

## Philosophy 132

### The Philosophy of Mind

Final Examination – Take Home Paper

Distributed 10 December 2007

ANSWERS DUE: Monday 17 December 2007 5pm

You should answer THREE of the following questions. A suitable answer should consist of about 500 words in length (around about one page, single-spaced typescript).

Reminder: my office hours are *Mondays* 2.30-4pm Moses 230.

1. Putnam claims that our beliefs about others' psychological states are both *analogous* to scientific theories, and that they are *disanalogous*. Outline in brief what he takes those analogies and disanalogies to be. Should we conclude on this basis that our beliefs about the psychological do or do not amount to a theory?

2. Jackson claims:

'The simplest explanation, and thus, in the absence of strong contrary indications, the best, is that ... both pains and blood vessels may have the same property, that of being located in the foot, and hence may warrant the same linguistic description. But this explanation is only available to one who acknowledges the existence of ... pains. For if they do not exist, they cannot have any properties at all, and *a fortiori*, cannot have the same property as a ... blood vessel.'

Briefly explain what Jackson's objection to state and adverbial theories of sensation are. Do you think his arguments are decisive?

3. Langsam says:

'Now suppose I have an experience of pain as a result of touching my lover's sunburned back. What happens when I stop touching here? Let us consider two possibilities. First, let us suppose that my experience of pain ceases as soon as I stop touching her. Then the case is similar to the case of touching a smooth object: just as I can feel its smoothness without feeling smooth myself, here, too, I feel my lover's pain but not my own; the pain is not transferred from her to me. On the other hand, if my experience of pain continues even after I stop touching her, then the case is similar to the case of touching a warm object: just as I feel the warmth of the object and feel warm myself, similarly I feel my lover's pain and also feel my own. In both cases I feel my lover's pain, which is not private... In sum, pains are private, but only contingently so.'

Outline Langsam's definitions of *subjectivity* and *privacy* of pain. Does his example show that pains are only contingently private in his sense? Is there any reasonable ground for denying that Langsam could feel his lover's pain?

4. Pitcher writes:

'What I have called the nonstandard cases, where there is not a co-occurrence of (a) feeling a pain in a certain part of one's body and (b) that bodily part's being in a disordered state, are extremely rare and are pretty easily recognizable. Apart from these few quite extraordinary cases, the correlation between (a) and (b) is very high indeed. And when we consider, too, that there is an elaborate system of nerves that carry signals from disordered states of our body to our brains... we would appear to be entirely justified in holding the perceptual view of pain.'

Explain what Pitcher means by a 'perceptual view of pain'. Is this the only account of pain which would predict the high correlation between bodily disorder and pain sensation?

5. According to Block:

'The functionalist says to the physicalist: "It is very hard to see how there could be a single physical characterization of the internal states of all and only creatures with mentality." I say to the functionalist: "It is very hard to see how there could be a single physical characterization of the inputs and outputs of all and only creatures with mentality."' What does Block mean by *inputs* and *outputs*? Explain in brief what the grounds of Block's challenge is, and comment on whether it essentially relies on the conceivability of 'absent qualia'.

6. Shoemaker claims:

'To hold that it is logically possible (or, worse, nomologically possible) that a state lacking qualitative character should be functionally identical to a state having qualitative character is to make qualitative character irrelevant both to what we can take ourselves to know in knowing about the mental states of others and also to what we can take ourselves to know in knowing about our own mental states.' Why does Shoemaker think that qualitative character would be irrelevant to what we know in our own cases if 'absent qualia' are a logical possibility? Do you think his reasons are good ones?

7. Nagel writes:

'In the case of experience, on the other hand, the connection with a particular point of view seems much closer. It is difficult to understand what could be meant by the *objective* character of an experience, apart from the particular point of view from which its subjective apprehends it. After all, what would be left of what it was like to be a bat if one removed the viewpoint of the bat? But if experience does not have, in addition to its subjective character, an objective nature that can be apprehended from many different points of view, then how can it be supposed that a Martian investigating my brain might be observing physical processes which were my mental processes?' Explain how Nagel uses the contrasting terms *subjective* and *objective*. Do you think Nagel is right to claim that one can know the objective character of an experience only by occupying the subject's viewpoint?

8. Wittgenstein writes:

'If one has to imagine someone else's pain on the model of one's own, this is none too easy a thing to do: for I have to imagine pain which I *do not feel* on the model of the pain which I *do feel*. That is, what I have to do is not simply to make a transition in imagination from one place of pain to another. As, from pain in the hand to pain in the arm. For I am not to imagine that I feel pain in some region of his body. (Which would not be possible.)' Briefly assess the objection to Wittgenstein that his worry here is no more than a form of inductive scepticism – denying that we can conceive of the unobserved on the basis of knowledge of the observed.

9. Strawson claims:

'One can ascribe states of consciousness to oneself only if one can ascribe them to others. One can ascribe them to others only if one can identify other subjects of experience. And one cannot identify others if one can identify them *only* as subjects of experience, possessors of states of consciousness.' Explain briefly why Strawson thinks that we can self-ascribe pain only if we can identify others 'as subjects of experience'. Do you think that this would be a satisfactory way of answering scepticism about our knowledge of other minds?