

Reading Guide #7: Eliminative Materialism

These reading guides are provided to assist you in your reading. I encourage you to read the material through, first, then go back to answer the questions. You are not required to hand in written answers. You are expected to have responses ready for class discussion. Page numbers refer to Peter A. Morton, *A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, Broadview Press, 1997.

Richard Rorty, from *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, pp 351-4.

1. How do the Antipodeans differ from us in their understanding of mental states?
2. Why were the Antipodeans unfamiliar with Locke's veil of ideas (the primary/secondary distinction)?
3. When and why did the Antipodeans talk about their neural states?
4. How did the Terrans (people from Earth) learn to talk about their neural states?
5. Why did the soft-minded philosophers deny that there was a problem of whether the Antipodeans had minds?
6. How did the tough-minded philosophers narrow the question of whether the Antipodeans had minds?
7. Why might the inferential nature of most of our reports of our neural states show that the Antipodeans had minds? Why does this argument not work?
8. Why did connecting a Terran brain and an Antipodean brain not help answer the question of whether Antipodeans had minds?
9. Why did the Terrans want to find out whether Antipodean reports of their neural states were incorrigible?
10. "...[I]t was not clear that 'how things seemed to them' was a matter of what raw feels they had, as opposed to what they were inclined to say (354)." Explain.

Patricia Churchland, from *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain*, pp 355-66.

1. What is folk psychology?
2. How do beliefs and desires function in folk-psychological explanations?
3. What is the role of background generalizations in folk-psychological explanations?
4. What is the relationship of folk psychology to scientific psychology?
5. How does folk psychology develop? Why does Churchland say that the origins and development of folk psychology are unimportant to whether they should be taken as theories?
6. What are propositional attitudes? How do they factor in deductive psychological explanations?
7. Distinguish rational explanations from causal ones. How is this distinction supposed to differentiate psychological explanations from other scientific explanations?
8. Is a rationality relation among beliefs and desires incompatible with causal connections among events? Explain.
9. How does psychology inherit systematicity from the logic of propositions?
10. What is the difference between a semantically coherent system and a causally interconnected system? Why would this difference undermine a reductionist (materialist) theory of the mind?
11. How are the generalizations of psychology supposed to be emergent with respect to neurobiology? Who supposes so?
12. Explain how the calculator analogy opposes the reductionist.
13. Explain how the fire example supports the anti-reductionist claim that, “[T]he categories of psychology cross-classify or are orthogonal to the categories of neuroscience (361).”
14. For what kinds of mental states do the anti-reductionist arguments work? To what kinds of mental states do they not seem to apply?
15. From where do irreducibility arguments get their support?
16. How can the reductionist respond to multiple realizability (“multiple instantiability”) arguments?
17. “[I]t may eventually be said that there is no neurophysiology of individual beliefs; there is only a neurophysiology of information fermentation... (363).” What would make us say such a thing?
18. How is belief ascription context-relative?
19. “[C]onsiderable correction and reconfiguration of the folk psychological concepts of belief and desire are required (364).” Explain.
20. What is the difference between the respectability of cognitive science, and its autonomy?
21. How does the calculator analogy fail?
22. Why does Fodor want to hold on to folk psychology? How does Churchland respond?