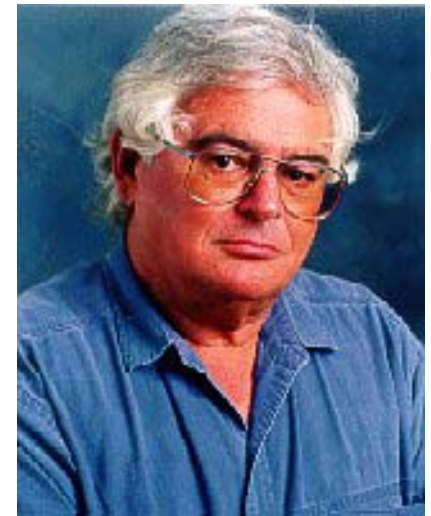


FUNCTIONALISM & FODOR

By: Amanda Pichardo

WHO IS JERRY A. FODOR?



- Born in 1935 in New York City.
- A.B. from Columbia University (1956)
- Ph.D. from Princeton University (1960)
- Taught Philosophy and Psychology in MIT until 1986.
- Distinguished Professor at CUNY Graduate Center from 1986 to 1988.
- Currently, teaching Philosophy and Cognitive Science at Rutgers University.
- Works include *The Language of Thought*, *The Modularity of Mind*, and *Psychosemantics*.



WHAT THE HECK IS FUNCTIONALISM?

- “Philosophy of the Mind”
- Contains elements of **behaviorism** and **identity theory**
- Main idea:
 - Mental states (being in pain, beliefs, feelings, etc.) are characterized by the functions they perform in the organism.



THE COMPUTER METAPHOR FOR FUNCTIONALISM:

- the MIND is like a piece of COMPUTER SOFTWARE running on your BRAIN which is the HARDWARE.
- the MIND is to the BRAIN what COMPUTER SOFTWARE (Microsoft Word) is to your COMPUTER HARDWARE (your Mac or PC).

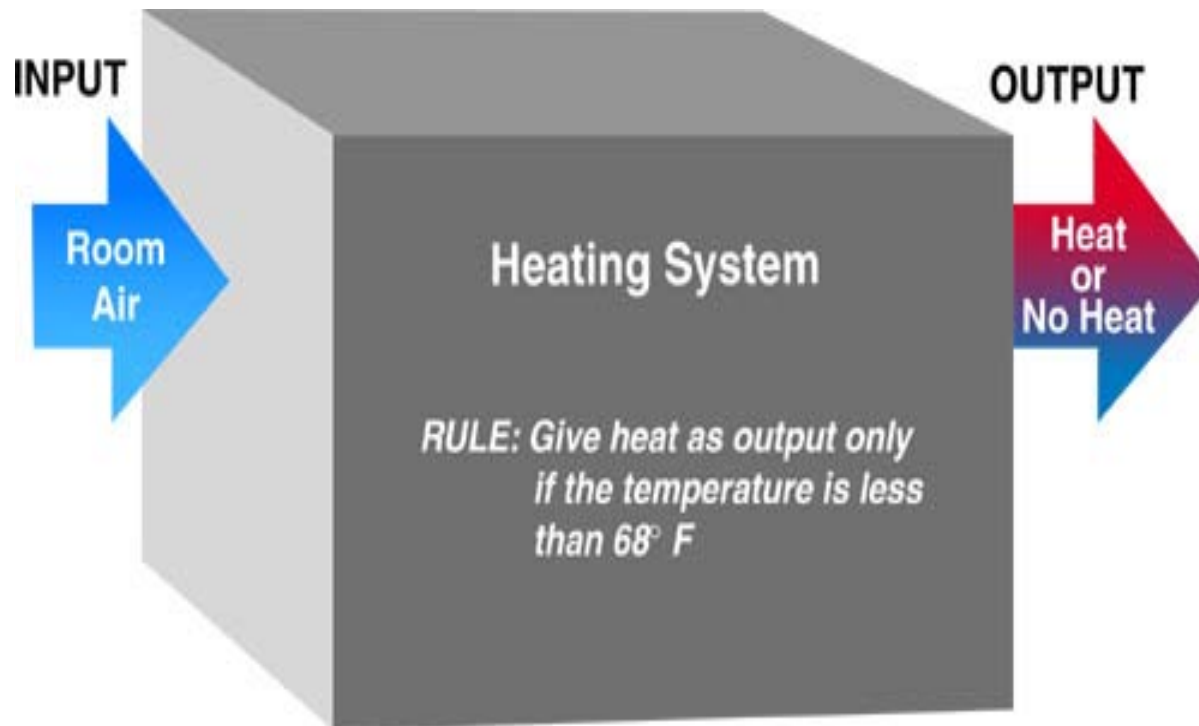


HOW FODOR EXPLAINS THE FUNCTIONALIST THEORY OF MIND:

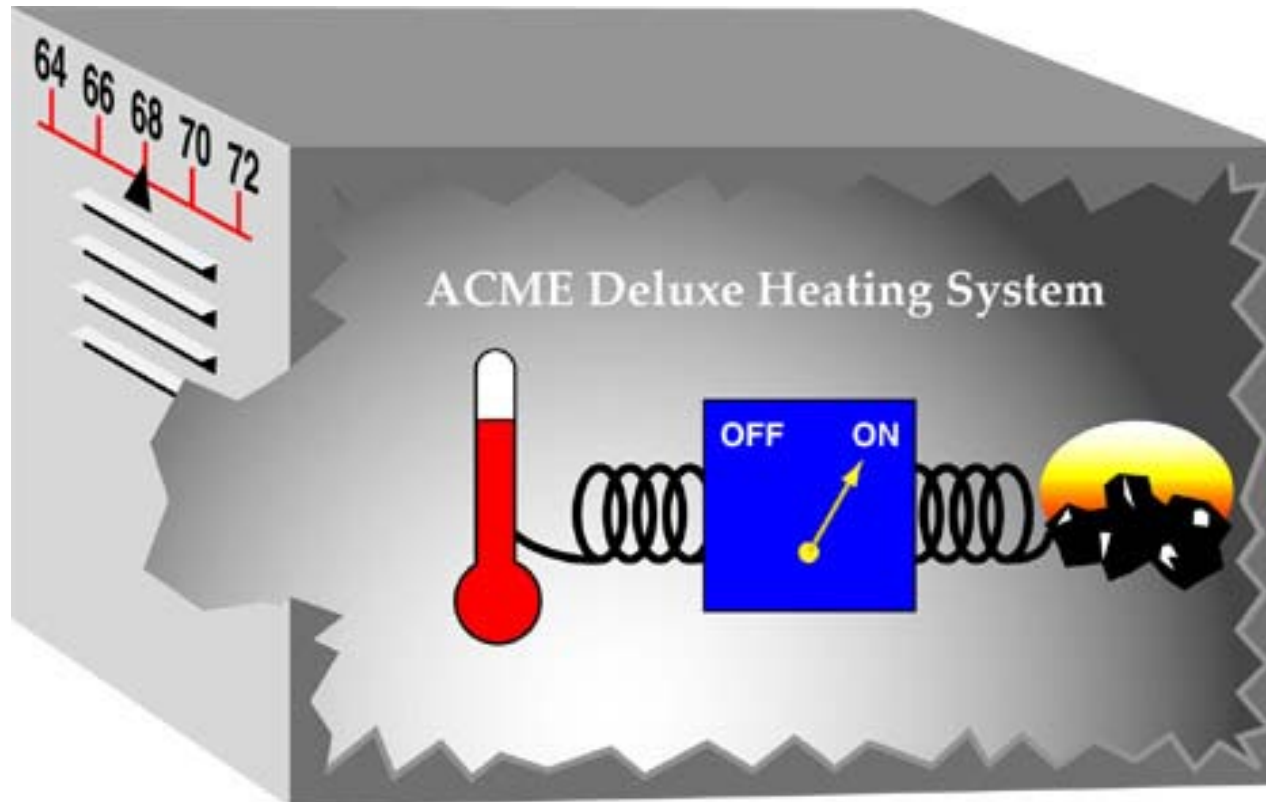
“Nothing about the way I have described the...Coke machines puts constraints on what they could be made of. Any system whose states bore the proper relations to inputs, outputs and other states could be one of these machines.” (Fodor, 456b).



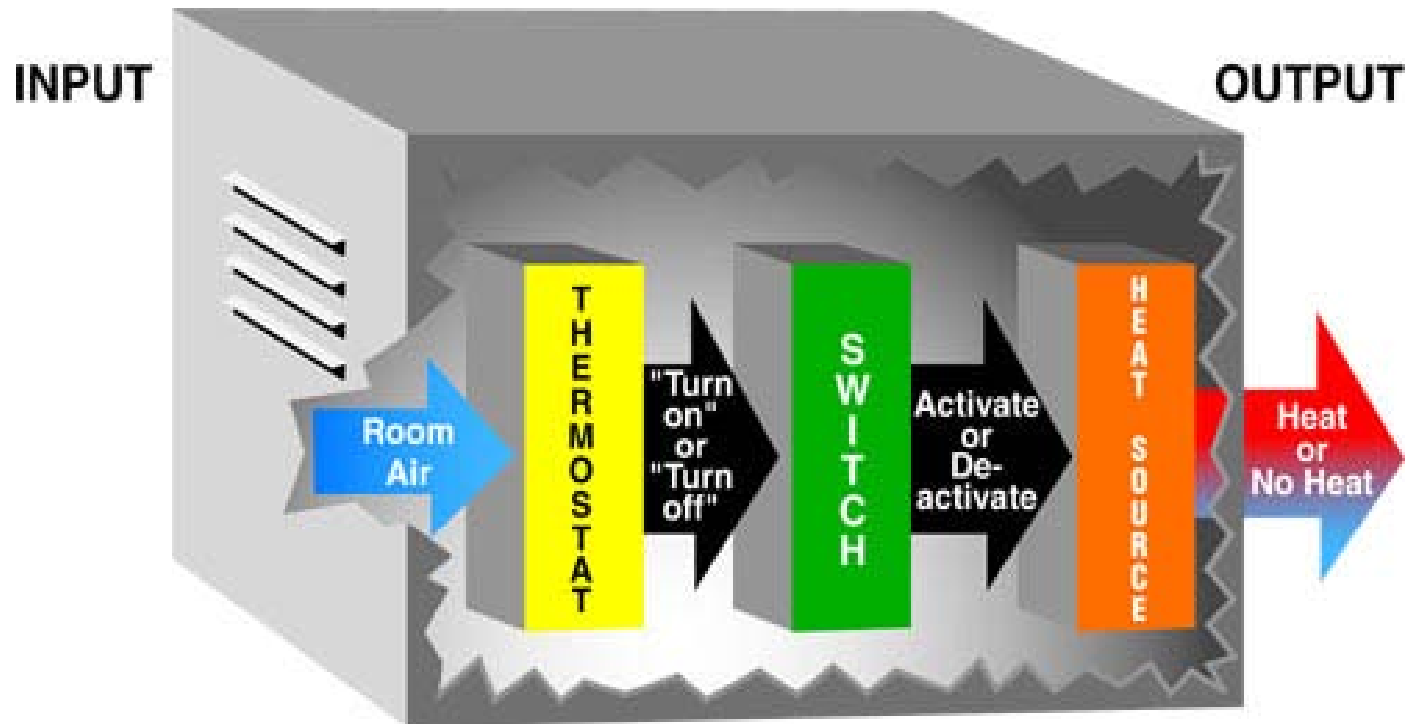
A FUNCTIONALIST VIEW OF A HEATING SYSTEM:



A PHYSICALIST VIEW OF A HEATING SYSTEM:



FUNCTIONALIST VIEW OF THE PARTS OF A HEATING SYSTEM:



BACK TO THE FUNCTIONALIST THEORY OF THE MIND:



“In the functionalist view, the psychology of a system depends not on the stuff it is made of (living cells, metal or spiritual energy) but on how the stuff is put together” (Fodor, 451).



A FUNCTIONALIST VIEW OF THE MIND:



...what is causing you to feel this way (the science-y stuff) doesn't matter!



SO WHAT ABOUT BEHAVIORISM AND IDENTITY THEORY? WHAT DOES THIS GOTTA DO WITH FUNCTIONALISM?

- Like behaviorism and identity theory, functionalism is taken to be a materialist theory. (concerning mental things)

“Functionalism construes the concept of causal role in such a way that a mental state can be defined by its causal relations to other mental states” (Fodor, 455b).



HOWEVER,

Since mental states interact in generating behavior, it will be necessary to find a construal of psychological explanations that posits mental processes: causal sequences of mental events” (Fodor, 454a).



- Identity theory claims that brain states are identical to mental states. Functionalist theory rejects this.
- Behaviorism cannot account for mental states because:
 - Different behaviors can result from the same stimulus.
 - Different stimuli can produce the same behavior.



“The problem with type physicalism is that there are possible information processing systems with the same psychological constitution as human beings but not the same physical organization. In principle, all kinds of physically different things could have human software” (Fodor, 455a).



WAIT!



Questions?
Comments?



THE TURING TEST

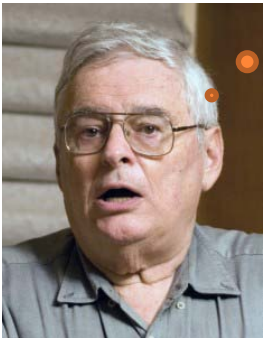
- Created by Alan Turing in 1950.
- Test involves two subjects: a human and a machine. (The machine to be tested)
- A human will interrogate both the other human and the machine.
- They are all separated.
- The human interrogator must tell which is the human from the machine based on the answers.
- If the interrogator cannot tell the human apart from the machine, then the machine is said to have passed the test.



Can Machines Actually Think?

If so,
could we refer to
them as
humans?

Uhh...



SOURCES

- http://www.philosophyonline.co.uk/pom/pom_functionalism_introduction.htm
- http://www.mind.ilstu.edu/curriculum/functionality_intro/functionality_intro.php?modGUI=44&compGUI=1945&itemGUI=3403

