

Philosophy 132
Philosophy of Mind
Handout 19
Friday November 16 2007

1. More on Functionalism

Psychological states of individuals are individuated by their causal roles: no two distinct psychological states can share causal roles; no two instances of the same psychological state can differ in their causal roles.

Which causal roles are relevant?

Analytic functionalism claims that we can specify the relevant causal roles by reference to *folk psychology*.

So if two individuals satisfy the same psychological theory, and are in the same states as specified by that theory, then the two individuals are in the same psychological states. These facts about causal roles determine the psychological facts.

Some versions of functionalism identify mental states with the states which occupy the causal roles (e.g. Lewis).

On Lewis's view the theory specifies what two creatures have to have in common in overall causal complexity in order to be psychologically endowed, but a given kind of psychological state, say pain, is identified with whatever physical (or ectoplasmic) state occupies that causal role in creatures of that kind.

On Shoemaker's view we should identify mental states with the causal roles themselves, taking the occupying states to realize the mental states. That is given the intuition of multiple realizability, the same mental state can be present in distinct individuals who do not share the same realizer state.

2. Problems Parallel to those in Formulating Behaviourism

Functionalism accommodates mental holism by specifying the overall causal structure that a creature must exhibit all at once – we define the causal powers of each mental state a creature could be in with respect to all of the other mental states that creature could enjoy.

But we still have a question about the inputs and outputs by which we specify these causal roles. In what sense need dolphins have the same limbs as us – how then are we to identify when dolphins are acting in the same way? In what sense do Thargs have the same sense modalities as us? How then are we to specify conditions under which one will have a certain perceptual belief?

This suggests that one of the intuitions behind multiple realizability, that a Tharg or a dolphin could think or desire the very same thing as me, cannot be demonstrated to be correct on a functionalist approach.

3. Functionalism as a Conceptual Thesis v. Functionalism as a Metaphysical Claim

The generalization of functionalism leads to the Causal Theory of Properties: that all (concrete or empirical) properties are individuated by their causal roles. (Cf. Shoemaker.) One may hold to functionalism because one holds the CTP more generally. One may reject CTP in general – e.g. claiming that we know the nature of being, square, say, independent of the causal powers that shape has – but still endorse functionalism. One may endorse CTP for most properties, but reject it for mental properties (e.g. supposing that introspection reveals to us the nature of mental qualities beyond their causal roles).

Functionalism may be put forward as a thesis about the *nature* of mental states, or it may also be put forward as a thesis about our *concepts* of mental states.

One might endorse the former claim if one supposed that the best account of what there is in the world which answers to our mental state notions are certain properties occupying causal roles. (Conversely an eliminativist about the mind might accept the *conceptual* claim, but deny the claim about the *nature* of mental states because they might deny that anything actually filled the causal roles specified by our concepts.)

Psycho-functionalism supposes that the causal roles relevant to individuating psychological states will be those that empirical psychology uncovers in determining how human minds work.

The key conceptual thesis in favour of analytic functionalism is our commitment to a.) multiple realizability; b.) the requirement of causal complexity.

4. Subjectivity & Functionalism

Many commentators complain that functionalism does not take proper account of subjectivity. There are two rather different ways of construing this complaint, and it gives rise to two different kinds of difficulties associated with the problem of other minds.

Subjectivity as Qualia

Subjectivity as a Person's Point of View

5. Subjectivity as Qualia

Some critics of functionalism complain that it doesn't explain how there is room for the qualitative aspects of consciousness in the mind. They complain that it is conceivable that there are functional duplicates of human beings which lack qualia (philosophical zombies, Block's Great Brain of China) and some pairs of human beings which are functionally identical but varying in their qualitative states.

The Absent Qualia objection is a variant of our ROBOTS, and the qualia inversion is just INVERSION. In the case of Other Minds Scepticism, the examples are used to throw doubt on our knowledge of the qualitative aspects of others' minds. In this context, they assume our knowledge of qualitative states and are used to argue for the inadequacy of a proposal about the nature of minds.

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