

Week 5: Phenomenal consciousness and Jackson's knowledge argument

Core Reading:

Jackson F. 'Epiphenomenal Qualia', *Philosophical Quarterly* 32, 1982, pages 127-136, reprinted in Lycan ed. *Mind and Cognition: A Reader*, pages 469-477.

Jackson F. 'What Mary Didn't Know', *Journal of Philosophy* 82, 1986, pages 291-295, reprinted in Rosenthal ed., *The Nature of Mind*, pages 392-394.

Lewis D. 'What Experience Teaches', reprinted in Lycan ed. *Mind and Cognition: A Reader*, pages 499-519.

Dennett D. 'Quining Qualia', reprinted in Lycan ed. *Mind and Cognition: A Reader*, pages 519-548.

Dennett D. *Consciousness Explained*. Chapter 12.

Also see:

Churchland P. (1985) 'Reduction, qualia, and the direct introspection of brain states', *Journal of Philosophy* 82, pages 8-28.

Papineau D. *Thinking about consciousness*, Chapter 2.

Nagel T. 'What is it like to be a Bat?', *Philosophical Review* 83, 1974, pages 435-450, reprinted in Nagel's *Mortal Questions*, pages 165-180, and in Rosenthal ed, *The Nature of Mind*, pages 422-428.

Levine J. 'On leaving out what it's like', in Davies and Humphreys eds. *Consciousness*, pages 121-136.

Levine, J. 'Materialism and qualia: The explanatory gap', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64, 1983, pages 354-61.

From last week:

Lewis's position is that our a priori idea of pain is an idea of a state which plays a causal role. If he was right, then pain (the functional facts about pain) could be fully explained by the physical facts, just as in the case of heat. But the functional role of pain is surely only part of the idea of pain. There is also the phenomenal aspect—the way pain feels.

So if this is right, and Lewis is wrong about our idea of pain, then the anti-physicalist will say that a physicalist account of pain in terms of what occupies the functional role for pain is bound to be incomplete:

1. In terms of facts and modality: the physical facts do not logically entail the facts about what pain experience is like. It is logically possible that there could be two systems that are functionally identical, but one is accompanied by pain and the other is not; the latter is a zombie (cf. Kripke; Chalmers pp. 94-9; Jackson's 'Epiphenomenal qualia' Part II).

2. In terms of explanation: The physical facts are not sufficient to explain the phenomenal aspects of pain (cf. Levine on the explanatory gap).

3. In terms of knowledge of facts: Physical knowledge is not sufficient to yield knowledge about what pain experiences are like (cf Jackson).

Jackson's knowledge argument

Mary, the scientist, is brought up in a black and white world, and has never seen colours. But she knows all the physical facts, including all the physical facts about colours. When she first sees a red tomato, she knows a new fact: she now knows what red things look like.

Possible responses:

1. Jackson: Mary experiences a new property: a phenomenal property. But this commits him to epiphenomenalism.
2. Churchland: Mary doesn't know a new fact, just the same old fact under a new 'mode of presentation'.
- Dennett: Mary is not relevantly changed as a result of her experience.
3. Lewis: Mary gains a new ability (know-how), no new knowledge (knowledge that).
4. Papineau: Mary gains a new concept, a phenomenal concept, which does not refer by description; but this is not a concept of a further non-physical property, a phenomenal property. With this new concept she gains new powers of thought.

Are zombies possible?

1. They certainly seem to be possible (see above).
2. The qualia-freak will say that zombies really are possible.
3. The physicalist will deny that zombies are possible (so conceivability is not a good guide to possibility), and therefore has to explain the appearance of possibility. The appearance cannot be explained by appeal to an analogy with temperature and mean kinetic energy. So what does explain it?
4. Perhaps a prior intuition of mind-brain distinctness (cf Descartes intuitions from Week 1).

Questions:

1. Is complete physical knowledge complete knowledge simpliciter?
2. How, if at all, can physicalism explain the qualitative nature of our conscious experiences?
3. Are phenomenal properties distinct from physical properties?

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