

Consciousness #8



NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF THE MIND

research project 2015-2017

 UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



John
Templeton
Foundation

newdirectionsproject.com

Seminar 8

1. Recap: qualia versus intentionalism about consciousness
2. Where did all this talk of qualia come from? A historical investigation
3. Summary of this term's conclusions

1. Recap: qualia and intentionalism

To make sense of debates about qualia, 'qualia' should not mean the same as 'conscious state or property'

Qualia = non-intentional conscious property

How qualia might be motivated, and what the intentionalist response might be

2. Where did all this talk of qualia come from?

How can there be disagreements about the obvious?

More general moral: you need to be able to make your opponents intelligible to you

History is one way to do this

Consciousness and intentionality today

“The greatest chasm in the philosophy of mind — maybe even all of philosophy — divides two perspectives on consciousness. The two perspectives differ on whether there is anything in the phenomenal character of conscious experience that goes beyond the intentional, the cognitive and the functional. A convenient terminological handle on the dispute is whether there are ‘qualia’, or qualitative properties of conscious experience. Those who think that the phenomenal character of conscious experience goes beyond the intentional, the cognitive and the functional believe in qualia.”

Ned Block “Mental Paint” (2003)

Block's picture

The cognitive, the intentional, the functional
as opposed to:

Qualia = the qualitative properties of conscious
experience

The broader picture

Phenomenally conscious or 'qualitative' sensations, experiences etc.

as opposed to

Cognition, intentionality, the 'propositional attitudes'

It wasn't always like this

Early 20th century:

(1) both thought and perception/sensation were considered conscious

(2) intentionality and consciousness were thought to be intrinsically connected.

But in the late 20th century:

- (1) Sensations became the paradigms of conscious phenomena
- (2) Conscious thought was considered something problematic, and the link between intentionality and consciousness was considered radical and controversial

My question today

How did this change happen?

My answer

A historical understanding of how we got to where we are today can help us diagnose and dissolve the philosophical stalemate Block talks about

In particular: I will argue that behaviourism played a crucial role in the construction of the late 20th century conception of consciousness

Early 20th century 1: analytic philosophy

Thought and sensation “are both forms of consciousness, or to use a term that seems to be more in fashion just now, they are both ways of experiencing”

G.E. Moore ‘The Refutation of Idealism’ 1903: 437

Early 20th century 1: analytic philosophy ctd

How can thought and sensation both be forms of consciousness?

Moore: “the merest sensation to the most developed perception or reflexion” involves “that peculiar relation which I have called ‘awareness of anything’ ... this is in fact the only essential element in an experience”

Moore, “The Refutation of Idealism” 1903: 453

Early 20th century 1: analytic philosophy ctd

How can thought and sensation both be forms of consciousness?

Moore: “the merest sensation to the most developed perception or reflexion” involves “that peculiar relation which I have called ‘**awareness of anything**’ ... this is in fact the only essential element in an experience”

Moore, “The Refutation of Idealism” 1903: 453

Early 20th century 1: analytic philosophy ctd

The relation of “being given” is the “peculiar and ultimate manner of being present to consciousness”

H.H. Price, *Perception* (1931: 3)

Early 20th century 1: analytic philosophy ctd

The relation of “being **given**” is the “peculiar and ultimate manner of **being present** to consciousness”

H.H. Price, *Perception* (1931: 3)

Early 20th century 2: psychology

“the science of the processes whereby an individual becomes aware of a world of objects and adjusts his actions accordingly”

G.F. Stout, *A Manual of Psychology* 1899: 4

Psychology is the “description and explanation of states of consciousness as such”

George Trumbull Ladd, who founded the Psychological Laboratory at Yale in 1892

Early 20th century 3: phenomenology

“the comprehensive task of constitutive phenomenology” is the task of “elucidating in their entirety the interwoven achievements of consciousness which lead to the constitution of a possible world”

Edmund Husserl *Experience and Judgement* (1948)
§11

Early 20th century 4: American Kantianism

C.I. Lewis:

The given and its properties or qualities (“qualia”)

vs

The way the given is interpreted or conceptualised by the mind.

We have no knowledge of qualia, according to Lewis, because “knowledge always transcends the immediately given”

Lewis, *Mind and the World Order* (1929: 132)

To sum up

Consciousness is 'givenness'

The history of psychology

Introspectionism (c.1880s — c.1920s)

Edward Titchener, Wilhelm Wundt etc.

Behaviourism (c. 1920s — c. 1960s)

Ivan Pavlov, JB Watson, BF Skinner, EC Tolman,

The rise of behaviourism in psychology

Two ideas:

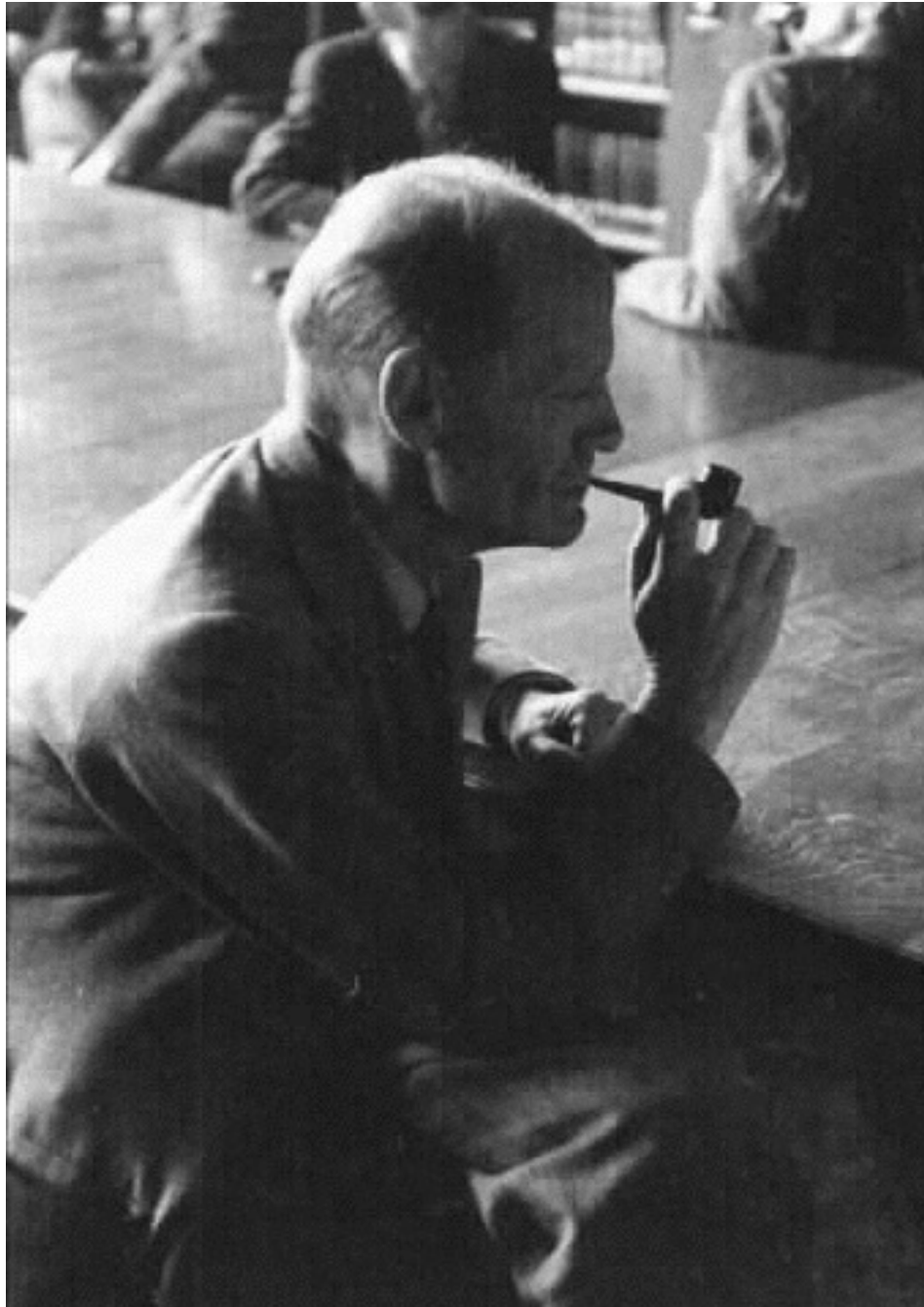
- (i) Psychology is the science of behaviour
- (ii) 'inner' mental states do not exist.

Behaviourism and consciousness

“Behaviorism claims that ‘consciousness’ is neither a definable nor a usable concept; that it is merely another word for the ‘soul’ of more ancient times”

J.B. Watson (1924: 3)

‘Philosophical’ or ‘analytic’ behaviourism?



C.D. Broad on philosophical behaviourism

Behaviourism is a “silly” theory, “one which may be held at the time when one is talking or writing professionally, but which only an inmate of a lunatic asylum would think of carrying into daily life.”

C.D. Broad, *The Mind and its Place in Nature* 1925: 5

Behaviourism: the true picture

“everything important in psychology ... can be investigated in essence through the continued experimental and theoretical analysis of the determiners of rat behavior at a choice point in a maze”

E.C. Tolman “The Determiners of Behavior at a Choice Point” *Psychological Review* 45 (1938) 1-14.

Tolman on 'raw feels'

“we never learn whether it feels like our red of our green or our gray, or whether indeed, its ‘feel’ is perhaps sui generis and unlike any of our own.... Whether your raw feels are or are not like mine, you and I shall never discover. ... If there be raw feels correlated with such discriminanda expectations, these raw feels are by very definition ‘private’ and not capable of scientific treatment. And we may leave the question as to whether they exist, and what to do about them, if they do exist, to other disciplines than psychology — for example, to logic, epistemology and metaphysics. And whatever the answers of these other disciplines, we, as mere psychologists, need not be concerned.”

E.C. Tolman *Purposive Behavior in Animals and Men* 1932: 252-3

Tolman on 'raw feels'

“we never learn whether it feels like our red of our green or our gray, or whether indeed, its ‘feel’ is perhaps sui generis and unlike any of our own.... Whether your raw feels are or are not like mine, you and I shall never discover. ... If there be raw feels correlated with such discriminanda expectations, **these raw feels are by very definition ‘private’ and not capable of scientific treatment. And we may leave the question as to whether they exist, and what to do about them, if they do exist, to other disciplines than psychology — for example, to logic, epistemology and metaphysics. And whatever the answers of these other disciplines, we, as mere psychologists, need not be concerned.**”

E.C. Tolman *Purposive Behavior in Animals and Men* 1932: 252-3

The significance of behaviourism

Not that it is a plausible philosophical or psychological theory

But the conception of consciousness it introduced:
the *phenomenal residue* or 'raw feel'

Post-behaviourist physicalism

The recovery of consciousness and the rise of materialism/physicalism

U.T. Place 'Is Consciousness a Brain Process?' 1956

JJC Smart 'Sensations and Brain Processes' 1959

Smart on phenomenal qualities

‘the singular elusiveness of “raw feels” —why no one seems to be able to pin any properties on them’

J.J.C. Smart, ‘Sensations and Brain Processes’ 1959

Functionalism and qualia

The objection that functionalism cannot account for 'qualia' is that functionalism 'cannot account for the "raw feel" component of mental states, or for their "internal" or "phenomenological" character'

Sydney Shoemaker, 'Functionalism and Qualia' (1975: 185)

The legacy of behaviourism

- (1) A conception of the mind as not essentially involving consciousness
- (2) A conception of consciousness as the 'phenomenal residue' of mental processes

But is this necessary?

None of the major arguments against physicalism from the existence of qualia presuppose the phenomenal residue conception:

- The knowledge argument
- The 'zombie' argument
- The 'explanatory gap'

Obstacles to understanding

The phenomenal residue conception of consciousness makes it hard to understand:

- the phenomenology of cognition
- intentionalist accounts of consciousness

Conclusion 1

The late 20th century conception of consciousness in analytic philosophy emerged from the idea of consciousness as givenness, via the behaviourist idea of 'raw feels'

Conclusion 2

In the post-behaviourist period in analytic philosophy, this resulted in the division of states of mind into essentially unconscious propositional attitudes ('beliefs and desires') plus the 'phenomenal residue' of *qualia*: intrinsic, ineffable and inefficacious sensory states

Conclusion 3

Very little in the important questions about consciousness depends on this conception, or on this particular division of mental states

Conclusion 4

Accepting this division and these conceptions of intentionality and consciousness are not obligatory starting points for the philosophy of mind

A historical investigation of how these ideas came to be seen as inevitable can also help us see how we might reasonably reject them

For more on this theme

Tim Crane, 'A short history of philosophical theories of consciousness in the 20th century'

www.timcrane.com/onlinepapers

Summary of this term's conclusions

From Seminar 1

Michaelmas term 2015: Themes

1. physicalism, reductionism and alternatives
2. Conceptions of consciousness
3. The history of phenomenal consciousness: sense-data, the given, qualia etc.
4. Phenomenal consciousness without qualia

Summary of first term's conclusions (1)

(a) Physicalism

- Requires an understanding of the 'physical'
- Should not be understood in terms of substance
- Entails global supervenience, but not vice versa
- Is reductive in one way or another

Summary of this term's conclusions (1)

(b) Reductionism

- Two kinds of reduction: ontological and explanatory
- Ontological reduction identifies entities
- Explanatory reduction relates claims
- Explanatory reduction not a bad thing as such

Summary of this term's conclusions (1)

(c) Alternatives: dualism, emergence

- anyone who denies the property ('type') identity theorist is a dualist of a kind (mental properties are 'novel')
- property dualism in the controversial sense denies supervenience
- weak emergence: novelty + explanatory reduction
- strong emergence: novelty and no explanatory reduction

Summary of this term's conclusions (2)

Conceptions of consciousness

- distinguish the phenomena from *theories* of the phenomena
- 'what it's like', the phenomenal and qualia
- qualia understood as non-intentional
- denying qualia is not denying consciousness
- qualia play no role in the anti-physicalist arguments

Summary of this term's conclusions (3)

History of qualia, sense-data, the given etc.

- Early 20th century picture of the relationship between intentionality and consciousness very different from late 20th century picture
- My conjecture: behaviourism had a key role in explaining the late 20th century picture
- This picture is not obligatory!

Summary of this term's conclusions (4)

Phenomenal consciousness without qualia

- Intentional theories of consciousness
- To be continued

Finally some methodological morals

Three morals

- The mind can be studied without establishing physicalism; we can be neutral on the question of physicalism
- Phenomenology before metaphysics! (In a certain sense...)
- Don't just state what seems obvious to you: try and figure out why others think differently

Happy christmas!

www.newdirectionsproject.com



125
g



NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF THE MIND

research project 2015-2017

 UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



John
Templeton
Foundation

newdirectionsproject.com