

Philosophy 132
Philosophy of Mind
Handout 22
Friday November 30 2007

1. *The State of Play*

a.) *Functionalism*

Analytic functionalists emphasise:

- i.) The possibility of multiple realizability – we think that creatures made of different materials and very differently structured could all still have the same beliefs and desires, and could experience the same elements of the world around them;
- ii.) That we think of our psychological states as causes of our behaviour, features of us which explain why we act as we do.

The functionalist then hypothesises that there is some level of causal complexity such that creatures which are alike in those causal respects will be psychologically the same. How do we specify those respects?

We have a general conception of how experiences, beliefs and desires all bear on each other and actions – a folk-psychological theory. If we replace all of the psychological vocabulary in that theory with dummy-terms, *variables*, then the theory still has the same descriptive import: it picks out the causal structure needed to realize a given psychology.

Functionalist Invariance: If *o* and *o'* both instantiate the same causal structure as specified by the substituted folk-psychological theory FTP, and whatever state *S* of FTP *o* is in, *o'* is in, then *o* and *o'* are in the same psychological states.

The functionalist claims that Functional Invariance holds because psychological states are no more than functional states.

b.) *Is That All There is?*

Critics suppose that we know more about the nature of the psychological than just what it can *do* – what effects can be brought about. In particular some critics claim that we know what conscious experience is like in a way which is independent of and prior to knowledge of its causal role. We can then conceive causal role and conscious experience coming apart: different conscious states playing the same causal role in different individuals; and something other than consciousness playing the same causal role as consciousness.

The two thought experiments for illustrating this are: *Spectrum Inversion* and *Absent Qualia*

c.) *Shoemaker*

Shoemaker admits that spectrum inversion should be taken as a genuine possibility. Ways of experiencing which do not count as being the same can nonetheless occupy the same causal roles according to him. Functional Invariance is therefore false according to him.

Shoemaker thinks a modified functionalism is still true:

If *o* and *o'* both instantiate the same causal structure as specified by the substituted folk-psychological theory FTP, and whatever state *S* of FTP *o* is in, *o'* is in, then *o* and *o'* are in *equivalent* psychological states – their experiences may not be the same, but they do the same causal work.

What it is to have an experiential state according to Shoemaker is determined functionally, but the identity of experiential states is not so determined. Shoemaker denies that Absent Qualia is a possibility: if a creature is functionally just like you then it too possesses consciousness.

According to Shoemaker:

- (1) If it is possible that there are *philosophical zombies* then you do not know that you are not a philosophical zombie
- (2) You do know that you are not a philosophical zombie
Therefore
- (3) It is not possible that there are philosophical zombies

Why accept (2)? Could you claim that you do not really know that you are conscious? Perhaps you just have a belief to that effect?

Why accept (1)? Shoemaker assumes that our means for finding out empirical truths should track the truth, and that whatever means we use, presumably these operate by causal means.

Assume that you have a functionally identical zombie twin:

- i.) Her means of finding out whether she is conscious is causally the same as yours;
- ii.) She is mistaken in her opinion about whether she is conscious (since she is functionally the same as you, she has a matching causal state to your true belief that you are not a zombie);
- iii.) The means that you use to determine whether you are not a zombie would issue in the false judgement that you are not a zombie were you a zombie.
- iv.) So the means you use does not track the truth;
- v.) So you cannot come to know that you are not a zombie through using it.
- a.) You might try to block this reasoning by insisting that your zombie twin does not have genuine beliefs (given that she is not conscious, after all) – but why should the truth-tracking test compare just beliefs, as opposed to what you have in common with zombies, schmeliefs? After all schmeliefs can do just the same things for you that beliefs can.
- b.) You might try to block this reasoning by rejecting the truth-tracking condition on knowledge. You can restrict it, or supplant it with some other condition.
- c.) You can reject the claim that the means you have for determining whether you are conscious is the same as your zombie twin. You may claim that being conscious is *self-intimating* – someone who is conscious is thereby in a position to know that she is conscious. This would be to reject the assumption that two individuals who are causally the same must be epistemologically the same.

Note that this idea doesn't seem to make much sense in the case of knowledge through sense perception, or through the use of scientific instruments. How could one telescope tell you more than another if they work in just the same way? But, perhaps we should insist that we don't know whether we are conscious through employing something like a telescope or some form of inner perception. One may claim that it is simply in virtue of the fact that one is conscious that one is in a position to know that one is conscious.

2. Mill & Absent Qualia

If one accepts the arguments against functionalism, then Mill's position may seem superior to Putnam's on the question of other minds. But at that stage one will need to rely on the contrast between what is metaphysically possible, that qualitative states and functional role come apart; and what is nomologically possible, that given the kinds of states we have and the effects that they produce, it is guaranteed that states with the same powers to produce behaviour will be qualitatively alike. *But note: if one supposes that qualitative states are epiphenomenal – i.e. have no causal consequences – then how can one carry out Mill's reasoning?*

3. Subjectivity & Conscious Experience

The arguments about Inverted Spectrum and Absent Qualia suggest that there is some way conscious is which we have knowledge of independently of knowing its causal role – we can conceive of identifying its absence despite the presence of its normal causal role.

What is this thing that we so identify?

Shoemaker's argument about absent qualia suggests that there are general conditions on what conscious can be which relate to the fact that we know that we are conscious.

In some ways this paralleled Malcolm's complaint against Mill: that Mill is wrong to assume that he really can have knowledge of his own consciousness if he lacks knowledge of anyone else's state of mind. But why suppose that my knowledge of my own consciousness should depend on things beyond the fact that I am consciousness?

What is it for me to be conscious – to have a point of view on the world?

And what is it for me to come be aware that I conscious, that I have such a point of view?

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