

Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W
Spring 2011
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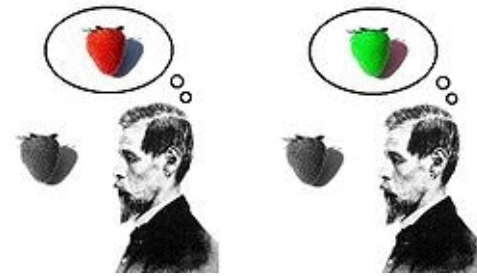
Class 22 - April 15
End Consciousness

Theories of Mind

- Dualism has an account of internal mental states.
 - But resists scientific treatment
- Behaviorism is physicalistic.
 - But denigrates internal processes
- Identity theory embraces the causal interactions in the brain
 - But is chauvinist
- Functionalism avoids the chauvinism of identity theory by abstracting to organization
 - But lacks an account of internal states

Consciousness Problems

- Intentions
 - Chinese Room
- Qualia
 - Inverted qualia
 - Absent qualia
 - zombies
 - modal argument



Bats



It will not help to try to imagine that one has webbing on one's arms, which enables one to fly around at dusk and dawn catching insects in one's mouth; that one has very poor vision, and perceives the surrounding world by a system of reflected high-frequency sound signals; and that one spends the day hanging upside down by one's feet in an attic. In so far as I can imagine this (which is not very far), it tells me only what it would be like for me to behave as a bat behaves. But that is not the question. I want to know what it is like for a bat to be a bat. Yet if I try to imagine this, I am restricted to the resources of my own mind, and those resources are inadequate to the task. I cannot perform it either by imagining additions to my present experience, or by imagining segments gradually subtracted from it, or by imagining some combination of additions, subtractions, and modifications. To the extent that I could look and behave like a wasp or a bat without changing my fundamental structure, my experiences would not be anything like the experiences of those animals... The best evidence would come from the experiences of bats, if we only knew what they were like (Nagel, "What is it Like to Be a Bat" p 439).

Jackson's Epiphenomenalism



- Fred and Mary
 - knowledge argument
 - blue bananas
- I think that there are certain features of the bodily sensations especially, but also of certain perceptual experiences, which no amount of purely physical information includes. Tell me everything physical there is to tell about what is going on in a living brain, the kind of states, their functional role, their relation to what goes on at other times and in other brains, and so on and so forth, and be I as clever as can be in fitting it all together, you won't have told me about the hurtfulness of pains, the itchiness of itches, pangs of jealousy, or about the characteristic experience of tasting a lemon, smelling a rose, hearing a loud noise, or seeing the ski (Jackson 127).



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Are We Zombies?

- The functionalist might deny that qualia are real.
 - ▶ The radical behaviorist already made this claim.
 - ▶ We thought the claim implausible, but perhaps we should reconsider it.
- Perhaps qualia have no room in our best scientific psychological theory.
 - ▶ There may be nothing that it is like to be us.
 - ▶ It is difficult to see how mature neuroscience can make reference to qualia.
 - ▶ Einstein: science can never give us the taste of soup.
 - ▶ Wittgenstein: nothing would serve as well as something about which nothing could be said.



Chase and Sanborn

from Daniel Dennett

- Both are tasters for, and loved, Maxwell House coffee.
- After a while, both of them realize that they no longer love the same coffee.
- Chase
 - My qualia are the same.
 - My evaluations of those same sensations has shifted.
- Sanborn
 - My qualia have shifted.
- Is it possible to determine whether they are correct or whether they are misdiagnosing themselves?
 - faulty memories
 - perceptual anomalies



More Intuition Pumps

- Drinking beer or wine
 - ▶ If tastes are acquired, then what we think about them shifts with our experience.
 - ▶ There is no single way that it tastes, independent of my past experiences.
- Cauliflower pill
 - ▶ Since we never liked cauliflower, it would seem that the pill must change its taste.
 - ▶ Another possibility is that it merely changes the way we feel about the taste.
 - ▶ The latter possibility is scientifically preferable, since it leaves the cauliflower alone.
 - ▶ There is no way that it tastes, independent of my past experiences.
- Phenol-thiol-urea
 - ▶ Whether you find it bitter or tasteless depends on your genes.
 - ▶ If we got rid of all of the humans with a genetic ability to taste it, then we might start to believe that it is intrinsically tasteless.
 - ▶ If we got rid of all the humans with a genetic inability to taste it, then we might think that it is intrinsically bitter.
 - ▶ The taste is thus relational, rather than intrinsic.
- Inverting spectacles
 - ▶ Suppose we pressed them on this question: “Does your adaptation consist in your re-inverting your visual field, or in your turning the rest of your mind upside-down in a host of compensations?” If they demur, may we insist that there has to be a right answer, even if they cannot say with any confidence which it is?... Only a very naive view of visual perception could sustain the idea that one’s visual field has a property of right-side-upness or upside-downness *independent of one’s dispositions to react to it* - “intrinsic right-side-upness” we could call it (Dennett, “Quining Qualia” p 423).

Two Paths

- One path accepts the reality of qualia, but denies the sufficiency of physicalism.
 - ▶ The insufficiency of physicalism seems to infect all kinds of reductive definitions.
 - ▶ All kinds of physical reductions are denigrated
 - ▶ Descriptions of the wavelength of light omit facts about its effects on perceivers.
- The other path takes physicalism as brute, but omits aspects of conscious experience.
 - ▶ We have to look for appropriate type-identities for mental states.
 - ▶ Type-identity statements (what it is to be a thing of a certain type) must be made with reference to the appropriate regularities.
 - elementary particles in terms of charge
 - species in terms of genetic constitution
 - water in terms of molecular constitution
 - mental states in terms of neuro-psychological laws
 - We're stuck with a non-relational account of mental states.

Ethics

- Understanding consciousness is important for psychology.
- Also, in case we meet the aliens.
- Friends or food?

