

Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W
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Class #22 - 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

Qualia Issues

- Materialist theories of mind fail to capture our internal mental lives.
- The behaviorist rejected all first-person evidence as misleading and useless.
- The identity theorist accepted that internal states were causes of behavior, rather than identical to behavior, but identified the mental states with their neural correlates.
- Both theories work better as third-person accounts of mental states than as first-person accounts.
- Similarly, functionalism has been criticized for failing to account for the way that mental states appear to us, for consciousness.

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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Zombies: Another Problem for Functionalism

Jackson's Modal Argument



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.
 - ▶ 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 Against Qualia

- 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).

Functionalism and AI

More Problems for Functionalism

- Functionalism presents a usefully liberal view of mind.
 - Aliens and robots can have minds.
- It isn't broad enough to capture qualia, but maybe they aren't real or relevant.
- Even if we deny the reality of qualia, though, functionalism runs into problems with intentional states.
- To understand minds, according to the functionalist, we can examine computer models and their software.
- Computers and their software work according to purely formal, syntactic manipulation.
- They merely follow algorithms, every step of which can be specified syntactically.

The Chinese Room



Searle's Argument

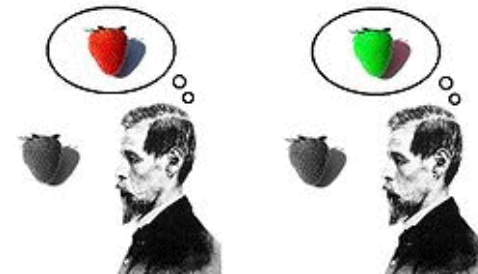
1. Programs are completely describable in terms of their formal, syntactic content.
2. Minds grasp the meanings, or semantics, as well as syntax.
3. Syntax alone can not produce semantics.

So, minds are not merely syntactic manipulators; i.e. minds are not mere programs.

There is more to our minds than algorithmic processing of sensory input toward the production of motor output.

Problems for Functionalism

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



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.

Summary

- The Chinese room argument shows that functionalism has a problem accounting for our intentional states.
- The absent qualia argument shows that functionalism has a problem accounting for our phenomenal states.
- Only the dualist provided a satisfying first-person account.
- But dualism has an apparently insuperable (and spooky) problem of interaction.
- Functionalism is the most widely supported contemporary theory of mind.

Ethics

- Understanding consciousness is important for psychology.
- Also, in case we meet the aliens.
- Friends or food?
- Are replicants persons?
 - ▶ Is it morally permissible to kill them?
 - ▶ Depends in part on our answer to the question about minds.
 - ▶ Another part: more general principles of morality.

