

Excellent Arguments on Functionalism from the Philosophy Forum, 7/2004

DM = Death Monkey, Quotes in red are mostly from "TecnoTut"- a "property dualist defending a non-material mind.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **TecnoTut**

Functionalism, whether it be machine functionalism, teleofunctionalism, or just plain old fashioned functionalism, merely describes what mental properties do, not what mental properties are ... Although functionalists associate themselves with materialistic monism (that is, the view that only material things exist), there is a dualism lurking beneath the surface. For, since any given mental state cannot be reduced to the physical mechanism which produces it (whether neurological or silicon-based), then mental states must be something more than the merely physical.

it makes no sense to claim that because "walking" is not reducible to "legs" the act / process of "walking" must be nonphysical. if "mind" *is* (only?) what "brains" *do* (and i'm not aware of any coherent argument or evidence to the contrary), then likewise the implication that "mind" is nonphysical is unwarranted (except, of course, as idle *metaphysical* speculation). though these complementary *aspects* (mind-brain) are not reducible to one other, it doesn't follow that these disparate *aspects* entail wholly distinct or incommensurable ontologies. the 'dualism' you perceive in "materialistic monism", **tecno**, seems the 'dualism' you're looking for.

180

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Walking will always be a physical event because it is an act only physical objects can perform.

Do you have any evidence that there are non-physical things that can engage in mental activities?

Quote:

Mental states do not walk, therefore they will not be physical.

Ummmm... What????

Quote:

And, as you've said, the act of walking is distinct from the physical pair of things known as legs. Once we admit this, we automatically will have a distinction between a functional role and its realizer. I am not claiming all functional roles are physical, but merely some. Eating, walking, running, fighting are all physical. But mental states are not, even if they are realized by physical things. Two people can be in the same functional state, yet differ in mental states. If A sees red and B sees green, despite being functionally identical with regard to input, related internal states, and behavior, A and B are in different mental states.

How do you know? There has never been any example, ever, of two people being in exactly the same physical state, much less evidence that their mental states would be different if they were.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Do you have any evidence that there are non-physical things that can engage in mental activities?

It is logically possible that non-physical things, e.g. ghosts, can walk. But since there are no such things, only physical things walk. That is not to say, of course, that mental properties are not instantiated by physical things.

I ask again, do you have any evidence that there are non-physical things that can engage in mental activities? Do you have any evidence that there are any non-physical things at all?

Quote:

Mental states may (assuming epiphenomenalism is false) cause walking, but mental states do not walk. Animal bodies and their legs walk. I can say that again.

So what?

Quote:

How do you know? There has never been any example, ever, of two people being in exactly the same physical state, much less evidence that their mental states would be different if they were.

First, we're not talking about the same physical state. We're talking about the same functional state. Two things can be in different physical and mental states yet be in identical functional states.

Different physical states are necessarily different functional states, by simple virtue of the fact that they are going to function differently.

Quote:

Second, people have been in the same type of physical states. When two persons are suffering from dehydration, they're not in the same token physical state, but they are in the same type physical state.

If you define a "functional state" to be a broad class of physical states, then your entire argument falls apart.

You said "If A sees red and B sees green, despite being functionally identical with regard to input, related internal states, and behavior, A and B are in different mental states."

If the physical states are not identical, then they are not functionally identical. The input is not identical. The related internal states are not identical, and the behavior is not identical.

DM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **TecnoTut**

I am not claiming all functional roles are physical, but merely some. Eating, walking, running, fighting are all physical. But mental states are not, even if they are realized by physical things.

this assertion is not an argument. you've yet to demonstrate how to distinguish *ostensively* between physical & 'nonphysical' (functions). besides, does it even make sense to *attribute* physicality / nonphysicality to functions?

180

TecnoTut,

Quote:

I ask again, do you have any evidence that there are non-physical things that can engage in mental activities? Do you have any evidence that there are any non-physical things at all?

If by "non-physical things" you meant "walking ghosts," then there's no evidence for walking ghosts. If you meant "mental properties," then your own mental states are evidence for the existence of "non-physical things."

By "non-physical things" I mean things which are not physical, where "physical things" are defined to be things which can be described in terms of their observable interactions with other things, which is of course exactly what it means for something to be "physical".

Quote:

So what?

So what "so what?" ? Is that supposed to be an argument?

That is exactly what I was wondering. Is the statement that mental properties don't walk actually supposed to have some kind of relevance to this discussion? Did you actually think that somebody here might be operating under the misconception that they do?

Quote:

Different physical states are necessarily different functional states, by simple virtue of the fact that they are going to function differently.

A carburetor is anything that mixes air with gasoline vapor to create an explosion. But the function of being a carburetor can be realized by steel, iron, plastic, rubber etc. This is what functionalism is all about_: different physical realizers, same functional state. But functionalism about the mind, that mental states are the same if they share the same functional states, is false.

This is not only a gross oversimplification of functionalism, it is also completely irrelevant. Whether or not you choose to label a group of physical systems *which are clearly different, and doing different things*, to be in the same "functional state", has no bearing whatsoever on whether those physical systems should be expected to produce *identical* mental states. You are essentially insisting that if similar, *but not identical*, functional states don't correspond to *identical* mental states, then functionalism is false. This is nonsense.

I could as easily label these non-identical mental states to be the same mental state. After all, they are no more different from each other than the functional states that they correspond to are.

It seems to me that you are confusing what psychology refers to as "functional states", which are broad categories or types of brain functions, with what "functional states" means in the computational, or Turing sense. Two physically different brains are not functionally equivalent. They may be performing similar tasks, so that a psychologist would say that they are performing the same psychological function, but they are not functionally identical in the computational sense, which is what matters for purposes of deciding whether functionalism is valid or not.

Quote:

You said "If A sees red and B sees green, despite being functionally identical with regard to input, related internal states, and behavior, A and B are in different mental states."

If the physical states are not identical, then they are not functionally identical. The input is not identical. The related internal states are not identical, and the behavior is not identical.

DM

The input is identical: each receives photons through their eyes. The internal mental states are the same since both persons feel happy. The behavior is the same: both smile.

I am finding it extraordinarily difficult to believe that you are not just pulling my leg here. Are you honestly trying to claim that this gross oversimplification you are presenting could possibly have any

relevance to the validity of functionalism? "The behavior is the same: both smile." Do you actually expect anybody to take such an argument seriously?

Quote:

this assertion is not an argument. you've yet to demonstrate how to distinguish ostensibly between physical & 'nonphysical' (functions).

Well, I believe mental states cannot be defined functionally. As I've said, two mental states can differ even if they have the same functional state. That's why I believe functionalism about the mind is false. Walking, on the other hand, can be defined functionally. Perhaps that does mean all functional roles are physical, and since mental states are not functional roles, then they are not physical.

Nope. By your reasoning, physical states (like walking) cannot be defined functionally either, since what you are calling the same functional state (walking) can correspond to many different physical states. All you have shown is that the gross misrepresentation of functionalism that you are presenting cannot be applied to *anything*, physical or mental. Fortunately, what you presented bears only a vague, superficial resemblance to actual functionalism.

Quote:

Perhaps it doesn't. But then again, walking seems to be something only physical things do. However, again, it seems logically possible that there can be walking ghosts.

Having experiences seems to be something only physical things do too, since nobody has ever observed a non-physical thing at all, much less observed one having an experience.

DM

readying ockham's whetstone ...

Quote:

Originally Posted by **TecnoTut**

First, you observe your own mental states, therefore you observe non-physical things all the time. Second, having a mental state cannot be defined by its functional role (assuming it has one), but walking can.

c'mon, **tecno!** your second point (a mental state cannot be defined by its function) contradicts your first (you observe your own mental states). in this context, *observing is a definite function.*

also, isn't the observation of our own 'mental states' itself a 'mental state'? your formulation is question-begging. that's like claiming (literally) that each person HAS a body. totally incoherent. we don't *have* bodies, we *are* bodies. only a body *has* -- ; a body can only be *had* by another body. likewise, we don't *have* 'mental states', we *are*, among other things, (mental) *processes* from which more or less discrete 'mental states' can be abstracted.

to suggest that one observes his own 'mental states' is like suggesting that one can (unaided) observe the back of his own head.

180

TecnoTut,

Quote:

By "non-physical things" I mean things which are not physical, where "physical things" are defined to be things which can be described in terms of their observable interactions with other things, which is of course exactly what it means for something to be "physical".

Thus in answering your question, viz. whether there is proof of non-physical things, being aware of your mental states is the proof.

Hardly. You have not established that my mental states are non-physical. On the contrary, since my mental states clearly have observable interactions with other things, to assert that they are non-physical is to assert that they cannot possibly be described in terms of these observable interactions. This is, to say the least, a completely unjustified assertion.

Quote:

This is not only a gross oversimplification of functionalism, it is also completely irrelevant. Whether or not you choose to label a group of physical systems which are clearly different, and doing different things, to be in the same "functional state", has no bearing whatsoever on whether those physical systems should be expected to produce identical mental states. You are essentially insisting that if similar, but not identical, functional states don't correspond to identical mental states, then functionalism is false.

You're still confused. If we have two carburetors made up of different types of materials, one made out of iron the other steel, then they still both perform the same type of function, viz. mixing air with gas vapors. Similarly, two different types computers with different hardware can instantiate the same type of program. Functionalists argue that mental states, such as pain, should be analyzed the same way as computer programs and carburetors are, viz. that the realizers of functional roles have no relevancy in defining the terms "carburetor," "computer program," and "pain."

This is completely wrong. The function of two different carburetors, or two different computer programs, is *different*. What you are calling "function" is a broad category of qualitatively similar functions, which are all referred to with the same name.

Think about it. The fact that two different carburetors do not have identical physical states poses no problem for the claim that physical states can be defined functionally, so why should the fact that two different people's pain are not identical mental states, pose a problem? The answer is that it doesn't. Just as you lump an entire class of physical processes together under the functional label of "mixing air with gas vapors", likewise I can lump an entire class of mental states together under the functional label "pain". There is absolutely no difference.

Quote:

I am finding it extraordinarily difficult to believe that you are not just pulling my leg here. Are you honestly trying to claim that this gross oversimplification you are presenting could possibly have any relevance to the validity of functionalism? "The behavior is the same: both smile." Do you actually expect anybody to take such an argument seriously?

Understand what is being said: the same TYPE. In my example, person A and person B share the same type of functional role, but not the same mental state types. Therefore, defining mental states according to their functional roles is false.

By this logic, defining *anything* according to its functional role is false, like I already said. The problem is that you are trying to define *very specific* mental states according to *very general* categories of functional roles. You will run into exactly the same problem if you try to define specific physical states of, say, a computer, according to general functional roles, such as "computation".

The problem you are claiming exists is a purely artificial product of the fact that you are trying to define specific states according to general functional classifications. Of course this is not going to work.

Quote:

Nope. By your reasoning, physical states (like walking) cannot be defined functionally either, since what you are calling the same functional state (walking) can correspond to many different physical states.

Why would I possibly say that walking cannot be defined functionally? Please don't put words in my mouth.

I didn't put words in your mouth. I am perfectly aware that you think that physical states can be defined functionally. That is the problem. This is inconsistent with your argument that mental states cannot, because the *exact* same argument applies equally to physical states.

Quote:

If something has the same causal relations that my legs have, then whatever that something is, that something walks. Thus walking is functionally definable.

But they are not the *exact* same causal relations. They are just similar enough to belong to the same general class of relations that we call "walking". Just as my mental state of pain, and yours, are not identical mental states. They are just similar enough to both belong to the same general class of mental states that we call "pain". Again, there is absolutely no difference.

Quote:

Having experiences seems to be something only physical things do too, since nobody has ever observed a non-physical thing at all, much less observed one having an experience.

First, you observe your own mental states, therefore you observe non-physical things all the time. Second, having a mental state cannot be defined by its functional role (assuming it has one), but walking can.

Wow, two completely unsupported assertions in as many sentences. Care to justify either of those claims? Please present your evidence that mental states are not physical. Then please present a reasonable argument for why mental states cannot be defined according to their functional roles. And please make it one that does not simply appeal to the obviously ridiculous notion that very specific mental states should be definable according to very general functional roles.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

I am saying that terms like "pain", and phrases like "mixing air with gas vapors", clearly refer to broad classes of phenomena, and not to anything specific. I am not sure what you mean by "higher level", nor am I quite clear on what you mean by "reducible to a disjunction...". I also see no need to use such jargon, as I think what I said is quite clear. If you are asking me whether or not I think that "pain" and "mixing air with gas vapors" are reducible to simpler properties/processes, of course they can.

That's not the issue. The issue is not whether mixing air with gas vapors is reducible to simpler properties. And if you do believe pain is reducible to simpler properties, you'll need an argument other than merely stating you believe pain is reducible to simpler properties.

I would, if I were attempting to *prove* that pain is reducible to simpler properties, but I am not. I am simply contesting *your* claim that computational functionalism is *false*. And if your argument requires that pain *not* be reducible, something which computational functionalism would require, then you need to justify your claim that this is true.

Quote:

The issue is this: what is it that all carburetors share in common? The answer is the mixing of air and gas vapors, viz. what carburetors do. Now, if we ask the same question but about the property of experiencing red, the property does not seem to be reducible to what redness does (whatever that means).

Your "whatever that means" just illustrates the problem with your argument. You have not provided sufficiently rigorous or specific definitions of what you mean by mental properties, for you to be able to meaningfully talk about them. Functionalists specifically avoid using terms that they cannot meaningfully define, instead taking great care to be very specific about exactly what properties and functions they are talking about. Dualists like to claim that they are leaving something out when they do this, indeed that they are leaving out qualia entirely, but unless you can provide a coherent definition for what it is that is being left out, you are just arguing from intuition.

Quote:

I have not claimed that it is impossible. I have merely pointed out that TT's examples are not valid, because the functional roles of these systems are clearly not identical. They are just similar enough to get the same general label attached to them. As Muxol pointed out, I think that TT is referring to some completely different type of functionalism than is being discussed in this thread. I am a scientist, not a professional philosopher, so I am not familiar with some of the jargon being used here, nor am I familiar with centuries old philosophical positions like "teleological functionalism" that Muxol referred to. That may very well be what TT is describing, but certainly what he is describing as functionalism is not a position held by any scientists or AI researchers that I have ever heard of.

Well, the term "functionalism" was coined by a philosopher and a scientist named Hilary Putnam, so I seriously doubt A.I. researchers use the term differently from philosophers, especially when many philosophers are A.I. researchers. Also, "teleological functionalism" is decades old, not centuries old. Third, my carburetor example is not an "oversimplification" of functionalism, but a standard example used by both philosophers and scientists.

I don't want to get into a semantics discussion about this. Could you please address my actual argument? Could you please explain to me why the fact that a functional state like "pain" corresponding to many similar, but not identical mental states, somehow disproves functionalism's applicability to mental states, but the fact that a functional state like "walking" corresponding to many similar, but not identical physical states, does not disprove functionalism's applicability to physical states? Why the double standard?

Is it not painfully obvious that, regardless of how some group of philosophers chooses to define what constitutes a functional state, the actual *function* of two different brains is always going to be slightly different? If so, is it not equally obvious that the fact that you choose to label a broad category of similar types of brain activity as a single "functional state", does not in any way imply that all such realizations of that type of brain activity should produce *exactly* the same mental state? Do you honestly think that proponents of functionalism are so incredibly stupid that they would think it does? Such a position would flatly contradict the computational model of the mind that the very people arguing for functionalism are trying to use to describe it!

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Your "whatever that means" just illustrates the problem with your argument. You have not provided sufficiently rigorous or specific definitions of what you mean by mental properties, for you to be able to meaningfully talk about them. Functionalists specifically avoid using terms that they cannot meaningfully define, instead taking great care to be very specific about exactly what properties and functions they are talking about. Dualists like to claim that they are leaving something out when they do this, indeed that they are leaving out qualia entirely, but

unless you can provide a coherent definition for what it is that is being left out, you are just arguing from intuition.

Mental properties cannot be defined biologically or functionally, thus they cannot be defined physically. What's being left out are your sensations.

What I think the word "sensations" means, cannot possibly be something that is being left out, since my sensations are causally efficacious. My sensations clearly have an effect on both my brain processes, and as a result, my overt behavior. This means that, at the very least, those aspects of my mind which have these effects, can be described functionally. And since I am not aware of any aspects of my mind which do not have any such effects, I have no idea what could possibly be getting left out.

Of course, I also have no idea what you mean by "sensations", but I would maintain that whatever you mean by it, if you are capable of vocalizing your knowledge of its existence, it must be causally efficacious, which implies that it is every bit as deserving of the label "physical" as anything else in the world that we apply that label to.

Quote:

I don't want to get into a semantics discussion about this. Could you please address my actual argument? Could you please explain to me why the fact that a functional state like "pain" corresponding to many similar, but not identical mental states, somehow disproves functionalism's applicability to mental states, but the fact that a functional state like "walking" corresponding to many similar, but not identical physical states, does not disprove functionalism's applicability to physical states? Why the double standard?

I don't even understand what your question is? What does it mean to say "a functional state like "pain" corresponding to many similar, but not identical mental states"? What does that mean? Pain is not a functional state. It's a mental property. What does it mean to ask "the fact that a functional state like "walking" corresponding to many similar, but not identical physical states"? Who ever said walking is either similar or identical to physical states? What does it mean to even ask such a question? Simply put, walking is a function that can realized by similar or identical physical types of things.

Now you are just being evasive. But I will play along, and be more specific:

Pain is a mental property, right? Wrong. It is a label we attach to a category of mental properties.

Now, we have a bunch of physical processes occurring in the brain which are associated with pain. Functionalism claims that the various mental properties that we call pain can be defined functionally, in terms of those physical processes.

So where is the problem? You can claim that the entire class of physical processes that we associate with pain all correspond to the same "functional state", but this is just arbitrary labeling. The fact that this functional state corresponds to many non-identical mental states, reflects nothing more than the fact that what you are calling a single functional state is actually an entire category of similar functional states.

You state in your above post that you accept that functional states can correspond to many similar, but non-identical physical processes. So why can a functional state not correspond to many similar, but non-identical mental states? Why the double standard? Why is it possible to define physical processes functionally, even though many different physical processes can all be said to be performing the same function, but not possible to define mental states functionally, simply because many different mental states can all be said to be performing the same function?

Quote:

Is it not painfully obvious that, regardless of how some group of philosophers chooses to define what constitutes a functional state, the actual function of two different brains is always going to be slightly different? If so, is it not equally obvious that the fact that you choose to label a broad category of similar types of brain activity as a single "functional state", does not in any way imply that all such realizations of that type of brain activity should produce exactly the same mental state? Do you honestly think that proponents of functionalism are so incredibly stupid

that they would think it does? Such a position would flatly contradict the computational model of the mind that the very people arguing for functionalism are trying to use to describe it!

I do not think two numerically distinct brains will function “slightly” different just because they are two numerically distinct brains.

There is simply no such thing as two identical brains. Such things simply do not exist in nature. I suppose you construct a hypothetical argument about two distinct, but physically identical brains, both receiving the same input, but as I mentioned in my first response to you, since such a thing does not exist, you cannot reasonably claim that if it did exist, the mental states of those two people would be different.

Quote:

Just as we can ask “what is it all functioning carburetors share in common?” we can also ask “what is it all functioning brains share in common?”

No doubt, but when we functionally define a *specific* physical object, like the carburetor *in my car*, we cannot only take into account the things that are functionally similar between all carburetors. We must take into account all functional aspects of the carburetor. Likewise, if we want to functionally define a *specific* mental state, like the experience of seeing blue that *I am having right now*, we cannot only take into account the things that are functionally similar in all examples “experiencing seeing color”. We must take into account all functional aspects of that specific experience. Like I said, you are applying a double standard. You will allow us to take into account all functional aspects of a specific physical process, when functionally defining that process, but when attempting to functionally define a specific mental state, you demand that we do so only in terms of general functional aspects which an entire class of mental states share in common. This is not reasonable.

Quote:

And no, I do not think functionalists about mental properties are stupid – so please, again, stop putting words in my mouth. But I do think they are wrong.

I did not say you did. I asked if you did, because the position you seem to think that they hold is an incredibly stupid one.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

What I think the word “sensations” means, cannot possibly be something that is being left out, since my sensations are causally efficacious. My sensations clearly have an effect on both my brain processes, and as a result, my overt behavior. This means that, at the very least, those aspects of my mind which have these effects, can be described functionally. And since I am not aware of any aspects of my mind which do not have any such effects, I have no idea what could possibly be getting left out.

One can agree with you that causes and effects are necessary conditions in defining mental properties, but disagree with the functionalist that causes and effects are sufficient conditions in defining mental properties.

Well, that is really the crux of it, isn't it? But consider this. Imagine that causes and effects are *not* sufficient conditions for defining mental properties. Exactly what aspects of those mental properties are being left out when we construct a functionalistic description of them? They cannot be aspects which have any effect on anything, by definition. So how do we know they exist at all? If we were aware of them, then that would be an effect. Indeed, imagine one of these mysterious aspects of one of my mental properties just suddenly ceased to exist? Would I even realize it? If so, would not that realization have an effect on my behavior? The very fact that I could then say “hang on, something just changed”, would *prove* that it had effects,

which means it cannot be one of those aspects which would be missing from the functionalistic description.

In other words, such aspects may exist, but we could never know that they do. We could never have any logical reason to think that they do. And most importantly, if they do, then there is no way we could ever hope to include them in *any* description of mental properties, functionalistic or otherwise.

Incidentally, we could say the same thing about physical properties. Indeed, we could say the same about anything. There simply is not any point in worrying about it. Once you define these aspects to be causally inefficacious, it literally does not make any difference whether they exist or not. Indeed, it is not entirely clear that it even *means* anything to say that they exist, since it is impossible to state in a coherent way what difference there is between such aspects, and aspects which don't exist.

Quote:

Second, we're assuming epiphenomenalism is false. Epiphenomenalism says there's no mental causation, thus no mental physical causal link, because physical things interact only with physical things (and quite possibly, mental things interact with mental things). One can, e.g., explain the lifting of our arms via brain processes, and not through desires.

Of course, but since functionalism is incompatible with epiphenomenalism, this is irrelevant. Unless you wish to show that epiphenomenalism is true (which you cannot possibly do), the mere fact that functionalism requires epiphenomenalism to be false, does not really constitute an argument against it.

Quote:

Of course, I also have no idea what you mean by "sensations", but I would maintain that whatever you mean by it, if you are capable of vocalizing your knowledge of its existence, it must be causally efficacious, which implies that it is every bit as deserving of the label "physical" as anything else in the world that we apply that label to.

I do not see why it must be the case that if I know the existence of something, it follows that something has causal efficacy. I know about numbers, but it doesn't follow numbers have causal efficacy.

Bad analogy. You do not know that numbers exist as part of reality. Unless you wish to claim that these causally inefficacious aspects of your mind are, like number, purely abstract concepts, rather than something which actually exists as a part of reality, this line of reasoning will get you nowhere. And if that is what you are trying to claim, then we are not in disagreement.

Quote:

Now you are just being evasive. But I will play along, and be more specific:

Pain is a mental property, right? Wrong. It is a label we attach to a category of mental properties.

No. Pain is a mental property, but the word "pain" is the English label we attach to the sensation pain. All words and labels are things, but not all things are words and labels. The term "pain" is a word and a thing, but the sensation pain is a thing, but not a label or a word.

Yes, I know. The point I was making is not that the sensation is a label (I am not stupid). The point I was making is that pain is not any single sensation. It is an entire class, or type of sensation. The pain I experience when I cut myself is very different than the pain I experience when I have a headache. These are *different* mental properties, and they are also *functionally* different.

Quote:

You state in your above post that you accept that functional states can correspond to many similar, but non-identical physical processes. So why can a functional state not correspond to many similar, but non-identical mental states? Why the double standard? Why is it possible to define physical processes functionally, even though many different physical processes can all be said to be performing the same function, but not possible to define mental states functionally, simply because many different mental states can all be said to be performing the same function?

Because functionalism of the mind defines mental properties by the causal roles of in term of their sensory-input, related internal structures, and behavioral-output. Under this definition (which is used by scientists and philosophers), two people can, for example, perceive the same object, form the same beliefs (e.g. "that object is in front of me"), and behave in the same fashion (e.g. walk towards the object), yet have different colors associated with the object.

But as I have already explained to you several times, the sensory-input, related internal structures, and behavioral-output, are *not* the same! They are only similar. The sensory input is different, because everybody's sensory organs work a little bit differently. The internal-states are different, because everybody processes that sensory input differently. The fact that we both believe that "the object is in front of me", does not constitute us both having the same internal state! And finally, the behavioral-output is different. No two people are going to respond behaviorally in *exactly* the same way to a given sensory stimulus.

I honestly don't see how you can reasonably claim that these things are ever the same in any real world scenario. At best, you could try to claim that *hypothetically* if they ever were all the same, then the mental state would still be different. But since this has never actually happened in reality, ever, this is mere speculation.

Quote:

We do not need to analyze whether a carburetor is in your car or my car to determine whether it is a carburetor, even if we are analyzing a specific particular carburetor. We don't even need to take into account what the physical make-up of the carburetor is. All we need to take into is whether it mixes air with gas vapors. Don't you agree?

We don't need to analyze whether your sensation of pain is a burning sensation, or a dull throbbing sensation, to know that you are in pain, either. But if I want to construct a functionalistic description of a particular mental state, I do. Likewise, if I want to construct a functionalistic description of the carburetor in my car, I need to take into account *all* of the functional aspects of it. Not just the fact that it mixes air with gas vapors. Again, there is absolutely no difference.

Is it your position that *specific* mental properties cannot be described functionally? If so, where is your evidence that the *exact same* functional states will not always correspond to the *exact same* mental state? So far, none of the examples you have given demonstrate this, because they are all examples of situations where the functional states are not identical, but instead only similar.

DM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Death Monkey**
TecnoTut,

Well, that is really the crux of it, isn't it? But consider this. Imagine that causes and effects are not sufficient conditions for defining mental properties. Exactly what aspects of those mental properties are being left out when we construct a functionalistic description of them? They cannot be aspects which have any effect on anything, by definition. So how do we know they exist at all? If we were aware of them, then that would be an effect. Indeed, imagine one of these mysterious aspects of one of my mental properties just suddenly ceased to exist? Would I even realize it? If so, would not that realization have an effect on my behavior? The very fact that I could then say "hang on, something just changed", would prove that it had effects, which means it cannot be one of those aspects which would be missing from the functionalistic description.

DM, I think you put the finger on the issue that all dualists and mysterians fear so much and are trying so hard to preserve from science. That there has to be more to it all than just what it appears to be. That it

(consciousness, free will, morality, etc) are outside the realm of natural investigation or scientific human understanding. Non-materialism of the Gaps, if you will.

In this related thread, mariner and dreamweaver, are impaled upon the free will and determinism philosophical paradox because they want to protect free will, knowledge and understanding from being explained using bottom-up scientific evolutionary theories.

<http://forums.philosophyforums.com/...38&page=6&pp=25>

Why is it that philosophers like paradoxes more than solving them? Zeno proved using philosophy that motion is impossible. Was he right? No. Science showed there was no paradox and solved it using calculus. I wonder why so many smart people- and they are smart, feel the desperate need to preserve aspects of the natural world and ourselves from scientific explanation and hide behind philosophical paradoxes? What are they so afraid of? Aren't the real and quite challenging mysteries of the natural universe interesting enough for them?

Probeman

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Well, that is really the crux of it, isn't it? But consider this. Imagine that causes and effects are not sufficient conditions for defining mental properties. Exactly what aspects of those mental properties are being left out when we construct a functionalistic description of them? They cannot be aspects which have any effect on anything, by definition. So how do we know they exist at all? If we were aware of them, then that would be an effect. Indeed, imagine one of these mysterious aspects of one of my mental properties just suddenly ceased to exist? Would I even realize it? If so, would not that realization have an effect on my behavior? The very fact that I could then say "hang on, something just changed", would prove that it had effects, which means it cannot be one of those aspects which would be missing from the functionalistic description.

This is a good argument used by many philosophers. Some, e.g., claim that if epiphenomenalism is true, then we can't even behaviorally utter that it's true. This objection is known as the "self-stultifying" objection. But one can simply reply that brain processes and electrical signals cause the qualia and the behavioral reactions to the qualia.

Yes, one can certainly *claim* that, but it does nothing to address my argument, since if this is the case, then what such a person is calling "qualia" are clearly not anything that person could possibly know they have. This is evidenced by the fact that if the qualia were removed, but all the brain activity remained the same, the person in question would not (indeed *could not*) even notice. Clearly any aspects of the mind that such a person is actually *aware of*, and therefore has any logical reason to think *actually exist*, are those which cause behavioral effects. Incidentally, it does not make much sense to talk about the behavioral reactions being "behavioral reactions to the qualia", when you have just asserted that they are caused by electrical signals in the brain. Clearly they are behavioral reactions to the electrical signals. The qualia, in this epiphenomenalistic scenario, do not produce any reactions at all. Indeed, it is not even clear what it means to say that they exist, since their definition does not stipulate how they differ from something which does not exist, or how the world would be different if they did not exist.

Quote:

Of course, but since functionalism is incompatible with epiphenomenalism, this is irrelevant. Unless you wish to show that epiphenomenalism is true (which you cannot possibly do), the mere fact that functionalism requires epiphenomenalism to be false, does not really constitute an argument against it.

But this is false. Not only is epiphenomenalism compatible with functionalism, but it is entailed by it, thus relevant. In his paper 'The Rise of Physicalism' David Papineau writes ". . . functionalism, is arguably a closet

version of epiphenomenalism. By functionalism I mean the view that identifies a mental state with a 'second-order' state, i.e., a state-of-having-some-state-that-plays-a-certain-role, rather than with the first order state that actually plays that role. Because the second order mental state cannot be identified with the first order physical state (rather, it is 'realized' by it), it is not clear that it can be deemed to cause what that first-order state causes, such as items of behavior."

I am not familiar with that work, and I cannot make enough sense out of the small bit of it that you have posted to know whether what Papineau said makes any sense, or is even relevant to what we are discussing. I do know that there are multiple meanings of the term "epiphenomenalism", which refer to two very different positions. There is the position that mental states are emergent properties of physical activity, but still reducible to those physical processes. Then there is the position that mental properties are somehow "caused" or "realized" by physical processes, but are not reducible to them, and their existence cannot be derived from them. This second view, which is what you are advocating when you claim that mental properties are not causally efficacious, is clearly **not** compatible with functionalism.

In the first view, there is no contradiction in saying that the mental properties caused an effect, and that the physical activity that the mental property is an emergent property of, caused the effect, because the mental property is reducible to those physical properties. It is like me saying that cohesive forces are responsible for surface tension in water, and then saying that electromagnetism is responsible for it. Cohesion in fluids is an emergent property of electromagnetism in fluids.

Quote:

This is widely known as "the exclusion" problem" because physical properties that realize mental properties exclude the latter from causal relevance.

Only if you claim that the realized properties are not reducible to the physical properties that realized them. That is the part that is incompatible with functionalism, because it directly implies that those realized properties cannot be defined in terms of their functions, since they simply don't *have* any function. They don't *do* anything.

Quote:

Bad analogy. You do not know that numbers exist as part of reality. Unless you wish to claim that these causally inefficacious aspects of your mind are, like number, purely abstract concepts, rather than something which actually exists as a part of reality, this line of reasoning will get you nowhere. And if that is what you are trying to claim, then we are not in disagreement.

I wouldn't hold that qualia are abstract objects, but my number example shows that there are things that lack causal efficacy yet are known by us.

Sure, but what is not knowable is that they exist in reality, and that is the point which is being called to question. In order for you to know that something exists in reality, it must have some sort of observable effects.

Quote:

But then again, one can know about qualia simply because brain processes cause my knowledge of qualia.

Under the scenario you have presented, this is simply false. Your brain processes cause you to *believe* you have qualia, but since they would have caused the same exact belief even if you did not, you cannot logically conclude that this belief is true. You cannot claim that it is knowledge.

All you really know is that something is that you have experiences. If you discover that brain activity is sufficient to explain the existence of every single aspect of those experiences you could possibly be aware of (which epiphenomenalism implies is true), then there is absolutely no reason to believe that there is anything more to it than that.

Quote:

Yes, I know. The point I was making is not that the sensation is a label (I am not stupid). The point I was making is that pain is not any single sensation. It is an entire class, or type of sensation. The pain I experience when I cut myself is very different than the pain I experience when I have a headache. These are different mental properties,

and they are also functionally different.

But properties can be classes or types too. Pain is both a token and a type property. My token headache pain is a different token headache pain from yours, but my type headache pain is the same type headache pain as yours. Similarly, the token word "pain" is a different this token word "pain," but they are exactly the same type of word. The same can be said of brains, carburetors, and functional roles.

Yes, and that exactly proves my point. If you want to make arguments based on correspondences between mental states and functional roles, you need to compare the ones that actually correspond to each other. You cannot take very general functional roles, which obviously correspond to many different mental states, and claim that this somehow invalidates functionalism. What you would have to do is show that those different mental states *really are* functionally identical. And you have simply not done this. In every example you have cited, the functional roles are clearly not identical. They are just all similar enough to be categorized as the same "type".

Quote:

Is it your position that specific mental properties cannot be described functionally? If so, where is your evidence that the exact same functional states will not always correspond to the exact same mental state? So far, none of the examples you have given demonstrate this, because they are all examples of situations where the functional states are not identical, but instead only similar.

I think the burden of proof is on the functionalist: where is his evidence that the same functional states will correspond to the same mental states.

The burden of proof *would* be of the functionalists, if we were claiming that we could prove that functionalism is true. But we are not. Like all good theories, functionalism is not provable, only falsifiable. All we are claiming is that, so far, functionalism is working out quite well, and so far, there are no examples of it having been shown to be false.

Quote:

Appealing to carburetors is not evidence because carburetors do not have mental states.

You are the one who brought up carburetors, not me. I have never claimed to be able to prove functionalism is true, and have made no attempt whatsoever to provide such a proof.

If you acknowledge that functionalism *could* be true, and are just saying that it has not been *proven* true, then we are in agreement. If you wish to maintain that it is false, then the burden of proof is clearly on you.

DM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Death Monkey**
TecnoTut,

Under the scenario you have presented, this is simply false. Your brain processes cause you to believe you have qualia, but since they would have caused the same exact belief even if you did not, you cannot logically conclude that this belief is true. You cannot claim that it is knowledge.

And so we come full circle to Dennett's suggestion that we study mental "properties" using heterophenomenology- 3rd person phenomenology or more commonly known as science. Just because a subject believes that a mental "property" exists, does not mean that it does. But we should treat their account of it as though it were real, for the time being, because after all, their belief in that mental

"property" is what we will eventually need to explain using normal science.

Filling what we don't yet know with, what is in principle, unknowable non-materialism, is simply as 180 said, fear of the known. The need for mysticism. Non-materialism of the Gaps.

Probeman

TecnoTut,

Quote:

If the epiphenomenalist were to respond to you, he would probably respond "well of course it does not make sense, in your own words, to "talk about the behavioral reactions being "behavioral reactions to the qualia"" simply by virtue of the fact that behavior is not a reaction to qualia."

That was exactly my point. To claim that this type of epiphenomenalism is not only compatible with functionalism, but entailed by it, is nonsense. If qualia are causally inefficacious, then they have no functional role, because they don't *do* anything.

Quote:

Furthermore, he would probably follow by replying that just because they do not cause our behavior, it does not follow they do not exist. Just because my funny bone was hit, which caused my brain to cause my arm to lift, it does not follow that I am not feeling a certain sensation (which is caused by my brain). You might ask "but how is it even possible that you know you're having that sensation, since, after all, mental properties have no effects?" Well, my brain causes me to know. In effect, what the epiphenomenalist does is deny the assumption that knowledge of a mental event requires causation by that mental event.

Which is, of course, nonsense. As I already mentioned, one can reasonably argue that your brain causes you to believe that you have a particular qualia, but if you assert that your brain would have caused this same belief even if the qualia did not exist, then obviously you cannot logically conclude the existence of qualia from your brain-induced intuitive belief.

That's the whole problem with this line of reasoning. Once you accept that your intuitive beliefs about the mind could be wrong, it is no longer necessary to try to explain why what you intuitively believe, is true. All that is necessary is to explain why you have those intuitive beliefs. Epiphenomenalism basically paints itself into a corner here, because it starts off by assuming that science *can* explain why we have the intuitive beliefs about the mind that we do, purely in terms of physical brain processes. It then goes onto assert that, in spite of the fact that they are not necessary to explain anything that actually needs explaining, these non-physical qualia actually exist.

Quote:

If you think functionalism holds that "mental states are emergent properties of physical activity, but still reducible to those physical processes" then I'm afraid you have not correctly described what functionalism is.

I do not think that this is what functionalism "holds". I do think that this is a position that is compatible with functionalism.

Quote:

When we reduce one property to another, we then are strictly identifying one property with another; we are saying, in other words, that having the former property is nothing over and above having the second property. So if we identify pain with a certain type of brain process, then having that type of brain process means having pain. But functionalism does not do that. Functionalists do not strictly identify pain with a brain process because of the fact that pain, they argue, can be realized by things that are not brains (e.g., they might be realized by physical things that are made out of silicon, electronic circuits, etc.).

They do not identify it with brains, no. They identify it with physical processes. For a non-brain to realize the property of pain, the physical processes would have to be sufficiently similar to the physical processes in the brain.

Quote:

Because of this, functionalists claim mental properties are properties of any physical thing that has the right computational/functional role.

Exactly. But that does not rule out reductionism in any way. On the contrary, it fits together quite nicely with reductionism. In effect, reductionism can tell us what the specific physical properties of the brain are that would have to be duplicated, in order to produce the same functional role, and thus produce the appropriate mental property.

Quote:

It is precisely this distinction between first-order properties and second-order properties that allows functionalism to avoid the problems of identifying mental properties with brain processes. Unfortunately for the functionalists, however, this same distinction between first-order properties and second-order properties makes functionalism a form of epiphenomenalism (which, according to you, is intractably false).

It does no such thing, for the reasons I have just outlined. What you do not apparently realize is that the actual scientific approach that is being used to try to understand the mind and brain, is both reductive and functionalistic.

Quote:

Sure, but what is not knowable is that they exist in reality, and that is the point which is being called to question. In order for you to know that something exists in reality, it must have some sort of observable effects.

I do not think whether numbers exist in reality really matters.

Maybe not, but whether or not qualia exist in reality is exactly what we are discussing.

Quote:

Let's say they don't exist in space-time. It nevertheless follows we have knowledge of their existence.

This is both a completely different kind of knowledge that knowledge about reality, and a completely different definition of "existence" than what is used when you claim that qualia exist.

Quote:

If I am right, then we know about things that are not in space-time. And if we know about things not in reality, then why shouldn't we know about things in reality? If you say that the difference is that the things in reality lack causal efficacy, then so do the things not in reality.

You are just playing word games. You can define qualia within some formal framework (just like numbers), and claim that you know about them (just like numbers). But unless they have some sort of observable effect on other things, there is no way that you can possibly know that this completely abstract concept you have invented actually represents something that exists in reality.

Quote:

Yes, and that exactly proves my point. If you want to make arguments based on correspondences between mental states and functional roles, you need to compare the ones that actually correspond to each other. You cannot take very general functional roles, which obviously correspond to many different mental states, and claim that this somehow invalidates functionalism. What you would have to do is show that those different mental states really are functionally identical. And you have simply not done this. In every example you have cited, the functional roles are clearly not identical. They are just all similar enough to be categorized as the same "type".

I'm not sure I follow your reasoning. Are you saying that there are no type-type reductions? For example, that water is H₂O this is an example of type-type reduction. All water, including distinct tokens (e.g. water in cup 1 is not the same water in cup 2), are H₂O. The functionalist is making a similar claim: all seeing red, even distinct tokens of seeing red, are functional state f1. But this is false.

All that proves is that all distinct tokens of seeing red are not functionally equivalent. Guess what? Not all distinct tokens of H₂O are functionally equivalent either. So what?

Like I said, the fact that you arbitrarily refer to a bunch of functionally non-identical physical states as all

having the same functional role, does not refute functionalism. It just means that your choice to refer to all distinct tokens of seeing red as playing the same functional role, is not a good choice. The bottom line is that these different "tokens" of seeing red are **not** functionally equivalent, regardless of whether you insist on saying that they all play the same functional role, or not. They simply do not.

Quote:

The burden of proof would be of the functionalists, if we were claiming that we could prove that functionalism is true. But we are not. Like all good theories, functionalism is not provable, only falsifiable. All we are claiming is that, so far, functionalism is working out quite well, and so far, there are no examples of it having been shown to be false.

But functionalism has been falsified. Since functionalism claims there is mental causation, then the closure argument falsifies it (unless, of course, one is a functionalist who does not believe in mental causation -- but that would defeat the point of being a functionalist).

Or one happens to think that mental states are physical, and all the functionalists I know of do.

Quote:

Since functionalism claims that casual relations are sufficient to define mental properties, then the inverted spectrum (A sees red, B sees green) scenario falsifies functionalism.

Only if A and B are physically identical, which is impossible. Frankly I am amazed that this is not painfully obvious to you.

It's really simple, TecnoTut. If the input, relevant internal states, and behavioral output, of subjects A and B are not *physically identical*, then not only does functionalism not require that A and B have identical mental properties, but it would be very surprising if they actually did!

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

I do not recall any epiphenomenalists believing that it is possible a certain brain process can occur, but not the mental property it is suppose to cause. An epiphenomenalist would hold that once the brain process occurs, then so will the qualia.

Epiphenomenalism claims that it is *logically possible* for the physical process to occur without the existence of qualia. At least, every epiphenomenalist I have ever talked to, when asked what their evidence for epiphenomenalism is, immediately responded with the claim that mental properties are not a logically necessary consequence of physical processes. They then begin talking about the conceivability of p-zombies, which are *defined* to be physically identical to normal human beings, but lacking qualia. The entire position is based on the logical possibility of such a scenario.

Quote:

This brain process may cause another brain process (which causes my belief of the qualia). Here's the figure:

What is that supposed to mean? Bottom line: If your belief in the qualia was caused by a physical process, and qualia are causally inefficacious, then your belief in that qualia would still have been caused by the physical process even if the qualia were not there. This means that you cannot deduce from your belief that the qualia actually exists. But this does not even matter. Even if epiphenomenalism did not claim that your belief was caused by physical processes in the brain, the fact remains that our intuitive beliefs about the

mind can be mistaken. Therefore you can not logically conclude the existence of qualia from your intuitive belief in them, nor can you reasonably refer to such a belief as "knowledge".

Quote:

Exactly. But that does not rule out reductionism in any way. On the contrary, it fits together quite nicely with reductionism. In effect, reductionism can tell us what the specific physical properties of the brain are that would have to be duplicated, in order to produce the same functional role, and thus produce the appropriate mental property.

You say that reductionism is compatible with the distinction between first-order and second-order properties, but it's not.

That all depends on what we think the distinction actually is, doesn't it?

Quote:

Reducing one property to another simple means having one property is nothing over and above having the other.

Exactly.

Quote:

So again, if pain is a first-order property identifiable with a brain process, then anything that does not have a brain cannot realize pain, even if it has the right computational role.

Nonsense. Again, this is just a question of how you choose to define your terms. If I define the term "pain" so that, by definition, it only refers to brain processes, then of course by that definition, a non-brain cannot experience pain. But that is an arbitrary definition. If I define pain to be a property of a general class of computational machine, of which brains are a member, then there is no problem. And of course, if I want to define "pain" functionally, then this is exactly what I must do, since any machine capable of performing the necessary functions must also be capable of having pain.

Quote:

To avoid this problem, it is necessary to not strictly identify pain with brain processes. So pain, according to functionalism, not a brain process, but rather, a property that has the property of being anything that has the same type of computational role a brain process has.

That is both silly, and not how functionalists define it. Like I said, I can define pain to be a property of a class of physical processes, of which brain processes are an example. There is no need for me to add these confusing and irrelevant additional layers of abstraction. After all, even if I defined it as a property of brain processes, I would be defining it as a property of a class of physical processes, since not all brains are identical. Now all I am doing is making that class of physical processes a bit larger, to account for the fact that non-brain thinking machines may be capable of fulfilling the same general functional roles associated with pain that brains do.

Quote:

The problem, however, is that this distinction between first-order and second-order properties leads to epiphenomenalism because the first-order properties, and not the second-order ones, end up having causal efficacy.

Second order properties are pure abstractions. They are convenient labels we can use to refer to classes of properties as though they were properties. They do not exist in reality any more than numbers do. The question of whether or not mental properties are second-order or not, essentially amounts to the question of how you define them. If you define them one way, then they are fictitious second-order properties that really just refer to the first-order properties of the physical processes. If you define them another way, they are first-order properties which are reducible to the first-order properties of the physical systems. This is, in fact, the only real distinction between "reductive materialism" and "eliminative materialism". It is simply a question of how you define your terms. Since dualists are notorious for never providing coherent definitions for terms like "mental property" or "qualia", it should come as no surprise that there is some confusion on the issue. But neither case is an example of epiphenomenalism. Epiphenomenalism makes the leap to claiming that they are not even second-order properties, but instead something completely different,

which is neither reducible to the physical properties, nor a fictitious label for referring to classes of properties as though they were properties.

Quote:

You can define qualia within some formal framework (just like numbers), and claim that you know about them (just like numbers). But unless they have some sort of observable effect on other things, there is no way that you can possibly know that this completely abstract concept you have invented actually represents something that exists in reality.

But we have already been through this. The claim that something needs to have causal effects to be known is simply false. The distinction between what's in reality and what's not in reality won't help for reasons I've already given.

You are just playing games with the meaning of the word "known". The claim that something needs to have observable effects for you to *know that it exists in reality*, is not false. Your argument amounts to saying that since you can know it exists in your abstract fantasy world, that you are somehow justified in claiming it exists in reality too.

Quote:

All that proves is that all distinct tokens of seeing red are not functionally equivalent. Guess what? Not all distinct tokens of H₂O are functionally equivalent either. So what?

Like I said, the fact that you arbitrarily refer to a bunch of functionally non-identical physical states as all having the same functional role, does not refute functionalism. It just means that your choice to refer to all distinct tokens of seeing red as playing the same functional role, is not a good choice. The bottom line is that these different "tokens" of seeing red are not functionally equivalent, regardless of whether you insist on saying that they all play the same functional role, or not. They simply do not.

It is true that tokens of the same type differ from each other in a token sense.

No, not just in a "token sense". They are functionally different. They are just functionally similar enough for us to define general functional roles that all tokens of the same type fulfill.

Quote:

But we're talking about whether the type of seeing red is identical with the type of being in some functional role.

And it is. But just as that functional role is defined broadly, corresponding to an entire class of functionally similar, but non-identical physical processes, so to the type of "seeing red" is defined broadly, corresponding to an entire class of similar, but not identical, mental properties.

Quote:

The inverted spectra scenario says no. The type of seeing red can be realized by different functional type states. Two persons can perceive the same object, have the same beliefs about the object, and behave differently.

Sure. Their process of perception is not identical. Their beliefs about the object are not identical. Why should their behavior be identical?

Quote:

Here we would have the same type of functional role (but different token roles) and different types (and different token) mental states.

Your designation of what constitutes a "type" is completely arbitrary. You are just defining your functional role "type" to be more general than the corresponding mental state "type". Of course if you do that then individual tokens of the functional role type will end up mapping to different mental state types. The problem you are claiming functionalism has is completely artificial. Define your mental state "type" a bit more broadly, or define your functional role "type" a bit more narrowly, and the problem vanishes into thin air.

For example, the class of functional roles associated with being in pain clearly corresponds to many

different mental states. Obviously all of those mental states belong to the general class of mental states we call "the sensation of pain". But if we arbitrarily decide to divide up this class of mental states into more specific subclasses, such as "burning sensation", "throbbing sensation", "painful itching", etc..., then obviously the functional roles corresponding to these more specific classes of mental states, are also going to have to be defined more specifically. Otherwise we end up with your wholly artificial contradiction, where different instantiations of the same functional role (being in pain) correspond to different mental states (burning sensation, throbbing sensation, etc...).

I don't see how this could not be painfully obvious to you. Especially since the entire process of trying to describe something functionally works by working your way through more and more specific examples of corresponding functional roles and states being defined. You start with a very general class of mental state (the sensation of pain), and find the corresponding class of functional roles (being in pain). Then you start narrowing down which specific functional characteristics correspond to which specific characteristics of the mental states. This process continues until you have completely defined all of the characteristics of the mental states in terms of the corresponding functional characteristics. When you run into an apparent problem like the one you describe, this is simply an indication that you have defined one of the two classes more generally than the other, and that is easily remedied. If you want to prove that the mental states truly are not describable in terms of their functional roles, then you need to provide an example of where the *exact same* physical process results in different mental states. And of course, not only have you not done this, but it is fundamentally impossible to do, since the only way you could know that a different mental state obtained, would be if a different type of behavior resulted, in which case the physical processes would not be identical!

DM

Quote:

Originally Posted by TecnoTut

Now I finally see what you've been trying to say (use of examples help, and that's why I always try to us them). What you say here is trivially true, and I doubt anyone would disagree with it. But it does not thwart the inverted qualia scenario. Even in cases of specific mental properties, e.g. a burning sensation, the functionalist will tell us that there is still specific functional state, e.g. F2 for the specific mental property. The inverted qualia argument still holds since two persons can be in F2 yet one persons feels a burning sensation yet the other person feels a chilling sensation.

The inverted qualia issue does not support the actual existence of qualia. For an example of experimentally inverted "qualia", consider the inverting prism glasses studies. See:

<http://pp.kpnet.fi/seirioa/cdenn/instqual.htm>

<http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/quinqal.htm>

Probeman

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Epiphenomenalism claims that it is logically possible for the physical process to occur without the existence of qualia. At least, every epiphenomenalist I have ever talked to, when asked what their evidence for epiphenomenalism is, immediately responded with the claim that mental properties are not a logically necessary

consequence of physical processes. They then begin talking about the conceivability of p-zombies, which are defined to be physically identical to normal human beings, but lacking qualia. The entire position is based on the logical possibility of such a scenario.

If what you say is true, then those epiphenomenalists you've spoken to should reconsider why they're epiphenomenalists in the first place. The motivation for being an epiphenomenalist is to avoid the problem of causal interaction between physical things and non-physical things. An epiphenomenalist is not even necessarily committed to inverted spectra, much less zombies and absent qualia.

Well, I certainly agree that people like Chalmers need to reconsider their position. But what you should consider is that when you remove the notion of mental phenomena not being reducible to physical phenomena, from epiphenomenalism, what you are left with is simply physicalism.

Put another way, physicalism holds that all emergent phenomena (mental or otherwise), are logically necessary consequences of physical things and processes. Their existence, and all of their characteristics, at least in principle, should be derivable from the physical facts.

Quote:

Even if epiphenomenalism did not claim that your belief was caused by physical processes in the brain, the fact remains that our intuitive beliefs about the mind can be mistaken. Therefore you can not logically conclude the existence of qualia from your intuitive belief in them, nor can you reasonably refer to such a belief as "knowledge".

It is true our beliefs can be false about our own mental states, but that is no argument that our beliefs are indeed false about our mental states. One simply can be a fallibilist about our mental states.

My argument does not require that we be able to prove that our beliefs about our mental states are false. It only requires that it be possible.

Quote:

That is both silly, and not how functionalists define it. Like I said, I can define pain to be a property of a class of physical processes, of which brain processes are an example. There is no need for me to add these confusing and irrelevant additional layers of abstraction. After all, even if I defined it as a property of brain processes, I would be defining it as a property of a class of physical processes, since not all brains are identical. Now all I am doing is making that class of physical processes a bit larger, to account for the fact that non-brain thinking machines may be capable of fulfilling the same general functional roles associated with pain that brains do.

According to the online Dictionary of the Philosophy of Mind, to functionalists and critics of functionalism, the definition I use is the standard definition. Pain, according to functionalism, is a second-order property.

This does not in any way invalidate my argument. It simply confirms my claim that the problem you are presenting is purely an artifact of semantics.

Quote:

You are just playing games with the meaning of the word "known". The claim that something needs to have observable effects for you to know that it exists in reality, is not false. Your argument amounts to saying that since you can know it exists in your abstract fantasy world, that you are somehow justified in claiming it exists in reality too.

But we've been through this already. The distinction between what's in reality and what's not is not material. In fact, it's incoherent to even hold that we know the existence of some things, such as numbers, not in reality, but we do not know about the existence of some things, such as mental properties, that are in reality and that have causes.

Are you serious?!?! The entire question being addressed is whether or not what you are calling mental

properties, exist in reality or not! How can that not be material? Unicorns exist too. So what? They just don't exist in reality. Are your mental properties real, or not?

Quote:

For example, the class of functional roles associated with being in pain clearly corresponds to many different mental states. Obviously all of those mental states belong to the general class of mental states we call "the sensation of pain". But if we arbitrarily decide to divide up this class of mental states into more specific subclasses, such as "burning sensation", "throbbing sensation", "painful itching", etc..., then obviously the functional roles corresponding to these more specific classes of mental states, are also going to have to be defined more specifically. Otherwise we end up with your wholly artificial contradiction, where different instantiations of the same functional role (being in pain) correspond to different mental states (burning sensation, throbbing sensation, etc...).

Now I finally see what you've been trying to say (use of examples help, and that's why I always try to use them). What you say here is trivially true, and I doubt anyone would disagree with it. But it does not thwart the inverted qualia scenario. Even in cases of specific mental properties, e.g. a burning sensation, the functionalist will tell us that there is still specific functional state, e.g. F2 for the specific mental property. The inverted qualia argument still holds since two persons can be in F2 yet one person feels a burning sensation yet the other person feels a chilling sensation.

Can they? Do you have any evidence to back this up? Do you have any evidence to support the claim that *identical* functional states (not just functional states which are similar enough for us to label them as being part of the same class), can result in different mental states? I don't see how you possibly could, since this has never, in the entire history of human existence, actually happened.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Put another way, physicalism holds that all emergent phenomena (mental or otherwise), are logically necessary consequences of physical things and processes. Their existence, and all of their characteristics, at least in principle, should be derivable from the physical facts.

Yes, I believe that neuronal firings cause sensations such as pain. Now, one may ask me "well, TecnoTut, what if the sensations pain did not occur when a neuronal firings did occur?" I would reply that such a scenario is nomologically impossible (although logically possible).

Ah, but therein lies the problem. If it is logically possible that neuronal firings could occur, but the sensation of pain not occur, then it follows that in such a scenario, you would not be aware that the sensation did not occur, since in order for you to be aware of this, other neuronal activity would be necessary. This means that what you are calling "the sensation of pain" here, cannot possibly be anything you are actually aware of.

If the actual sensation of pain were to not occur, you would, by definition, have to be aware of it (otherwise it would not be a sensation at all). This means that, whatever the nature of the sensation may be, it is **not** logically possible for the neuronal activity to go on unchanged, without the sensation. Not unless you assert that your awareness of the sensation is caused by something other than brain processes, in which case you are no longer talking about property dualism, but instead some sort of spiritual or substance dualism.

Quote:

If I was asked "why is it that pain occurs rather than pleasure, when neuron X fire?" I would reply that I do not know, but we just have to accept it with natural piety that it simply happens

Why? There are no known examples of it ever happening.

Quote:

-- just as we naturally accept the fact that gravity makes things travel along curved space-time, or that photons have no mass, or that malnutrition causes death.

But we do have examples of these things happening, as well as comprehensive and well-tested theories describing exactly how they happen. I cannot imagine a worse analogy.

Quote:

My argument does not require that we be able to prove that our beliefs about our mental states are false. It only requires that it be possible

But just because it's possible our beliefs about our mental states are false it does not follow that they are false. "Might be false" also means "might not be false."

I have not claimed that it is not possible that they are not false. My position, like any scientific theory, could be wrong.

Quote:

This does not in any way invalidate my argument. It simply confirms my claim that the problem you are presenting is purely an artifact of semantics.

I do not know what it means to say my argument is an "artifact of semantics," but the argument is that if you strictly identify a type of mental property, e.g. pain, with another type of property, e.g. brain processes X, then only something with a brain will feel pain.

Sure. But only if you strictly identify them with each other. But that would be silly. If I strictly identify my experience of pain with my brain processes, then your brain cannot feel my experience of pain. So what? As soon as I make my categories more general, so that the term "pain" can apply to an entire class of sensations felt by many different brains, I am no longer strictly identifying pain with a specific set of brain processes. I am identifying it with any physical process that meets some minimal set of necessary criteria. There is no reason for me to assume that only human brains can meet these criteria. Functionalism certainly does not require me to assume this.

Quote:

Now, I know you don't believe that because you believe something without brains can have mental experiences. But if that means you are suggesting that pain is a first-order property (rather than a second-order property) identifiable with brain states and all the other things causally equivalent to brain states, then what you're doing is identifying a first-order property M with many other first order-properties, viz. P1 v P2 v P3 v P4 v P5 ...Pn. But there's no property such as P1 v P2 v P3 v P4 v P5 ...Pn.

I have no idea what you are talking about here. My argument is exactly what I have stated. I think that the sensation of pain can be explained functionally, in terms of physical processes. You can go on about first and second order properties all you want. It has no relevance to my argument.

Quote:

Are you serious?!?! The entire question being addressed is whether or not what you are calling mental properties, exist in reality or not! How can that not be material? Unicorns exist too. So what? They just don't exist in reality. Are your mental properties real, or not?

Death Monkey, I'm disappointed at you. Unicorns don't exist. But my mental properties do.

That depends on what you mean by "mental properties". Your sensation of pain exists, but this notion of

something which is caused by the neural activity, but not logically entailed by it, is a figment of your imagination, and no more real than unicorns.

Quote:

Can they? Do you have any evidence to back this up? Do you have any evidence to support the claim that identical functional states (not just functional states which are similar enough for us to label them as being part of the same class), can result in different mental states? I don't see how you possibly could, since this has never, in the entire history of human existence, actually happened.

The inverted qualia scenario is based on logical and nomological possibility. If we deny that inverted qualia are nomologically possible,

I deny that they are even logically possible, since this logically leads to the conclusion that you cannot possibly be aware of them, which contradicts their very definition.

Quote:

then why should one believe that it is nomologically possible for things that don't have brains to have mental experiences?

Because we have a highly successful scientific theory which strongly indicates that it should be.

Quote:

Have you seen things without brains experience pain? I haven't. How proper is it to allow arguments based on nomological possibility for functionalists only, but disallow them for non-functionalists?

That is not what I am doing, at all. I have not claimed to be able to prove that it is possible for a machine to have subjective experiences. You, however, have claimed that it is not possible for subjective experiences to be described functionally. See the difference? You can not back up a claim that X is impossible by merely pointing out that NOT X is possible.

Just look at the argument you have presented: You have claimed that functionalism is false, because it is *possible* that different qualia may arise from the same physical state. This is pure nonsense. Unless you have some evidence that this *actually does happen*, this is no different than me claiming that the theory of evolution is wrong, because it is *possible* that God could magically create a brand new species of life on the Earth.

If your only claim is that it is *possible* for functionalism to be wrong, then I absolutely agree. It is possible. But you have not presented any reason to think that it actually *is* wrong.

DM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **TecnoTut**

Death Monkey, I'm disappointed at you. Unicorns don't exist. But my mental properties do.

It's amazing how important a point you have just missed in your joking!

Of course, DM would agree that mental states representing unicorns exist in reality. The point is that the thing that these mental states represent (actual unicorns) do not exist. So the very important question you dodged is: do these non-physical mental properties that you claim, actually exist, or are they merely an actually existing mental state representing an actually non-existing "unicorn"?

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Ah, but therein lies the problem. If it is logically possible that neuronal firings could occur, but the sensation of pain not occur, then it follows that in such a scenario, you would not be aware that the sensation did not occur, since in order for you to be aware of this, other neuronal activity would be necessary. This means that what you are calling "the sensation of pain" here, cannot possibly be anything you are actually aware of.

If the actual sensation of pain were to not occur, you would, by definition, have to be aware of it (otherwise it would not be a sensation at all). This means that, whatever the nature of the sensation may be, it is not logically possible for the neuronal activity to go on unchanged, without the sensation. Not unless you assert that your awareness of the sensation is caused by something other than brain processes, in which case you are no longer talking about property dualism, but instead some sort of spiritual or substance dualism.

Are you saying that the possibility of a zombie's neurons firing, but the lack of mental properties occurring, implies substantive dualism?

I am saying that if the sensation is not there, but the zombie's neurons are behaving exactly the way they do in a person who does have the sensation, then there must be something other than the brain which is aware of the sensation, because in this scenario, it is not possible for the person's brain to be aware of the sensation. This requires some sort of substantive dualism, because properties are not aware of things. If the only non-physical things in the universe are properties, then whatever it is that is aware of your sensations, must be physical.

Quote:

If that is your argument, then you should recognize that the argument that the unaltered body could exist without the mind is not the same as the suggestion that the mind might continue to exist without the body. The big picture is this: physicalism has no problems just because it is possible a neuron can fire and with no mental property resulting.

The problem is not with the mental property not occurring when the neuron's fire. The problem is that, in order for your brain to be aware of the mental property, neuronal activity must be partially dependent on which mental state you are experiencing. If it is, then in zombie world, that neuronal activity will be different than in the real world. The only solution to this is to claim that the brain is not aware of mental experiences at all, which would require some sort of substantive dualism to provide something non-physical to be aware of your mental experiences for you. Of course, even then you end up with the problem of how this non-physical experiencer can communicate with your brain, so that your brain can cause your mouth to say "I am having an experience right now".

Quote:

Why? There are no known examples of it ever happening.

But we do have examples of these things happening, as well as comprehensive and well-tested theories describing exactly how they happen. I cannot imagine a worse analogy.

The analogies hold because the argument was that sooner or later we have to take some cause/effect relations as brute facts. If we posit another causal explanation to explain the first one, then the novel explanation would have to become a brute fact. Here, one of the brute facts is that when a neuron fires, a mental property occurs.

You seem to be skipping the entire step where causal explanations make testable predictions, which we then extensively test before concluding that the causal explanation is actually correct. In your example, this has not happened. What testable predictions does your claim that the same physical activity could result in different mental states, make? If it does make any, then we need to test them before we can accept this hypothesis as being something that can actually happen. And since it is impossible to test, this means that it

is forever doomed to be pure speculation. You cannot disprove a theory by speculating that something may be possible which would contradict the theory. You need to actually show that something which contradicts the theory *actually happens*.

Quote:

Well just because you do not understand the argument, it does not follow the argument has no relevance. The issue would then be your comprehension, not relevancy. Anyhow, recall that the exclusion problem states that functionalism is a type of epiphenomenalism because the first-order properties do all the causal work. This forces many functionalists to abandon the first-order second-order distinction (i.e. abandon the position known as role functionalism), and instead, to identify mental property M with a set of disjunctive first-order physical properties (i.e. adopt the position known as realizer functionalism): P1 (e.g. neuronal firings) v P2 (e.g. electric circuits firing) v P3 (e.g. metallic hydraulics pumping) v . . . Pn. So what we have is a mix of identity theory and functionalism because we are identifying a mental property M with all physical systems that realizes functional roles identifying M with the role itself. In other words, role functionalism identified M with R (a type of role); realizer functionalism identifies M with a property P1 v P2 v P3 v P4 ... Pn.

The objection to realizer functionalism is that P1 v P2 v P3 v P4 ... Pn is not a genuine property at all. Some physicalists who believe that P1 v P2 v P3 v P4 ... Pn is a genuine property, such as David Papineau, claim that it still does not avoid the exclusion problem because if pain for humans is P1, then P1 alone would be causing the behavior of saying "ouch" and not P2 v P3 v P4 ...Pn. What that means is that pain (a.k.a. P1 v P2 v P3 ...Pn) does not cause "ouch" but P1 does. Are these relevant claims? Clearly. But are they demonstrative proof that there is no such thing as realizer functionalism, or if there is such a thing, then is it still epiphenomenal? I do not know, but the jury is still out as many people are publishing papers on these matters as we speak.

Again, this argument requires that the mental property M being associated with all these different physical processes be a single mental property. This is nonsense. Different physical systems will produce different mental properties. Those mental properties may all be similar enough to each other to all be referred to as "pain", but no two sensations of pain, even in the same person, are ever identical.

In effect, this is just the inverse of your other argument about the same physical conditions giving different mental states. Neither argument is valid, because there has never been any known example of two different people having the same physical brain state, nor of a single person having the same physical brain state twice, nor of two subjective experiences being identical.

The inverted qualia argument requires that there either be multiple instantiations of a single mental state corresponding to different physical states, or that there be multiple instantiations of a single physical state corresponding to different mental states. There are no examples of either of these conditions actually ever being met.

DM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **TecnoTut**

My belief, a mental property, about the unicorn exists. The unicorn itself does not exist.

I take it then that you are admitting the "non-physical" properties of these mental processes are like unicorns- non-existent.

So what then is the point of invoking something that does not exist, to explain something that does actually exist- for example, your beliefs?

Probeman

TecnoTut,

Quote:

The problem is not with the mental property not occurring when the neuron's fire. The problem is that, in order for your brain to be aware of the mental property, neuronal activity must be partially dependent on which mental state you are experiencing. If it is, then in zombie world, that neuronal activity will be different than in the real world. The only solution to this is to claim that the brain is not aware of mental experiences at all, which would require some sort of substantive dualism to provide something non-physical to be aware of your mental experiences for you. Of course, even then you end up with the problem of how this non-physical experiencer can communicate with your brain, so that your brain can cause your mouth to say "I am having an experience right now".

This argument does not show that zombies entail substantive dualism. That claim is just as false as your claim some time ago that epiphenomenalism entails zombies.

Yes, it does. I am afraid that if you are going to offer nothing more than saying that it does not, I can offer nothing more than saying that it does in response.

Quote:

You seem to be skipping the entire step where causal explanations make testable predictions, which we then extensively test before concluding that the causal explanation is actually correct. In your example, this has not happened. What testable predictions does your claim that the same physical activity could result in different mental states, make? If it does make any, then we need to test them before we can accept this hypothesis as being something that can actually happen. And since it is impossible to test, this means that it is forever doomed to be pure speculation. You cannot disprove a theory by speculating that something may be possible which would contradict the theory. You need to actually show that something which contradicts the theory actually happens.

Who said I believe "that the same physical activity could result in different mental states"? You're confusing the inverted qualia topic with what I said. What I said that whenever a certain type of neuronal firing occurs, a certain type of mental property must occur. If brain activity X takes place, then mental property Y must occur. If someone were to ask me "well, TecnoTut, why doesn't mental property Z, occur?" I would reply because it simply doesn't. If asked "why?" again, I would reply that because it's a simple case of a cause/effect brute fact. I do not think you disagree with me here, but you did misunderstand what was said.

I did not say that you believe it. I was responding to the argument you presented. If you do not believe your argument, that is your problem.

Quote:

Again, this argument requires that the mental property M being associated with all these different physical processes be a single mental property. This is nonsense. Different physical systems will produce different mental properties. Those mental properties may all be similar enough to each other to all be referred to as "pain", but no two sensations of pain, even in the same person, are ever identical.

Well, you could opt that route, and some (not not many) philosophers have. This option has been called the "eliminative" option. It is not eliminative in the strong Dennett/Churchland sense where there are no mental properties. It's a mild type of eliminativism. The strategy is simple. For each of the members of {P1 v P2 v ... Pn} there is said to correspond a mental property, a species of M. If M is the property of pain, there will be many different kinds of pain, but no such thing as pain, period. Each of those kinds is then identified with its corresponding physical realizer. Again, unlike a more thoroughgoing eliminativism, this view is not saddled with the implausible claim that people are not conscious, that they have no thoughts, etc. But it does face the charge that its invocation of these kinds of pain, and so on, is arbitrary and misleading:

A mild eliminativist will hold the following to be true
Burning pain for humans is sensation M1 & M2
Burning pain for chimps is sensation M2 & M3

Burning pain for wolves is sensation M3 & M4

Burning pain for wolves shares nothing in common with burning pain for humans. But why call it burning pain if doesn't have the features common to all burning pains? We cannot, on this view, say that it has those features, because there is no such thing as the property of burning pain, period, and hence no such thing as what is in common to each such instance.

I don't see why you would claim that this is arbitrary or misleading. It seems to me like the only approach that does not begin by making a bunch of completely unjustified assumptions about the form the relationship between subjective experiences and brain processes is going to take. I thought that the goal was to determine what these relationships are, not to assume that they are some specific way, and then try to make the data fit the model.

Quote:

In effect, this is just the inverse of your other argument about the same physical conditions giving different mental states. Neither argument is valid, because there has never been any known example of two different people having the same physical brain state, nor of a single person having the same physical brain state twice, nor of two subjective experiences being identical.

Again, we're not talking about identical brain states and mental states. We're talking about brain states and mental properties being so similar to each other that they belong in the same type or set. The eliminative option explained above is an example of humans can have the same type of burning pain, but a different type from chimps and wolves.

The inverted qualia argument is invalid when applied to this view, because this view does not require that there be a 1 to 1 mapping between these sets. Indeed, it would be extraordinarily naive to assume that there would be.

Quote:

The inverted qualia argument requires that there either be multiple instantiations of a single mental state corresponding to different physical states, or that there be multiple instantiations of a single physical state corresponding to different mental states. There are no examples of either of these conditions actually ever being met.

The inverted qualia claim does not state that different physical states can have the same mental state, but it does say that same physical states can have different mental states (there's a difference). But that's not the issue. The issue is this: an anti-functionalist will admit inverted qualia are not possible unless there's empirical evidence for it if and only if the functionalist admits functionalism is not possible unless there's empirical evidence for functionalism (e.g. evidence of beings made up of silicon with mental experiences).

Nobody is asking you to admit that inverted qualia are not possible. But the mere fact that we cannot prove that they are impossible, does not constitute a problem for positions that require them to be impossible. In effect, you are saying nothing more than that it is possible that functionalism may be wrong. I agree. It is possible.

Quote:

So, going back to what I said, the inverted qualia argument is used only when a functionalist used functionalism. If one can use an argument based on logical possibility, then so can the other.

If I were to claim that it is impossible for functionalism to be wrong, then you might actually have a point. But I have not. You did not present the inverted qualia argument as an argument for the claim that it is *possible* that functionalism could be wrong. You presented it as an argument for the claim that functionalism *is* wrong. Am I safe in assuming that you are now retracting this claim?

Quote:

But my example of how two persons can be in the same functional state, yet differ in mental states, shows that functionalism is wrong.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Yes, it does. I am afraid that if you are going to offer nothing more than saying that it does not, I can offer nothing more than saying that it does in response.

The claim that neurons firing without mental properties entails there are non-physical substances must be supported by an argument.

That is not what I claimed. Neurons can fire without mental properties being present. It happens all the time.

Quote:

Your argument that neurons firing for a zombies are different from neurons firing for normal people is question begging.

That is not what I argued at all. You completely misunderstood my argument. My point was that if the brain is aware of mental experiences, then zombies are impossible, because their neuronal processes would have to be different, *and by definition they are not*. This means that the only way to have zombies is for there to be something other than the brain which is aware of our experiences, which implies substantive dualism. I also made the point that even then, the p-zombie idea does not work, because this other thing would have to be able to interact with the brain, which violates the definition of zombie-world as being physically identical to ours. In other words, zombies imply substantive dualism, which is incompatible with the definition of zombie-world, which renders the entire p-zombie idea incoherent.

Quote:

If you wish to show they are different, then argue for it. So again, that claim is just as false as your claim some time ago that epiphenomenalism entails zombies.

I did not claim that they were different. On the contrary, by definition they must be the same. That is the whole point. The only way they could be the same is with some sort of substantive dualism.

Quote:

I don't see why you would claim that this is arbitrary or misleading. It seems to me like the only approach that does not begin by making a bunch of completely unjustified assumptions about the form the relationship between subjective experiences and brain processes is going to take. I thought that the goal was to determine what these relationships are, not to assume that they are some specific way, and then try to make the data fit the model.

You're dodging the question: why say wolves and humans are both in pain if their sensations share nothing in common?

Because the stimulus, behavioral response, and brain processes involved, are all very similar.

Quote:

The inverted qualia argument is invalid when applied to this view, because this view does not require that there be a 1 to 1 mapping between these sets. Indeed, it would be extraordinarily naive to assume that there would be.

I'm not talking about inverted qualia. You're saying there's no such thing as a type.

When did I say that?

Quote:

Nobody is asking you to admit that inverted qualia are not possible. But the mere fact that we cannot prove that they are impossible, does not constitute a problem for positions that require them to be impossible. In effect, you are saying nothing more than that it is possible that functionalism may be wrong. I agree. It is possible.

If I were to claim that it is impossible for functionalism to be wrong, then you might actually have a point. But I have not. You did not present the inverted qualia argument as an argument for the claim that it is possible that functionalism could be wrong. You presented it as an argument for the claim that functionalism is wrong. Am I safe in assuming that you are now retracting this claim?

Okay, now we're talking about inverted qualia. Anyhow, you're saying that you never said functionalism is true. But guess what? I never said you said functionalism is true. My (and the inverted qualia) arguments are against the functionalists and functionalism (hence the name of this thread), not Death Monkey's neutral stance towards functionalism.

First of all, my stance is not neutral. It is just not dogmatic. I am a functionalist. Second, you can back-pedal all you want now, but the fact remains that you claimed that the inverted qualia argument *shows functionalism to be false*, and this is simply not true.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

That is not what I claimed. Neurons can fire without mental properties being present. It happens all the time.

Obviously I'm talking about the type of neurons that cause mental properties.

There is no "type" of neurons which cause mental properties. The neurons involved in those processes are not any different than the neurons involved in other brain processes. Mental phenomena are part of the overall behavior of the entire network.

Quote:

That is not what I argued at all. You completely misunderstood my argument. My point was that if the brain is aware of mental experiences, then zombies are impossible, because their neuronal processes would have to be different, and by definition they are not. This means that the only way to have zombies is for there to be something other than the brain which is aware of our experiences, which implies substantive dualism.

Brains are no aware of experiences. People are. Brains don't see. People see.

Your brain is the part of you that is aware of experiences. If not, then what? What part of you is aware of your experiences? Isn't it painfully obvious that to claim that there is some non-physical part of you that is aware of experiences, is to claim the existence of some sort of spirit/soul/homunculus?

Quote:

I also made the point that even then, the p-zombie idea does not work, because this other thing would have to be able to interact with the brain, which violates the definition of zombie-world as being physically identical to ours. In other words, zombies imply substantive dualism, which is incompatible with the definition of zombie-world, which renders the entire p-zombie idea incoherent.

And since our behaviors are caused by neuronal activity, how would that be any different in any physical sense since zombies neurons cause zombie behavior?

Since our subjective experiences clearly affect our behavior, the only way that you could claim that our neuronal activity is the *only* cause of our behavior, is to claim that subjective experiences *are* neuronal activity, in which case zombies are impossible.

Quote:

Because the stimulus, behavioral response, and brain processes involved, are all very similar.

Now you're going back to role functionalism, which has its problems and is different from realizer functionalism. So which is it? Are pains identical to functional roles? Or with the realizers of functional roles? Make up your mind.

What do you mean "which is it"? When people talk about human pain and wolf pain both being examples of pain, they are defining pain in a role functionalism sense. When neuroscientists try to understand how human pain *actually works*, in terms of physical brain activity, they recognize that role functionalism is not specific enough, and use an approach more appropriate to the task at hand. What do you mean "make up my mind"? Why can't I just recognize that both approaches exist, and are each useful for different things?

Quote:

When did I say that?

When you erroneously thought I was talking about inverted qualia, I would identify a type of mental property with a physical state, and you went off on some rant about brains states not being identical with each other. Then I tried telling you (numerous times) tha I'm talking about types not tokens.

I ask again, when did I say that there are no such things as types?

Quote:

First of all, my stance is not neutral. It is just not dogmatic. I am a functionalist. Second, you can back-pedal all you want now, but the fact remains that you claimed that the inverted qualia argument shows functionalism to be false, and this is simply not true.

That makes no sense. If are a functionalist, then you believe functionalism is true.

Don't tell me what I believe. I am a functionalist because I think that it is probably true, and because I think that the functionalistic approach is the best approach we currently have available to us.

Quote:

How can one be a functionalists and not believe it is true.

By being an open-minded scientist, rather than a closed-minded armchair philosopher.

Quote:

If you believe functionalism is true, then you believe anything with the brain's causal powers can be conscious.

Anything with the same causal powers as a brain would *be* a brain. As to whether anything with the same general "type" of functional roles as a brain, would be conscious, that depends on how generally you define those functional roles.

Quote:

If you believe anything with the brain's causal powers can be consciois, then you believe a being made up of silicon that instantiates the brain's causal powers can be conscious.

In principle, yes. I think that such a being could possess all of the characteristics which we associate with the term "consciousness", such as self-awareness, though, perception, etc... But it would not be identical to human consciousness.

Remember that I do not claim that brain processes *cause* consciousness, or that consciousness *results* from brain processes. I think that a person's consciousness *is* their brain processes. I can (theoretically) simulate that person's brain with a computer, or an artificial network, or whatever. That simulation will not *cause* consciousness any more that the human brain does. Nor will any of its processes *be* consciousness. It will, however, be a *simulation* of that person's consciousness, and as such, will have all of the characteristics that we associate with human consciousness.

Quote:

But there's no empirical evidence that such a thing is conscious.

There is no such thing for there to *be* empirical evidence about.

Quote:

Therefore, either you should not be a functionalist, or you believe that it is both logically and nomologically possible for such a being to exist.

Or I think that it is highly probable, based on what we currently do know about the brain and consciousness, that it is possible for such a being to exist.

Quote:

But if you're allowed to believe in such empirically unconfirmed yet logically and nomologically possible scenarios, then the nonfunctionalist should be allowed to believe believe in empirically unconfirmed yet logically and nomologically possible inverted qualia scenario.

Let me get this straight. Are you seriously arguing that your completely false claim that the inverted qualia argument shows functionalism to be false, should be accepted as valid on the grounds that you think that somebody else is making an equally invalid claim about your own position?

Even if I was making the unjustified claim that the inverted qualia scenario is impossible, that would not justify your claim that the inverted qualia argument shows functionalism to be false. It would just mean that we are both full of crap.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

There is no "type" of neurons which cause mental properties. The neurons involved in those processes are not any different that the neurons involved in other brain processes. Mental phenomena are part of the overall behavior of the entire network.

I do not know what you mean by this, but clearly some types of neurons cause consciousness and others don't. Some, for example, cause heart beats.

There are many different types of neurons, and the brain consists of many different types of neurons, but the same types of neurons that are involved in cognitive processes, are also involved in other types of processes that have nothing to do with consciousness.

Quote:

Your brain is the part of you that is aware of experiences. If not, then what? What part of you is aware of your experiences? Isn't it painfully obvious that to claim that there is some non-physical part of you that is aware of experiences, is to claim the existence of some sort of spirit/soul/homunculus?

Neither my brain nor my "soul" are aware of my experiences. I am aware of my experiences.

Whatever that means...

Quote:

Since our subjective experiences clearly affect our behavior, the only way that you could claim that our neuronal activity is the only cause of our behavior, is to claim that subjective experiences are neuronal activity, in which case zombies are impossible.

One can believe in zombies without upholding the view that mental properties cause our behavior.

I did not say anything about mental properties. I said that subjective experiences clearly affect our behavior. If you wish to claim that subjective experiences are not mental properties, that is fine with me. Like I said, I don't think that they are properties at all. But if you want to claim that zombies have subjective experiences, then I have no idea what you think the difference between a zombie and a person is.

Quote:

Also, if one believes in zombies, one can also believe that our behavior is causally overdetermined. You might object that nothing is causally overdetermined. But that would not be true. Go ask any criminal law attorney. If persons A and B simultaneously shoot victim V, and both bullets fatally wound V, then both A and B are the causes of V's death. Would V have died if A didn't shoot? Yes. Would V have died if B didn't shoot? Yes. Hence, there are many cases of causal overdetermination.

I am not claiming that behavior cannot be caused by more than one thing. But it cannot be *completely* caused by one thing, unless nothing else has an effect on it. If subjective experiences affect our behavior, but do not affect our neuronal activity, then our behavior cannot possibly be totally caused by neuronal activity. That would be self-contradictory.

Quote:

What do you mean "which is it"? When people talk about human pain and wolf pain both being examples of pain, they are defining pain in a role functionalism sense. When neuroscientists try to understand how human pain actually works, in terms of physical brain activity, they recognize that role functionalism is not specific enough, and use an approach more appropriate to the task at hand. What do you mean "make up my mind"? Why can't I just recognize that both approaches exist, and are each useful for different things?

Because there's a difference between identifying mental property M with role R, and identifying M with $P1 \vee P2 \vee P3 \dots Pn$. Both identifications have their specific problems concerning epiphenomenalism.

I know there is a difference. They are different ways of assigning labels to things. Why should I be required to declare that there is one "proper" way of doing this, and that any other method of assigning labels is somehow "wrong"? This is nonsense.

Quote:

I ask again, when did I say that there are no such things as types?

When I would identify types with other types, and you would retort that no two things are identical.

I was not claiming that there is no such thing as types. I was pointing out (quite correctly) that your argument fails because it does not make any sense unless you are talking about identical things, rather than things which are just similar enough to be considered the same "type".

Quote:

By being an open-minded scientist, rather than a closed-minded armchair philosopher.

Is that supposed to be an argument? I'll ask again: How can one be a functionalist and not believe functionalism is true?

It was not an argument. It was an answer to your question. I think my answer was pretty clear. What part of it did you not understand?

Quote:

In principle, yes. I think that such a being could possess all of the characteristics which we associate with the term "consciousness", such as self-awareness, though, perception, etc... But it would not be identical to human consciousness.

What do you mean by "in principle"? That it is logically and nomologically possible.

I mean that the existence of such a being is logically consistent with my position.

Quote:

There is no such thing for there to be empirical evidence about.

There's no such thing as empirical evidence?

No, there is no such thing as a silicon machine that instantiates the brain's causal powers.

Quote:

Or I think that it is highly probable, based on what we currently do know about the brain and consciousness, that it is possible for such a being to exist.

How is it highly probable if the only things that we observe that have consciousness are things with biological brains? Seems more like it's logically possible than "highly probable."

I just answered that question in the post you quoted.

Quote:

Let me get this straight. Are you seriously arguing that your completely false claim that the inverted qualia argument shows functionalism to be false, should be accepted as valid on the grounds that you think that somebody else is making an equally invalid claim about your own position?

Even if I was making the unjustified claim that the inverted qualia scenario is impossible, that would not justify your claim that the inverted qualia argument shows functionalism to be false. It would just mean that we are both full of crap.

What I am saying is this: functionalism and inverted qualia are both viewpoints based on logical possibility.

That's fine, but your *claim* that the inverted qualia argument *shows functionalism to be false*, is not. It is simply a false statement.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Whatever that means...

You don't know what "I am aware of my experiences" means? Why do I have my doubts that you know exactly what the sentence means.

I know what *I* would mean if I said that, and I know what a *spiritualist* would mean if he said that, but you have explicitly stated that what you mean by that sentence does not match any of the meanings that I know of. So no, I have no idea what *you* mean by that sentence.

Quote:

I did not say anything about mental properties. I said that subjective experiences clearly affect our behavior. If you wish to claim that subjective experiences are not mental properties, that is fine with me. Like I said, I don't think that they are properties at all. But if you want to claim that zombies have subjective experiences, then I have no idea what you think the difference between a zombie and a person is.

I never said that zombies have experiences nor have I ever said subjective experiences are not experiences of mental properties. But I did say that it is conceivable that the type of neuronal firings normally responsible for consciousness could occur without consciousness occurring.

Only if subjective experiences are not part of consciousness. The bottom line is that if subjective experiences are not brain processes themselves, then there is clearly at the very least a **two-way** interaction between them and brain processes. This means that it is simply **not** possible for the subjective experiences to be gone, and the brain process to be the same, unless there is some other new thing there to duplicate the effects of the subjective experiences.

This means that p-zombies are impossible. Either the brain processes will be different because of the removal of subjective experiences, or there will be some new physical thing in the world taking their place. Either way, zombie world cannot be physically identical to the real world.

Quote:

I am not claiming that behavior cannot be caused by more than one thing. But it cannot be completely caused by one thing, unless nothing else has an effect on it. If subjective experiences affect our behavior, but do not affect our neuronal activity, then our behavior cannot possibly be totally caused by neuronal activity. That would be self-contradictory.

An interactionist can simply say that when a mental property causes a neuron to fire, and the neuron then causes the arm to lift, then the mental property is the transitive cause of the arm lifting. Or an interactionist can simply claim both the mental properties and neuronal properties simultaneously cause the lifting of the arm. What's the problem?

There is no problem with the first scenario, except that it implies that mental properties cause physical effects, which will clearly not be there anymore in zombie-land. If the mental properties cause the neuron to fire in the real world, and the mental properties don't exist in zombie world, then the neuron will not fire in zombie world.

In the second scenario, they can both be causal factors in the lifting of the arm, but if the lifting of the arm would have happened in exactly the same way, even without the mental property, then the mental property clearly was not a causal factor in its lifting.

Quote:

I know there is a difference. They are different ways of assigning labels to things. Why should I be required to declare that there is one "proper" way of doing this, and that any other method of assigning labels is somehow "wrong"? This is nonsense.

Because of epiphenomenalism, neither models are attractive. Unless, of course, one does not mind being both an epiphenomenalist functionalist.

What on earth do methods for assigning labels to things have to do with whether or not one is an

epiphenomenalist or a functionalist? You could say that one method of assigning labels is more useful for functionalism than another, but that does not mean that the other method does not have its uses.

Quote:

I was not claiming that there is no such thing as types. I was pointing out (quite correctly) that your argument fails because it does not make any sense unless you are talking about identical things, rather than things which are just similar enough to be considered the same "type".

But I have always been talking about types. What do you think my whole spiel about the difference between tokens and types was about? Yet, despite the fact I talked about types, you'd always (irrelevantly) retort about how two different things can never be identical to each other. I never claimed two different tokens were identical; I've always claimed that two tokens can be the same type.

You have complete missed my point. I know perfectly well you were talking about types. That is the problem. The arguments you were making are not valid for types.

Quote:

It was not an argument. It was an answer to your question. I think my answer was pretty clear. What part of it did you not understand?

And your answer was both irrelevant and fallacious.

How so? Where do you get off saying that I can only be a functionalist if I dogmatically insist that functionalism cannot possibly be wrong? What kind of nonsense is that?

Quote:

I mean that the existence of such a being is logically consistent with my position.

I'm not asking if the possibility of a conscious silicon creature is consistent with your views. I'm just asking you if you believe that such a creature could exist.

And I already told you that I consider it very likely, based on the available scientific evidence, that it is. As to whether you would call this "belief" or not, I neither know, nor care.

Quote:

Whether the creature is consistent with your views is irrelevant to the question. And so you believe that this creature can have exactly the same type of mental states as we do.

I think that it can possess all of the same general characteristics that we associate with consciousness.

Quote:

If so, how do you reconcile that view with your earlier view that anything with a different type of physical state will have a different type of mental state (recall my examples of wolves' burning sensation not sharing anything in common with the burning sensation of humans)?

I never expressed that view. I made it very clear that when you are talking about types, no such general claims can be made, because they will depend on how you choose to classify your types.

Quote:

This latter "mild eliminativist" position is obviously not a type of functionalism, but a type of identity theory of the mind.

Says who? What you seem to be describing as functionalism is just plain foolishness. Only a fool would think that the brain can completely described in terms of a functionalism that only discusses broad general functional types.

Quote:

No, there is no such thing as a silicon machine that instantiates the brain's causal powers.

But you do believe such a creature could exist, correct?

I already told you, I think that it is very likely.

Quote:

That's fine, but your claim that the inverted qualia argument shows functionalism to be false, is not. It is simply a false statement.

If the inverted qualia argument is logically possible (i.e. conceivable), then it shows that functional roles are not sufficient conditions (although a non-functionalism can consistently concede that they are necessary conditions) for some mental properties.

No, it just shows that *as far as you know*, it *may* be the case that they are not sufficient conditions. It does not, in any way, demonstrate that, in actuality, they are not.

Quote:

If two persons perceive different colors, yet are in the same functional role, then functional roles are not sufficient conditions to identify mental properties. It's that simple.

Yes, it is that simple. If what you have suggested can *actually happen* in the *real world*, then functionalism is wrong. But since there is no evidence that it *can* actually happen in the real world, it is a **false claim** to say that the inverted qualia argument shows functionalism to be false.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

The bottom line is that if subjective experiences are not brain processes themselves, then there is clearly at the very least a two-way interaction between them and brain processes.

Not necessarily. See epiphenomenalism (again).

Since epiphenomenalism claims that subjective experiences have no effect whatsoever on our behavior, and this is clearly false, I reject this option. If you wish to assert that something exists which has no effect on my behavior, go right ahead, but everything that I am aware of *does* affect my behavior. I have explained this before.

Quote:

There is no problem with the first scenario, except that it implies that mental properties cause physical effects, which will clearly not be there anymore in zombie-land. If the mental properties cause the neuron to fire in the real world, and the mental properties don't exist in zombie world, then the neuron will not fire in zombie world.

Even if one is not an epiphenomenalist who believes that zombies are possible, then one could hold that another neuron, rather than the neuron responsible for behavior, will cause the neuron to fire. So you might say that that scenario is physically different from the other scenario. But there are different types of zombies.

Well, those are not the zombies we are talking about, now are they? I made very clear what definition of zombies I was referring to. If you want to argue about a completely different scenario, then you need to state what it is first.

Quote:

A zombist can believe that normal humans are causally overdetermined by both their mental properties and

neuronal properties, but zombies are determined only by their neuronal properties.

This is nonsense. If the zombie's behavior is completely determined by their neuronal processes, and both the neuronal properties and behavior of the zombie are identical to that of the human, then the human's behavior is also completely determined by their neuronal processes. To claim that the behavior would be the same even if the mental properties were not there, or were different in some way, is exactly what it means to say that they have no affect on the behavior. You are just playing word games by saying that the behavior is caused by mental states, but would be completely unchanged if the mental states were different, or gone completely. Doing so renders the term "caused" to mean nothing more than "correlated with".

Quote:

Is there a difference between the human and the zombie? Yes, because in addition to the physical properties, the mental properties cause the human to do X as well. But is there a physical difference between the human and the zombie? No. Both neuronal properties cause the behavior in both cases.

Mental properties are completely irrelevant in this scenario. Not only can they **not** be meaningfully said to be causing any behavior, but the person or zombie would literally have no way of knowing which he is. Like I said before, mental properties don't think.

Quote:

In the second scenario, they can both be causal factors in the lifting of the arm, but if the lifting of the arm would have happened in exactly the same way, even without the mental property, then the mental property clearly was not a causal factor in its lifting.

Well, why not? Recall my example of the two murderers shooting the victim simultaneously? If murderer A didn't shoot, then murderer B would have been the causal factor of V's death.

You are trying to equate legal guilt with causality. This is nonsense. Would he have died if only A shot him? If not, then A was not the sole cause of his death. Another causal factor was involved. Likewise for B. If he would have died from A's shot alone, but not from B's, then A caused his death, not B. And vice versa. If both shots were required, then both are causal factors.

Likewise, if my behavior would be *exactly the same* without the mental properties, then they are not a causal factor in my behavior. Only if removal of them would change my behavior in some way, can they be said to be causing it. Your analogy fails completely.

Quote:

What on earth do methods for assigning labels to things have to do with whether or not one is an epiphenomenalist or a functionalist? You could say that one method of assigning labels is more useful for functionalism than another, but that does not mean that the other method does not have its uses.

The difference between role functionalism and realizer functionalism is not a difference of labels for the same thing. They're both different things, with their own different problems.

Which is completely irrelevant. I don't think that what you are calling role functionalism can be used to functionally describe the brain, but that does not mean that it has no uses. For example, that does not mean that it is not useful for pointing out similarities between behavioral responses to similar stimuli in similar animals.

Quote:

How so? Where do you get off saying that I can only be a functionalist if I dogmatically insist that functionalism cannot possibly be wrong? What kind of nonsense is that?

The answer that one is an open-minded scientist rather than a closed-minded philosopher is a fallacy (as either *ad hominem* or self-flattery). Ergo, it doesn't answer the question of how one can be a functionalist without believing functionalism to be true. That claim seems to be incoherent on its face.

I explained my answer to you. Take it or leave it.

Quote:

And I already told you that I consider it very likely, based on the available scientific evidence, that it is. As to whether you would call this "belief" or not, I neither know, nor care.

I will interpret "Very likely" to mean possible. So why is it okay for you to believe that conscious silicon creatures are possible, yet it's not okay for inverted qualia to be possible.

It is ok for inverted qualia to be possible. But that does not mean that they are an actuality. For you to claim that the inverted qualia argument **shows** functionalism to be false, is to claim not only that it is a possibility (meaning not impossible as far as we know), but that it actually can happen in the real world.

Quote:

Seems like a double-standard to me. If you say that there has never been an observed instance of two functional states having different qualia, then I'll reply that there has never been an observed instance of a conscious silicon creature.

It would only be a double-standard if I tried to claim that the possibility of the existence of conscious silicon creatures, somehow showed that the inverted qualia scenario was impossible. That would be begging the question, which is exactly what you are doing.

Quote:

I think that it can possess all of the same general characteristics that we associate with consciousness.

Does "same general characteristics" means "same type"? If not, then what do you mean by "same general characteristics"?

Yes, I am referring to sets of similar characteristics.

Quote:

I never expressed that view. I made it very clear that when you are talking about types, no such general claims can be made, because they will depend on how you choose to classify your types.

In my example, I was classifying my types in the sense that wolves' have different brains than we do but the same functional role.

They have some of the same functional roles (namely very general ones). They also have some very different functional roles. The more specific the functional role, the less they have in common.

Like I said before, if you define your functional roles very generally, then you need to define your mental types very generally too. If you define your functional roles more specifically, then your mental types need to be more specific as well. If you make one set of types more general than the other, then you will not get a 1 to 1 mapping. Big surprise there. All this means is that you need to adjust your classification scheme.

Quote:

Says who? What you seem to be describing as functionalism is just plain foolishness. Only a fool would think that the brain can completely described in terms of a functionalism that only discusses broad general functional types.

Remember, the mild eliminativist of identity theory holds that anything that does not have the same type of brain (i.e. a human brain), then it will have different type of mental state. According to functionalism, the type of role matters, not the type of brain.

Your distinction is completely artificial. You agreed earlier that physical systems can be defined functionally. This clearly means that functionalism is not artificially constrained to general functional roles. If physical brains can be defined functionally, then this *implies* that identity theory is compatible with

functionalism. Because you can make those functional roles as specific as they need to be in order to describe the brain.

Remember that my position is that a complete description of physical brain activity is a complete description of that brain's consciousness.

Quote:

And when I asked if you believe that it makes any sense to call wolves and humans in pain if they share no sensation in common, you replied that we shouldn't try to make the data fit the model (whatever that meant -- I was just looking for a "yes" or a "no").

If you want yes or no answers, then don't ask questions that cannot reasonably be answered that way.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Since epiphenomenalism claims that subjective experiences have no effect whatsoever on our behavior, and this is clearly false, I reject this option. If you wish to assert that something exists which has no effect on my behavior, go right ahead, but everything that I am aware of does affect my behavior. I have explained this before.

And as I've already told you, simply saying "epiphenomenalism is false" is not an argument. You need arguments, and ones that do not make false claims such as epiphenomenalism implies zombies. Until then, you're simply question-begging.

I gave my argument for why epiphenomenalism is false. It is very simple.

Premise 1) Under epiphenomenalism, the only things which are non-physical are mental properties, which cannot affect anything physical.

Premise 2) Subjective experiences are assumed to be such properties.

Observation 1) My subjective experiences clearly affect my thoughts.

Observation 2) Mental properties do not think, because properties do not *do* anything. Thinking is a process, not a property.

Conclusion 1) My thoughts are not mental properties, therefore my subjective experiences affect something physical.

Conclusion 2) Epiphenomenalism is false.

Where, exactly, do you claim this argument fails? It seems to me that the only way to refute this argument is to get very loose with your definition of property, so that property can mean pretty much anything at all. But all that does is add a second step in the proof, since thoughts clearly affect behavior, and behavior is clearly not a mental property.

Quote:

Well, those are not the zombies we are talking about, now are they? I made very clear what definition of zombies I was referring to. If you want to argue about a completely different scenario, then you need to state what it is first.

Of course they are zombies. Their behavior is caused by neuronal properties. That's a zombie.

That was not the definition I gave. I made it very clear that I was referring to zombies which are not only physically identical to normal people, but which exist in a world physically identical to this one. Such a definition clearly implies epiphenomenalism.

Quote:

This is nonsense. If the zombie's behavior is completely determined by their neuronal processes, and both the neuronal properties and behavior of the zombie are identical to that of the human, then the human's behavior is also completely determined by their neuronal processes. To claim that the behavior would be the same even if the mental properties were not there, or were different in some way, is exactly what it means to say that they have no affect on the behavior. You are just playing word games by saying that the behavior is caused by mental states, but would be completely unchanged if the mental states were different, or gone completely. Doing so renders the term "caused" to mean nothing more than "correlated with".

The claim that behavior is the same even if the mental properties were not there, simply means precisely that our behavior is determined either by our mental properties, neuronal properties, or both.

No, it does not. It means that behavior most definitely was not caused by the mental properties. You are not making any sense here. How can you possibly claim that A causes B, when B would have happened even without A? That is nonsense.

Quote:

Saying I am playing "word games" (whatever that means) is not an argument. By the way, just in case you're confused about the meaning of the word "zombist," it simply means someone who believes in zombies; the word does not mean "zombie."

You are playing word games. You are using terms like "property" and "caused" without any coherent definition for them. You just throw the words around like they intrinsically mean something, and when I provide specific definitions, and explain how your statements are false for those definitions, you just claim that this is not what they mean, without providing any definition yourself.

Quote:

Mental properties are completely irrelevant in this scenario. Not only can they not be meaningfully said to be causing any behavior, but the person or zombie would literally have no way of knowing which he is. Like I said before, mental properties don't think.

Well an epiphenomenalist would agree with your second sentence. And I have no idea what the last sentence is supposed to mean since I never said mental properties have thoughts (whatever that means).

It means that thinking is not a mental property. So if you are going to claim that thinking is not a physical process, then you must claim that it is something non-physical which is not just a property, but in fact a process. As I said before, this implies substance dualism.

Quote:

You are trying to equate legal guilt with causality. This is nonsense. Would he have died if only A shot him? If not, then A was not the sole cause of his death. Another causal factor was involved. Likewise for B. If he would have died from A's shot alone, but not from B's, then A caused his death, not B. And vice versa. If both shots were required, then **BOTH ARE CAUSAL FACTORS**.

Likewise, if my behavior would be exactly the same without the mental properties, then they are not a causal factor in my behavior. Only if removal of them would change my behavior in some way, can they be said to be causing it. Your analogy fails completely.

My point is that an interactionist would hold that both mental properties and neuronal properties are causal factors of behavior just as the two snipers are causal factors of victim's death.

That's fine, but in such a scenario it is **false** to say that the behavior would be the same without the mental properties, because one of the causal factors is missing.

Quote:

If mental properties would not have occurred, behavior would have occurred.

But not the same behavior.

Quote:

If sniper A's shooting would not have occurred, V's death would have occurred.

Maybe, maybe not. But that doesn't matter, because even in this example, the manner of death would be different. Just as the behavior of the zombie will be different than that of the human. Sure, either way there will be behavior, just as either way the victim in your example will die, but when you remove one of the causal factors, the results change.

Quote:

If neuronal properties would not have occurred, behavior would have occurred. If sniper B's shooting would not have occurred, then victim's death would have occurred. Therefore, the analogy holds.

So now behavior can occur without neuronal activity? That's a new one, especially since neuronal activity itself is an aspect of our behavior!

Not only does your analogy horribly fail, but what you are describing is utterly incoherent. Either subjective experiences affect our behavior or they don't. If they do, then to say that they could be removed without changing the behavior, is self-contradictory. If they do not, then they are not anything I am aware of having, so I must be a zombie.

Quote:

Which is completely irrelevant. I don't think that what you are calling role functionalism can be used to functionally describe the brain, but that does not mean that it has no uses. For example, that does not mean that it is not useful for pointing out similarities between behavioral responses to similar stimuli in similar animals.

We are discussing metaphysics, not the utility of functional role models. Obviously such models are useful. The issue is not whether the functional role models are useful, but rather, whether there is nothing over and above for a mental property to be a functional role (or a functional realizer). Furthermore, functionalists of the mind have to choose between being role functionalism and realizer functionalism. Finally, regardless of their choice, each position has an epiphenomenal problem. [quote=Death Monkey]

I explained my answer to you. Take it or leave it.

Your answer was fallacious. Do you know what a fallacy is?

Yes, do you?

For example, we are not discussing metaphysics. We are discussing whether or not subjective experiences can be described functionally. That is epistemology. Your metaphysical beliefs may imply epistemological consequences which claim that functionalism cannot describe subjective experiences, but what we are discussing is still epistemology.

You can posit all the additional metaphysical properties for the mind you want to. Nobody is claiming that such hypothetical metaphysical properties can be described functionally. Your ability to dream them up does not have any more relevance to our ability to describe subjective experiences functionally, than your ability to assign such properties to physical objects has to our ability to describe them functionally.

Quote:

It is ok for inverted qualia to be possible. But that does not mean that they are an actuality. For you to claim that the inverted qualia argument shows functionalism to be false, is to claim not only that it is a possibility (meaning not impossible as far as we know), but that it actually can happen in the real world.

No, when a functionalist makes an identity statement by identifying a role R with a mental property M, then he is saying necessarily R is M. But if the functionalist is saying that it is possible that M is not realized when R occurs, then he is not saying necessarily R is M; rather, he's saying contingently R is M. But there's no such thing as contingent identity. Identity is necessity.

Do you understand the difference between saying that something is possible in the sense that we do not know for sure that it *can't* happen in actuality, and saying that something is possible in the sense that it can happen in actuality? Your posts seem to indicate that you do not.

You can claim that the same physical state occurring with different mental states is possible, in the sense that we don't know for sure that it can't happen in actuality. But you cannot claim to know that it is possible in the sense that it *can* happen in actuality. The latter is what you would need to be able to conclude that functionalism is false.

Quote:

They have some of the same functional roles (namely very general ones). They also have some very different functional roles. The more specific the functional role, the less they have in common.

Like I said before, if you define your functional roles very generally, then you need to define your mental types very generally too. If you define your functional roles more specifically, then your mental types need to be more specific as well. If you make one set of types more general than the other, then you will not get a 1 to 1 mapping. Big surprise there. All this means is that you need to adjust your classification scheme.

In my example regarding humans, chimps, and wolves, I obviously was using specific sensations (e.g. burning sensations). Now, how can you believe that wolves and humans share a burning sensation if there is no sensation in common between them. Do you even remember my example?

Yes, I remember your example. There is not even anything in common between two different people's burning sensations. They are just similar. Likewise the burning sensation a human experiences, and the one a wolf experiences, have nothing in common. They are just similar. They are not as similar as the sensations of the two humans, but they are still similar enough for us to call them both burning sensations, simply because we define the term "burning sensation" to be general enough that it can apply to them both.

Again, you are playing word games. You are conflating similarity with actually have some identical characteristics in common.

Quote:

Your distinction is completely artificial. You agreed earlier that physical systems can be defined functionally. This clearly means that functionalism is not artificially constrained to general functional roles. If physical brains can be defined functionally, then this implies that identity theory is compatible with functionalism. Because you can make those functional roles as specific as they need to be in order to describe the brain.

Remember that my position is that a complete description of physical brain activity is a complete description of that brain's consciousness.

Actually, the distinction between type identity-theory and functionalism is well recognized distinction. And obviously functionalism includes different types of roles, some being more specific than others. But so what?

So what?!?! Your entire argument against functionalism requires that there be some minimal degree of generality in functional roles! Now, do you actually have a response to my point? If you agree that brains can be described functionally, then why do you claim that functionalism must describe the mind in terms of functional roles which are far too general to be able to functionally describe the brain?

Quote:

If you want yes or no answers, then don't ask questions that cannot reasonably be answered that way.

Asking if you think wolves and humans are in the same type of pain can't be answered with a "yes" or a "no"? News to me.

Unfortunately, I suspect that this is true. It never even occurred to you that the answer might depend on

how specifically we choose define our types (which are completely arbitrary), did it? That pretty much sums up your entire argument against functionalism. You want to define types of functional roles, and the types of mental states they should correspond to, and then demand that if functionalism cannot make your arbitrarily imposed classification scheme work, it must be false.

DM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **TecnoTut**

Beliefs and sensations are not unicorns. The former two exist, the latter doesn't. Mental properties can be about concepts of things that do not exist. So what's the problem?

I agree. Beliefs are merely physical neural states in various portions of the brain. Yes, they actually exist and are formed by vastly complex molecular arrangements of carbon (and other) atoms in the brain. These neural states can be more or less accurate assessments of our environment or strategies for behavior or they can be false or mistaken, like an optical illusion or belief in the non-physical, but they do actually exist. So what's the problem?

Probeman

Quote:

Originally Posted by **TecnoTut**

Brains are no aware of experiences. People are. Brains don't see. People see.

This is so silly. Of course brains experience. Brains experience the body for one thing and anticipate and react to the environment for another. That is what the animal brain evolved for after all.

People without brains do not "see", in fact they don't experience much of anything at all!

Probeman

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Observation 1 need not be accepted because it might simply seem that our mental properties cause our behavior.

Observation 1 does not say that mental properties cause our behavior. It says that subjective experiences have an effect on our behavior. This is unquestionably true. I can think about my subjective experiences. I can reflect on them, and I can even verbally express that I am doing so. To claim that my subjective experiences do not affect my behavior, is to claim that it is not my subjective experiences which I am thinking about, reflecting on, and verbally talking about, but instead something else. This contradicts the very definition of what a subjective experience is.

Quote:

The first sentence of observation 2 (O2) is a strawman because it is not an argument used for epiphenomenalism.

It is not a strawman, nor is it an assumption of epiphenomenalism. It is a fact which is clearly true. It follows directly from the meaning of the word "property".

Quote:

The second sentence of O2 is arguably false, but just in case it isn't, like sentence one of O2, it is irrelevant to epiphenomenalism, thus another strawman.

I am truly baffled as to how you can seriously claim that thinking is not a process. Note that I did not say it was necessarily a physical process. But it is clearly a process. It is something which *happens*, not a property of something else. And again, you could only call this a strawman if I were claiming that it is an assumption of epiphenomenalism. I am not. I am claiming that it is a true statement about the real world.

Quote:

Sentence three of O2 is true, but again, irrelevant to epiphenomenalism. Epiphenomenalism simply holds that mental properties such as sensations are not physical processes because they're not processes at all.

Now I am confused. O2 only contains two sentences.

Quote:

Where, exactly, do you claim this argument fails? It seems to me that the only way to refute this argument is to get very loose with your definition of property, so that property can mean pretty much anything at all. But all that does is add a second step in the proof, since thoughts clearly affect behavior, and behavior is clearly not a mental property.

My definition of "property" is the definition most philosophers use, viz. the referent of a predicate.

So you are going to try to tell me that thinking is the referent of a predicate? That is nonsensical. I have also never heard an epiphenomenalist make such a ridiculous claim before. Every one of them I have ever discussed the issue with, has claimed that thinking is a process which has both physical mental properties, not that thinking is, itself, a mental property of something.

Quote:

That was not the definition I gave. I made it very clear that I was referring to zombies which are not only physically identical to normal people, but which exist in a world physically identical to this one. Such a definition clearly implies epiphenomenalism

The physical world in which normal people live in is identical to this world. So zombies physically identical to normal people exist in a world physically identical to this one.

And like I said, this clearly implies epiphenomenalism!

Quote:

No, it does not. It means that behavior most definitely was not caused by the mental properties. You are not making any sense here. How can you possibly claim that A causes B, when B would have happened even without A? That is nonsense.

I'm not saying that. I'm saying A & B are causes of C, and if A didn't happen, then B is the cause of C. If B didn't happen, A would have been the cause of C.

That is what I just said. This is nonsensical. You can claim that A and B both *affect* C, but this implies that removal of one or the other of them will change C in some way. If mental properties can be removed without their removal having any effect on behavior, then those mental properties are not affecting the behavior, by definition!

Quote:

That's fine, but in such a scenario it is false to say that the behavior would be the same without the mental properties, because one of the causal factors is missing.

No, it's not false. Just as it is not false to say sniper B is the cause of V's death absent sniper A's shot.

I already explained why this analogy is flawed. The death of the victim is a very general description of what happens to the victim. In the case that only A shoots, what actually happens to the victim is different than what actually happens when only B shoots, which in turn is different than what actually happens when

both shoot. Likewise, it may be that after removal of mental properties, behavior still occurs, but it will not be the same behavior that you would have had with the mental properties. You can claim that both are causal agents to behavior, but you cannot claim this and simultaneously claim that the removal of one of those causal agents will not result in any change in the behavior.

Quote:

Just as Victim's death would have occurred, the same behavior would have occurred.

No. Just as the victim's death would have occurred, some sort of behavior would have occurred. And just as the details of the victim's death will be different, likewise the details of the behavior will be different.

Quote:

Maybe, maybe not. But that doesn't matter, because even in this example, the manner of death would be different. Just as the behavior of the zombie will be different than that of the human. Sure, either way there will be behavior, just as either way the victim in your example will die, but when you remove one of the causal factors, the results change.

The manner of death is the same: brain failure.

Is that supposed to be funny? Or are you seriously presenting this as an argument? Are you honestly suggesting that a *similarity* in results in your analogy constitutes a good argument for claiming *identical* results in the example of causes of behavior?

Quote:

So now behavior can occur without neuronal activity? That's a new one, especially since neuronal activity itself is an aspect of our behavior!

By behavior I do not mean neuronal behavior. I mean the behavior of our macro-body parts, such as our limbs, etc.

So now the brain is not a body part? How convenient. Are you even taking this discussion seriously, or are you just saying whatever pops into your head?

Quote:

Not only does your analogy horribly fail, but what you are describing is utterly incoherent. Either subjective experiences affect our behavior or they don't. If they do, then to say that they could be removed without changing the behavior, is self-contradictory. If they do not, then they are not anything I am aware of having, so I must be a zombie.

All I am doing is presenting the arguments of epiphenomenalists and interactionists. Clearly those two positions are incompatible with each other. Although I'm not sure which of these is incompatible positions is correct, I do know that both avoid eliminativism and reductionism.

The problem is that you are bouncing back and forth between them, in an attempt to keep from acknowledging that both are horribly flawed. Any time I present an argument against epiphenomenalism, you counter with an argument that only works for interactionism, and vice versa.

Quote:

All I asked is how it is possible for someone who believes that the mind is nothing but a functional computation (a functionalist if the mind), believe at the same time that functionalism is not true.

What kind of nonsense is this? For one thing, functionalists do not claim that the mind is nothing but a functional computation. Why would you even suggest that? You acknowledge that functionalism works for physical systems. Certainly you don't think that physical systems are nothing but a functional computation.

Do you?

Quote:

You answered that it is possible if the functionalist is an open-minded scientist and not a closed-minded philosopher. This is a fallacious answer; either as [*i*]ad hominem[/*i*], self-flattery, or both.

I never said anything of the kind. I never said that I believe that functionalism is not true. I said that I acknowledge the possibility that it could be wrong. At this point, I can only conclude that you are either too stupid to understand the difference, or too intellectually dishonest to discuss the issue without deliberately misrepresenting my position.

Quote:

Do you understand the difference between saying that something is possible in the sense that we do not know for sure that it can't happen in actuality, and saying that something is possible in the sense that it can happen in actuality? Your posts seem to indicate that you do not.

You can claim that the same physical state occurring with different mental states is possible, in the sense that we don't know for sure that it can't happen in actuality. But you cannot claim to know that it is possible in the sense that it can happen in actuality. The latter is what you would need to be able to conclude that functionalism is false.

You're still confused, but I think it's my fault for not being clearer. The inverted qualia argument need only to be logically possible, rather than nomologically possible (which is what you mean by the term "actuality"). If $A = B$, then necessarily A is B -- this principle is known as the necessity of identity, which simply means that A is B in all worlds. You would have us believe that M is R . But the inverted qualia argument says that M^* could be R . Which means M is not necessarily R . If M is not necessarily R , then the identity statement " $M = R$ " is not a proper or valid identity statement. This argument holds against physicalism regardless of whether one is a role functionalist, realizer functionalist, type-identity theorist, or token-identity theorist.

You have not established logical possibility. Simply saying that we cannot be certain that X is false, does not constitute saying that X is logically possible. For the inverted qualia to be logically possible, it would have to be the case that it does not contradict any facts which are true in all possible worlds. You have not established that this is the case. All you have done, is point out that I can't prove it is false, and from this make the unjustified leap to claiming that it is actually logically possible.

Quote:

Yes, I remember your example. There is not even anything in common between two different people's burning sensations. They are just similar. Likewise the burning sensation a human experiences, and the one a wolf experiences, have nothing in common. They are just similar. They are not as similar as the sensations of the two humans, but they are still similar enough for us to call them both burning sensations, simply because we define the term "burning sensation" to be general enough that it can apply to them both.

Again, you are playing word games. You are conflating similarity with actually have some identical characteristics in common.

As Ronald Regan famously once remarked, "there you go again." Anyhow, you say nothing is in common between two people's burning sensations, yet they say they are similar. If they are similar, then there must be something in common. They can only be similar if they share at least one thing in common. I do not think it is I who is playing words games here.

Also, two numerically distinct properties can be qualitatively identical (which is much stronger than mere qualitative similarity).

Similarity does not imply that they have something in common. Not unless you define "having something in common" generally enough that similarity alone qualifies, in which case there would be something in common between a wolf's burning sensation, and a person's. What they do not have in common, is any identical physical processes occurring in both brains.

Like I said, you are just playing word games. You adjust the specificity of your terms in whatever way serves your purposes at the moment, apparently never even realizing that your classifications are completely arbitrary.

Quote:

Unfortunately, I suspect that this is true. It never even occurred to you that the answer might depend on how specifically we choose define our types (which are completely arbitrary), did it? That pretty much sums up your entire argument against functionalism. You want to define types of functional roles, and the types of mental states they should correspond to, and then demand that if functionalism cannot make your arbitrarily imposed classification scheme work, it must be false.

Take burning sensations on the arm. That's pretty specific. Are you suggesting that if you and I stuck our hands in the same oven at the same time, then we wouldn't feel the same type of sensation? That seems silly. Obviously they are the same **type** of pain, because they're the type of pain that has a burning sensation.

I rest my case. I am through with this discussion. I have no interest in continuing to bang my head against your brick wall.

DM

TecnoTut,

Quote:

Observation 1 does not say that mental properties cause our behavior. It says that subjective experiences have an effect on our behavior. This is unquestionably true. I can think about my subjective experiences. I can reflect on them, and I can even verbally express that I am doing so. To claim that my subjective experiences do not affect my behavior, is to claim that it is not my subjective experiences which I am thinking about, reflecting on, and verbally talking about, but instead something else. This contradicts the very definition of what a subjective experience is.

Then substitute "cause" for "reflect." My original point that it merely seems that that is the case still stands.

What? I cannot even make any sense out of this response.

Quote:

It is not a strawman, nor is it an assumption of epiphenomenalism. It is a fact which is clearly true. It follows directly from the meaning of the word "property".

So what? It's irrelevant in trying to disprove epiphenomenalism.

No it isn't. I just got through explaining exactly why it is relevant. Epiphenomenalism makes claims about subjective experiences which simply are not true.

Quote:

I am truly baffled as to how you can seriously claim that thinking is not a process. Note that I did not say it was necessarily a physical process. But it is clearly a process. It is something which happens, not a property of something else. And again, you could only call this a strawman if I were claiming that it is an assumption of epiphenomenalism. I am not. I am claiming that it is a true statement about the real world.

I meant to say the second part of the first sentence, viz. properties have no causal efficacy. It is arguably false, but just in case it isn't, like sentence one of O2, it is irrelevant to epiphenomenalism, thus another strawman. Now, sentence two of O2 is true, but again, irrelevant to epiphenomenalism. Epiphenomenalism simply holds that mental properties such as sensations are not physical processes because they're not processes at all.

Claiming that mental processes like thinking and experiencing are not processes at all, but rather properties, may save epiphenomenalism's internal consistency, but it renders it false by virtue of the fact that what it is

describing no longer bears any resemblance to reality. In the real world they are processes. You can play pretend about fantasy zombie worlds all you want. That won't change the facts.

Quote:

So you are going to try to tell me that thinking is the referent of a predicate? That is nonsensical. I have also never heard an epiphenomenalist make such a ridiculous claim before. Every one of them I have ever discussed the issue with, has claimed that thinking is a process which has both physical mental properties, not that thinking is, itself, a mental property of something.

Sure. If I say "TecnoTut is thinking," the subject is "Tecnotut" and the "predicate" is the term "thinking." The referent of the predicate is the event, which is also a property. All events can be properties, but not all properties have to be events.

This is nothing less than a blatant abuse of the ambiguity of the English language. If I say that I am walking, then walking is not a property of me. It is an activity that I am performing. The *fact* that I am performing that activity is a property of me (at least while I am doing so), but the activity is not. You are just making use of the fact that we use the same syntax to say things like "I am walking" and "I am tall". The meanings are completely different.

Quote:

And like I said, this clearly implies epiphenomenalism!

The only thing implied is that zombies are physically identical to us.

Do you actually have a rebuttal to my argument, or do you intend to just say "is not" everytime I derive a conclusion?

Quote:

That is what I just said. This is nonsensical. You can claim that A and B both affect C, but this implies that removal of one or the other of them will change C in some way. If mental properties can be removed without their removal having any effect on behavior, then those mental properties are not affecting the behavior, by definition!

But C is not changed in some way. C will occur regardless of whether A occurs (so long as B occurs) or if B occurs (so long as A occurs).

I just explained why this is nonsensical. Again, are you going to address my argument, or simply restate your absurd claims as the only response to my arguments?

Quote:

I already explained why this analogy is flawed. The death of the victim is a very general description of what happens to the victim. In the case that only A shoots, what actually happens to the victim is different than what actually happens when only B shoots, which in turn is different than what actually happens when both shoot. Likewise, it may be that after removal of mental properties, behavior still occurs, but it will not be the same behavior that you would have had with the mental properties. You can claim that both are causal agents to behavior, but you cannot claim this and simultaneously claim that the removal of one of those causal agents will not result in any change in the behavior.

But it will be the same behavior just as it is the same death. The same event, death, occurs. Similarly, the same event, the lifting of an arm, occurs. The only difference is the cause of the event. So I can claim that both A and B, A, or B are causes of C.

Dying as a result of my brain being torn apart by a bullet, and dying from lack of oxygen to the brain, because a bullet destroyed my heart, are **not** the same event.

Again, you simplify and generalize to an absurd degree to try to wiggle out of my arguments. There is a hell of a lot to the physical behavior that is involved in me lifting my arm, then just the fact that my arm

rises. If all of this will occur, for completely physical reasons, in the absence of mental properties, then it is simply false to claim that the mental properties had any effect on them.

Quote:

What kind of nonsense is this? For one thing, functionalists do not claim that the mind is nothing but a functional computation. Why would you even suggest that? You acknowledge that functionalism works for physical systems. Certainly you don't think that physical systems are nothing but a functional computation. Do you?

I clearly stated that I was talking about a metaphysical functionalists of the mind. They do claim that the mind is nothing but a computational function. If you deny this position, then we do not disagree.

I have never heard of anybody making such a ridiculous claim. Besides, this is clearly BS, since you said that you agree that functionalism can work for physical things, but not for the mind. And functionalism as applied to physical systems clearly does not make this absurd metaphysical claim.

Quote:

I never said anything of the kind. I never said that I believe that functionalism is not true. I said that I acknowledge the possibility that it could be wrong. At this point, I can only conclude that you are either too stupid to understand the difference, or too intellectually dishonest to discuss the issue without deliberately misrepresenting my position.

But you openly admitted that you believe functional properties are sufficient to define mental properties. You did not say, for example, that functional properties could be sufficient; you said that they are sufficient. Thus, you believe functionalism of the mind is true. Perhaps it is you who is too "stupid" to understand the consequences of your own positions.

Again, complete BS. You tried to get me to say that, and I refused. What I told you was that I consider it to be very likely. Not that it *is* true, or even that I *believe* it to be true.

Quote:

You have not established logical possibility. Simply saying that we cannot be certain that X is false, does not constitute saying that X is logically possible. For the inverted qualia to be logically possible, it would have to be the case that it does not contradict any facts which are true in all possible worlds. You have not established that this is the case. All you have done, is point out that I can't prove it is false, and from this make the unjustified leap to claiming that it is actually logically possible.

I never said "we cannot be certain" that $M = R$. I said it is "logically possible" that M is not R . Do you even know what "logical possibility" means? Probably not.

Apparently I am the only one of us that does. You claimed that conceivability implies logical possibility, but this is not the case. Conceivability only logically implies the you cannot be certain that it is *not* logically possible.

It is entirely possible to conceive of something which is not logically possible. All that is necessary is for you to not know that its logical possibility would imply a contradiction.

Quote:

Similarity does not imply that they have something in common. Not unless you define "having something in common" generally enough that similarity alone qualifies, in which case there would be something in common between a wolf's burning sensation, and a person's. What they do not have in common, is any identical physical processes occurring in both brains.

But of course similarity implies something in common. A red ball and a blue ball are similar, despite the fact they have different colors. If you believe a wolf pain is similar to a human pain, then there's something in common between the two sensations, or else we wouldn't be using the same word, viz. "pain."

Read what I said again, and get back to me when you actually have a response to it.

DM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **TecnoTut**

Brain processes may be caused by other bodily processes, but it is I who has the experiences, not my brain. People without brains do not experience anything because the brain causes the experience. But it is I who experiences what my brain causes.

"I"? Who is "I"?

The problem with your position is that you're still stuck in the infinite regress Cartesian Theater of the Homunculi. Or are you now suggesting that your immortal "soul" or "spirit" is doing the experiencing of the brain? Same thing really.

Probeman