the other's interiority. Gabriel Marcel argued that the 'cogito' is a philosophical abstraction. A human person exists as an incarnate mind/body unity existentially involved in the world of subjects and objects. The list of supporting philosophers could go on, but the point being made is clear. Being human is being a composite, indivisible unity of mind and body, of matter and spirit interacting with a world filled with other human beings and non-human objects as well as suggested in the text. The problems associated with this interaction are indicated clearly in the text: '... there is another aspect of me not directly visible or definable. ... This part of me is aware that I can never be fully known or understood by myself or by others; it notices that although there may be some unchanging essence which is 'me', this same 'me' is also constantly changing and evolving'.

I would like to reflect on my own experience of myself as a human person. Reflecting on the philosophers I have explored in this essay, I can see another way of approaching the question of what makes me a human being from my own commitment to the teachings of Christianity. While many view Christianity as a religious persuasion, I also view it as a philosophy of life which sees the soul as the essential defining characteristic of the human person. Christianity defines a human being as a spiritual being which possesses a soul. The material body is seen as a temporary home for the soul and should be respected as such. However, it is the immortal soul which is to be understood as the fundamental essence of being human.

I can conclude that the philosophical approaches presented above address the issues raised by the stimulus from very different perspectives. Cartesianism emphasizes the importance of the mind. The constitution view primarily speaks of the 'first-person perspective. Existentialism highlights the composite unity of mind and body incarnated in a world of interaction. Christianity points out the significance of the soul. All of this shows me that the topic remains a central issue for philosophical discussion. It might not be possible to find a definite answer to the mind/body problem just like it might not be possible to answer the question 'who or what am I?' But we have seen that philosophical perspectives that highlight physicality enable the sense perception of a material external world to give us knowledge of ourselves as physical, material beings. Other philosophical perspectives which emphasize immateriality or mental states provide us with an appreciation of our inner workings. Finally, religious perspectives provide us with a view of human beings as playing a role in the development of the spiritual sensitivity of humankind. I prefer to see human beings most fundamentally as a fusion of all three of these approaches. In my opinion, mind, body and soul are not independent realities. They are, rather, facets of being human in an authentic manner.

Core theme sample 1: 25/25

This answer is well organised and clear. There is an explicit focus on a philosophical issue raised by the stimulus and a clear link to the question of what it is to be human. Philosophical vocabulary is used confidently throughout the response, and the knowledge deployed is accurate and relevant. The answer clearly engages in critical analysis of the issue, including discussion of alternative interpretations, and the points made are well justified.

Core theme sample 2: 15/25

This essay is hindered by the fact that it tries to cover too much/ too many different points and the analysis therefore ends up lacking depth. The essay does make connections to the stimulus, and does explore some alternative points of view, but again this suffers from a similar problem– the fourth paragraph for example discusses four separate philosophers within a single paragraph. In addition to needing to be more focused, some of the critical analysis also lacks clarity.