

### 1. *Summarizing Mill's Position*

Mill feels pain when you step on his toe, and having felt pain, he lets out an 'Ouch'. Mill judges that he feels pain when affected in a certain way, having his toe stepped on, because it is part of his *nature* as a human being so to be affected. He also reasons that the explanation of why *he* says, 'Ouch, is that his feeling pain causes him to make this noise. Mill takes himself to have evidence that it is reasonable to judge that he is surrounded by other human beings who share the same nature as him. He takes himself to be a *representative* sample of humanity and so to reason that in humans, this kind of cause, stepping on toes, is liable to cause *feelings of pain*, and that the best explanation of the 'Ouch' noises that others make is that they are feeling pain, and that the pain is a cause of that behaviour.

Note that, in this, Mill supposes that there is merely a contingent connection between feelings and the behaviour they give rise to.

How does this address the original sceptical worry about ROBOTS? Surely the protagonist of ROBOTS has the same evidence as Mill, and yet the protagonist in that case is entirely mistaken in his opinions.

### 2. *Putnam*

Putnam on the 'Empirical Realist' and the external world challenge.

'Material objects exist' is not a 'hypothesis' that explains anything; and indeed 'material objects do not exist' does not explain anything either. What does explain a host of phenomena is something we might call 'thing-theory'; that is, the conjunction of all the theories, hypotheses, empirical laws, ordinary empirical statements... that we accept and that we employ in explanation. (Putnam, 'Other Minds, p,343.)

'Material objects exist' has not been *confirmed*. 'Thing-theory' has not been *confirmed*, because really there is no such thing as thing-theory; there are only many many many individual statements about things which individually might be regarded by logicians as theories. *Thing theories* have been confirmed *as opposed to alternative thing theories*. (p.344.)

To give up 'material objects exist' would require giving up all of the individual laws, statements, hypotheses, etc., that *imply* material objects exist. But then what alternative explanation would we have for the phenomena in question? The inability of anyone to suggest an alternative explanation is itself our deepest justification for staying with the accepted explanations. (p.345.)

Putnam suggests that our reason for dismissing the sceptical challenge about the external world is that our general scientific world view is the best (because the *only*, relative to the sceptic) explanation of the phenomena we encounter.

Is Putnam begging the question against the sceptic in the external world scenario? Does the brain in the vat really have the same evidence as we have for the existence of things, and does the existence of things really explain best the situation in his or her plight?

Is there a difference here between the external world sceptic and the other minds sceptic? In ROBOTS you seem to have just the same evidence as the protagonist in that situation.

Putnam applies the same strategy in the case of the social world:

The situation appears to me to be exactly the same in the case of psychological statements. We explain the behaviour of other people as well as ourselves by reference to desires, character traits, etc...

These facts show that our reasons for accepting it that others have mental states are not an ordinary induction... Yet... our acceptance of the proposition that others have mental states is both analogous and disanalogous to the acceptance of ordinary empirical theories on the basis of explanatory induction... It is analogous... in that part of the justification for the assertion that other people have mental states is that to give up the proposition would require giving up all of the theories, statements, etc., that we accept *implying* that proposition; and those latter statements do have, many of them, the kind of explanatory role that the inductivist stresses. It is also analogous in that many empirical theories are accepted today precisely for the two reasons that (a) they, or theories that presuppose them, provide plausible explanations of many phenomena, and (b) no alternative is today in the field. (346)

It is perfectly imaginable that other people should be mere 'dummies' controlled remotely by some intelligence, I know nothing of. But I do not grant that this hypothesis is 'in the field'. For a hypothesis to be in the field, it is not enough for it to represent a possibility that we can imagine; it must meet two further conditions. It must be elaborated, the details must be worked out to a certain degree, various questions which naturally occur to one must be answered, and, secondly, it must not be too *silly* to consider. (359-360.)

We don't have an explicit theory which we confirm on the basis of others' physical movements, but we can take our various opinions about people's attitudes and behaviour as all presupposing psychological theory. That theory is the *only* explanation in play for people's behaviour – because the sceptical hypotheses are not serious rival explanations.

### 3. Putnam v Mill

Note that in Putnam's discussion, unlike Mill's, there is no emphasis on distinctive knowledge only of one's own case.

*But isn't Mill's problem distinctively one about that aspect of feelings which we are only aware in our own case.*

When Putnam wrote 'Other Minds' he was also developing an account of functionalism as an account of the nature of mind. Functionalism seeks to understand the nature of things in terms of their *causal roles*: what can give rise them and what they, in consort with other properties, can give rise to.

A standard objection to functionalism focuses on its treatment of the private, feeling aspect of consciousness.

*But before we address that question we need to ask: How should we think about feelings or bodily sensations such as pain?*

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