

24.09 Minds and Machines

spring 2007

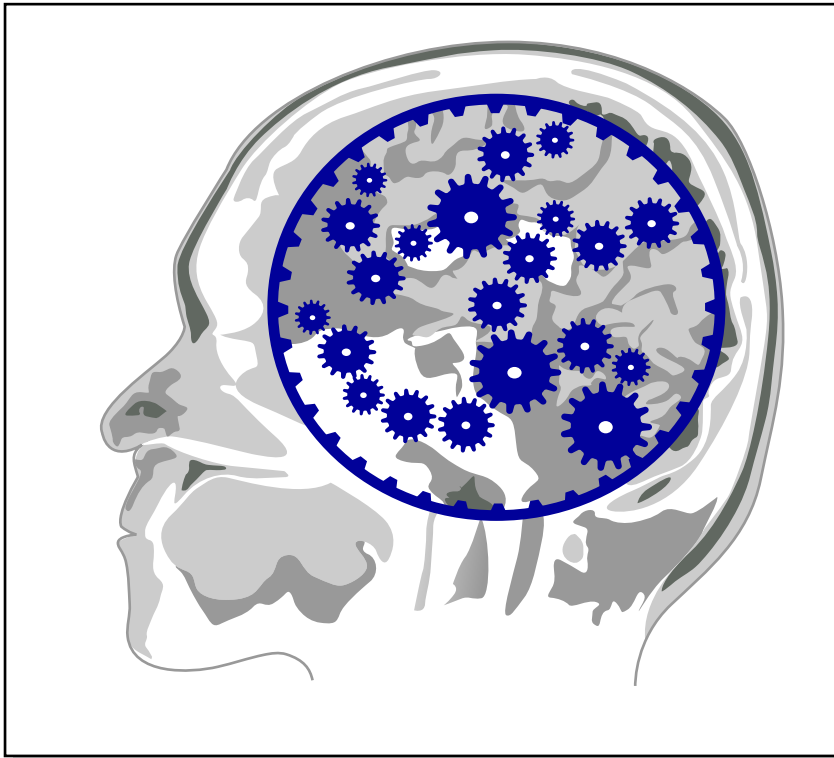


Figure by MIT OCW.

- handouts in study material section
- solutions to problem set 1 in assignments section
- first paper to be assigned this week

argument D

1. if I can clearly and distinctly conceive a proposition **p** to be true, then **p** is possible (“[E]verything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it” (p. 16).)
2. I can clearly and distinctly conceive that the proposition that my mind is not identical to my brain is true

therefore:

3. it is possible that my mind is not my brain (there is a “possible world” in which my mind is not my brain)

therefore:

4. my mind is not my brain

roadmap

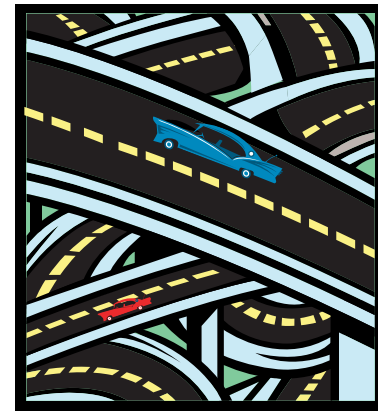
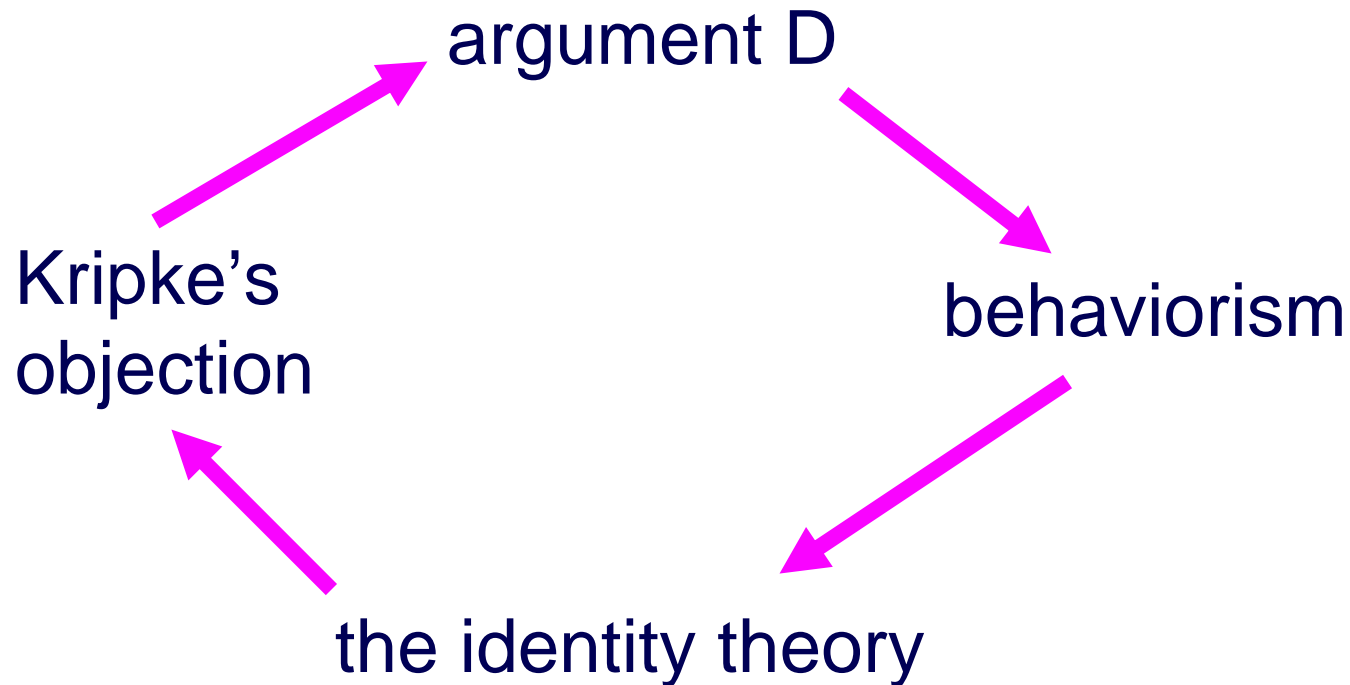


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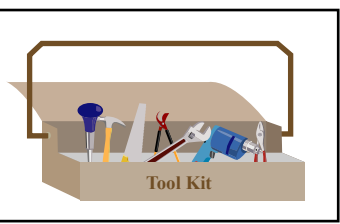


Figure by MIT OCW.

from the philosophical toolkit:

- “metaphysics”/“metaphysical”
 - what there is (the “furniture of the universe”)
- “epistemology”/“epistemological”
 - how/whether we have knowledge or justified belief

Ryle against dualism

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
Gilbert Ryle (1900-1976).

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Book cover of *The Concept of Mind* by Gilbert Ryle.

the “official doctrine”

- a man’s body and mind are “are ordinarily harnessed together, but after the death of the body his mind may continue to exist and function”
- “The workings of one mind are not witnessable by other observers”
- “A person’s present thinkings, feelings...are intrinsically ‘phosphorescent’”
- “A person...lives through two collateral histories...The first is public, the second private”
- “Absolute solitude is on this showing the ineluctable destiny of the soul. Only our bodies can meet”

the dogma

“Such in outline is the official theory. I shall speak of it, with deliberate abusiveness, as ‘the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine’...It is one big mistake and a mistake of a special kind. It is, namely, a category-mistake.”

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
An CD album cover for album The Ghost in the Machine by The Police.

category mistakes: example 1

“A foreigner visiting Oxford...for the first time is shown a number of colleges, libraries, playing fields...He then asks ‘But where is the University?...His mistake lay in his innocent assumption that it was correct to speak of Christ Church, the Bodleian Library...and the University, to speak, that is, as if ‘the University’ stood for an extra member of the class of which these other units are members”

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Aerial photograph of several colleges of Oxford University.

category mistakes: example 2

“A foreigner watching his first game of cricket learns what are the functions of the bowlers, the batsmen, the fielders...He then says ‘But there is no one left on the field to contribute the famous element of team-spirit. I see who does the bowling, the batting and the wicket-keeping; but I do not see whose role it is to exercise esprit de corps.’”

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
Donald Bradman playing cricket.

category mistakes: example 3

“[thinking of] The Average Taxpayer as a fellow-citizen...an elusive insubstantial man, a ghost who is everywhere yet nowhere”

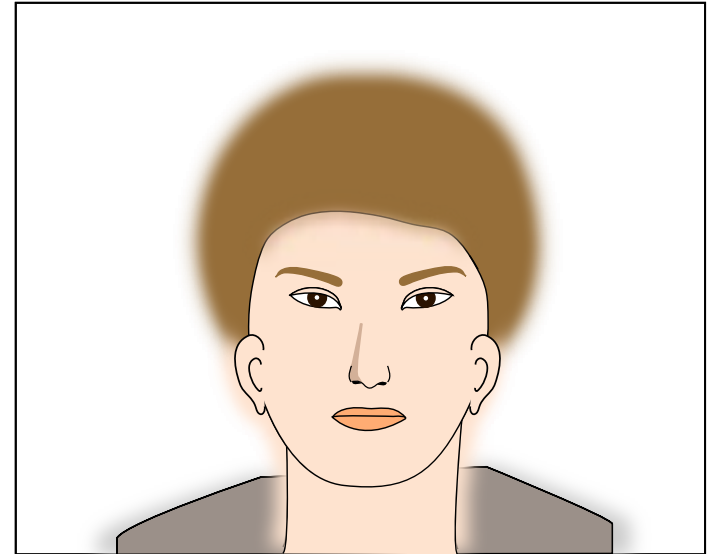


Figure by MIT OCW.

The average (White) taxpayer. (composite of 100 male and 100 female images. See page 11, bottom, of "Face Recognition for Predicting Attraction Between People." ([PDF](#))#
Here is another version of an [average face](#).

category mistakes?

- Ryle's examples are all quite different
- the University example is analogous to materialism (the mind is “nothing over and above” such-and-such molecules, as the University is nothing over and above the Colleges, Library, etc.)
- talk of the Average Taxpayer is (one might think) a misleading way of speaking—there is no Average Taxpayer

two problems for dualism

- mental causation
- how do I know that you have a mind?

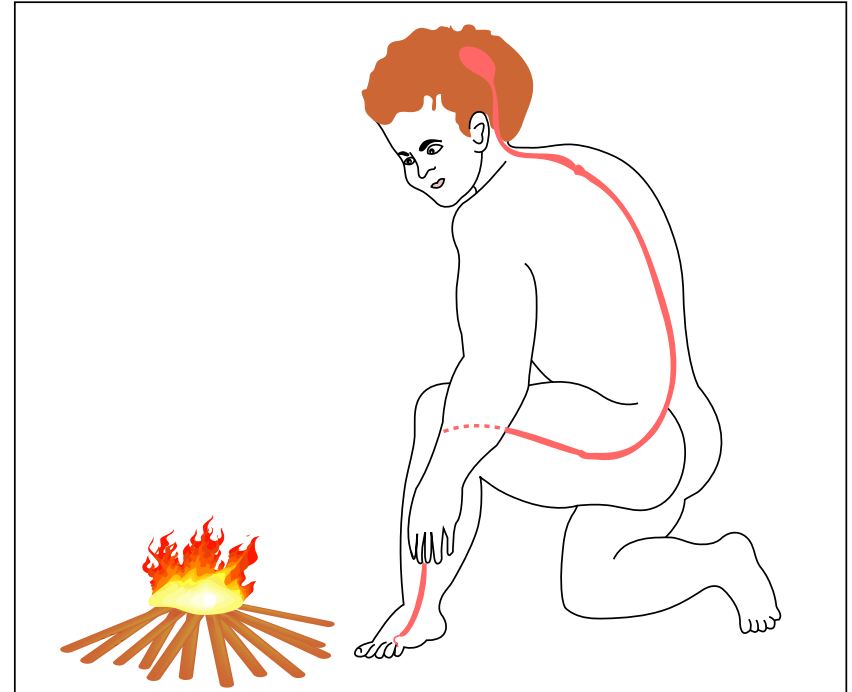


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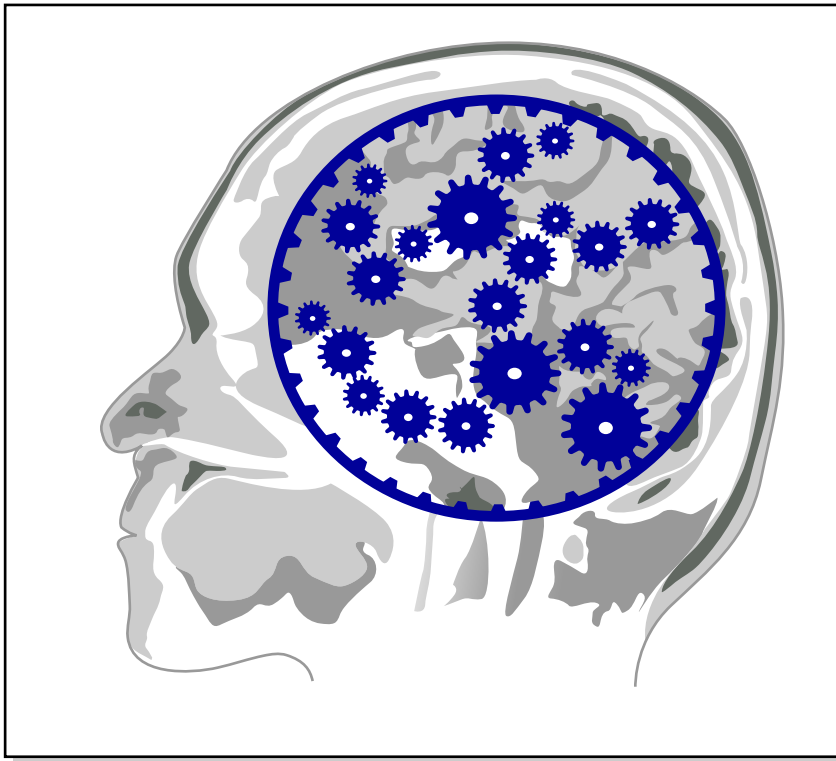


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- behaviorism

“the measure of a man”

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behaviorism: first try

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- S is in mental state M iff S behaves in such-and-such ways
- e.g. S is in pain iff S writhes, groans, etc

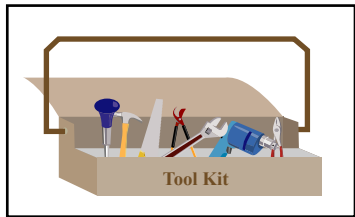


Figure by MIT OCW.

from the philosophical toolkit:



Figure by MIT OCW.

dispositions (powers, tendencies)

- a special kind of property
- examples: fragility, solubility, elasticity
- a fragile object is (to a first approximation) something that would break if it were struck
- a wine glass is fragile (has the property of fragility) even when it isn't manifesting the kind of behavior (breaking) distinctive of fragility

behaviorism: second try

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- S is in mental state M iff S is disposed to behave in such-and-such ways
- e.g. S is in pain iff S is disposed to (has a tendency to/is inclined to) writhe, groan, etc.

problems (I)

- either the behaviorist describes “behavior”
 - (a) in terms of mere bodily movements (e.g. “Smith’s arm is rising”, “Jones’s vocal chords are vibrating”) or
 - (b) mentalistically (e.g. “Smith is raising his arm”, “Jones is shouting angrily”)
- if (a), it is hard to see how to state a plausible version of the theory
- if (b), behaviorism doesn’t explain how a merely physical thing could have mental states

problems (II)

- the special access we have to our own mental states is hard to explain on the behaviorist view
- aren't mental states the inner causes of behavior?
- a mental state doesn't have "a fund of behavioral consequences to call its own": what a person does depends on what mental states she is in

- arguably, the behaviorist confuses epistemology with metaphysics
 - how we find out about others' mental states
- versus
 - what mental states are

roadmap

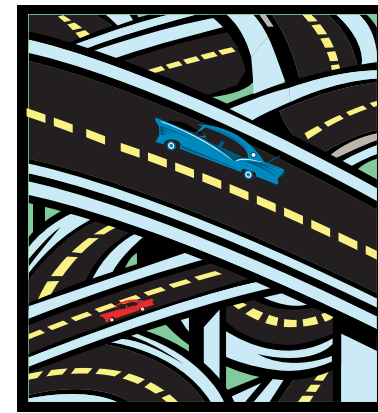
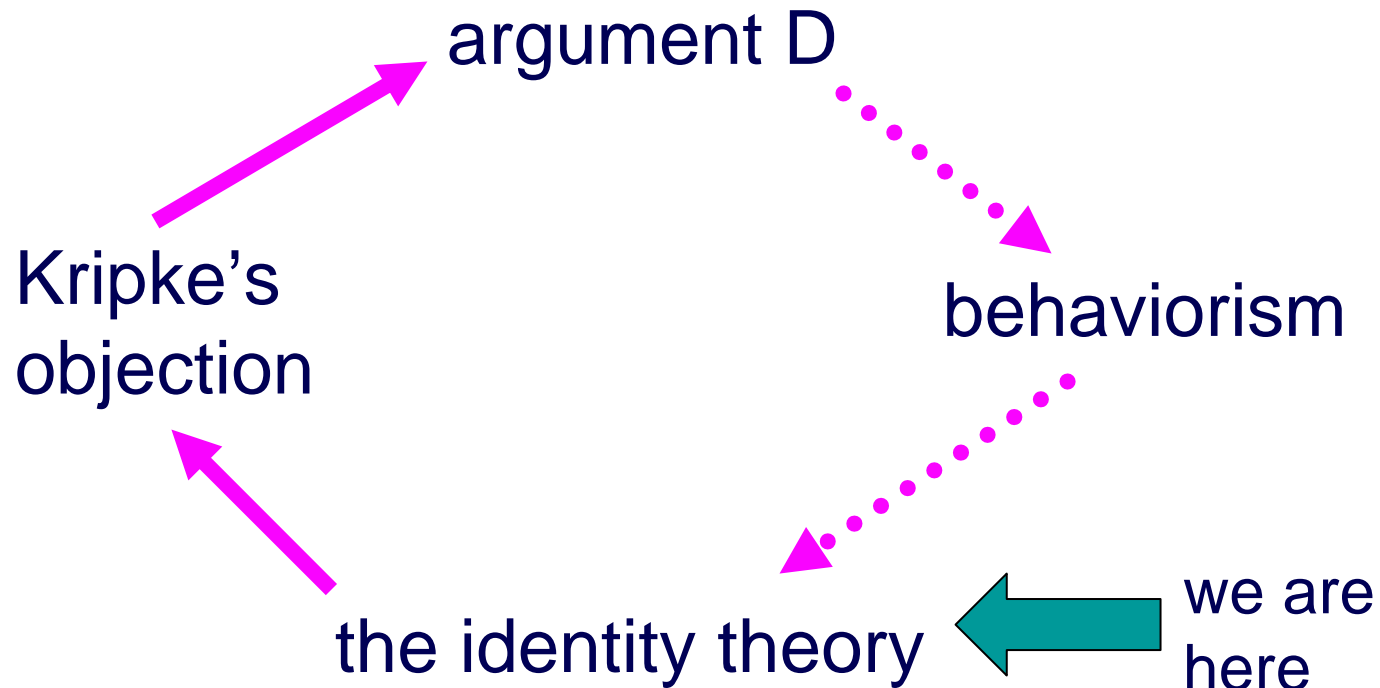


Figure by MIT OCW.



the identity theory

- proposed by JJC Smart and UT Place in the 1950s
- a “theoretical identity”
water= H_2O
heat=molecular kinetic energy
pain=c-fibers firing
 (“c-fibers” is just a placeholder for a more realistic candidate)

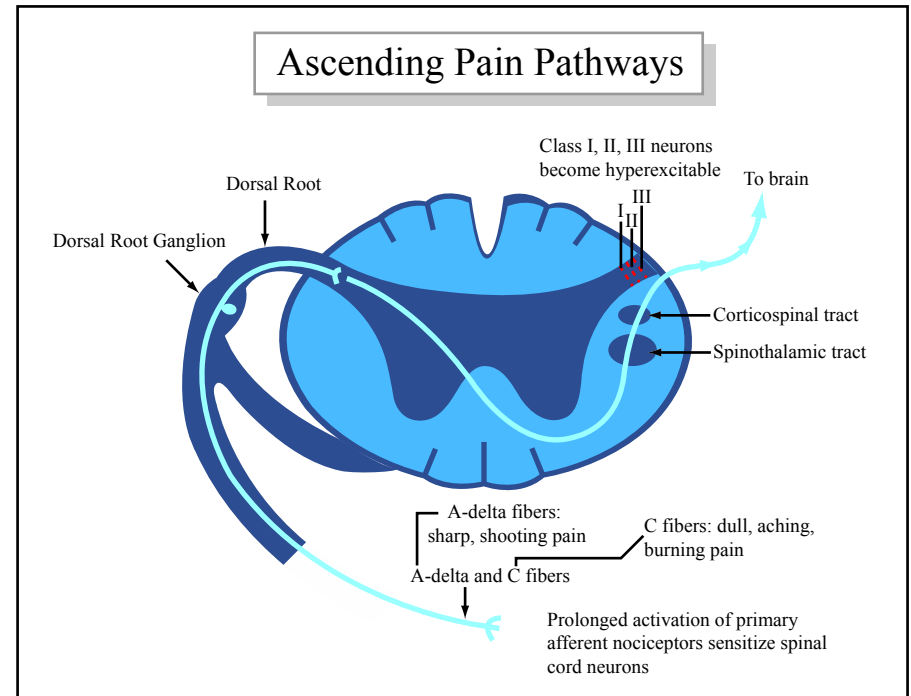


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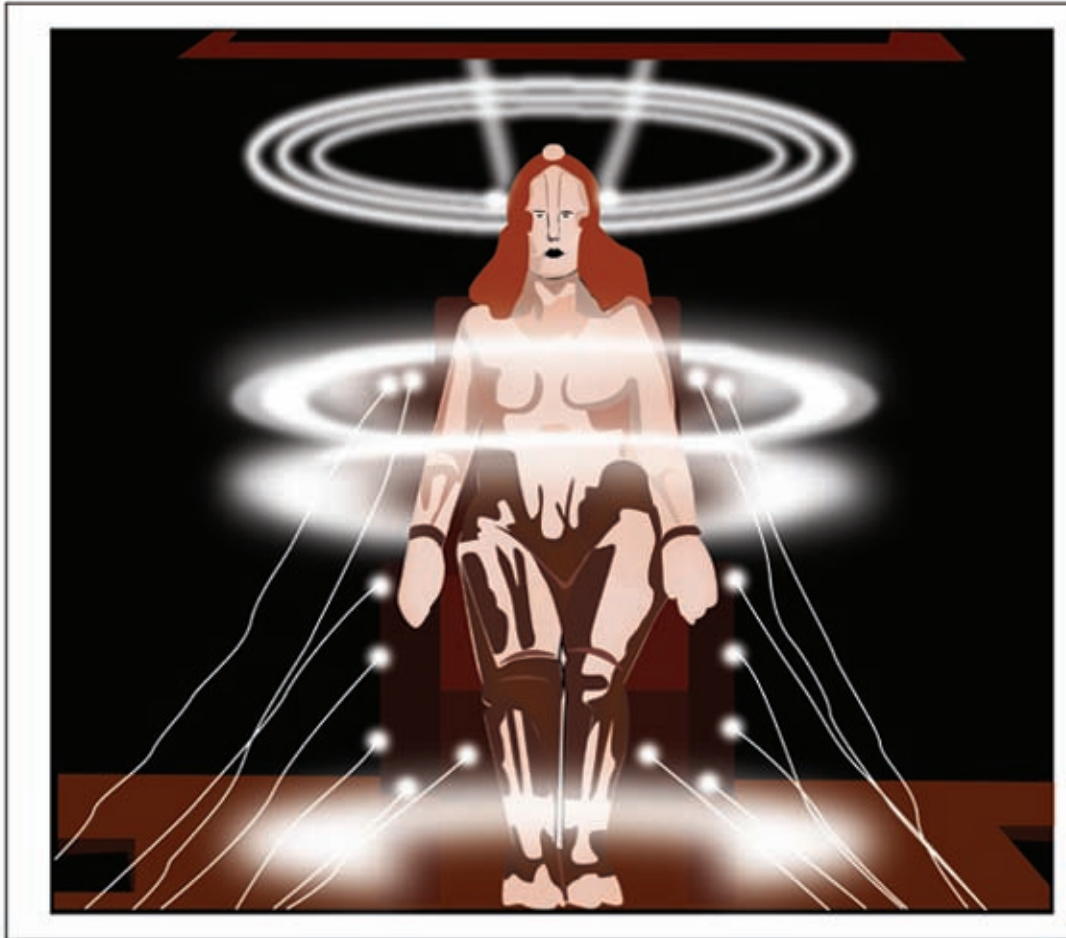


Figure by MIT OCW.

- read Smart and Place for wednesday