

Lecture 9

Part One:

Folk Psychology, The Life World,
Stances

Plan

- Folk Psychology
 - What Fodor, Churchland, and Dennett think folk-psychology commits us to
- Abstracta
 - Ontological status
- The Life World
 - A simple model
- Stances
 - Physical, design

Folk-Psychology

- Folk-psychology involves ascribing mental states such as belief, desire, hope, fear etc
- Mental states are thought to be propositional in structure (believes that p, desires that q etc)
- We ascribe these states (at least in part) to **predict** and **explain** behavior

Fodor

- Focuses on the success of folk psychology because:

REPRESENTATIONAL THEORY OF MIND (RTM)

- 1. Propositional attitudes pick out computational relations to internal representations
- 2. Mental processes are causal processes that involve transitions between internal representations

Churchland

- Focuses on the limitations of folk psychology:
 - Works only sometimes
 - not good for sleep, mental illness, neurological illness etc)
 - Folk theories typically have a bad fate as scientific theories
 - Folk biology and folk physics didn't fare well
 - Folk psychology hasn't developed or progressed
 - Doesn't fit with science (neuroscience or physics)

Folk-Psychology

- They both agree that folk psychology is committed to mental states being **internal** states that **cause** behavior
 - Fodor - there are such states
 - Churchland - there aren't such states

Abstracta

- Physicists posit centers of gravity
- They use these posits to predict the behavior of physical objects
- Are there really such things as centers of gravity?

Abstracta

- Before we can say whether there really are such things...
- We need to know more about what centers of gravity are supposed to be
- That is a pretty good policy in general!

Abstracta

- If a center of gravity is a point mass then there isn't any such thing (useful fictions)
- If a center of gravity is a vector sum that acts through a point then there is (they are perfectly real)

Abstracta

- Center of the population of the United States
- Dennett's lost sock center
- Abstract, not useful, - real?
- Reality comes cheap for Dennett – but he professes to be less interested in 'reality' and more in 'utility'

Dennett

- HEADLINE: Scientists discover left handed people don't really have beliefs!
- HEADLINE: Scientists discover people with diabetes don't really have desires!
- If there weren't inner states that played the right causal role this wouldn't undermine folk-psychology
- We need to focus on 'the light'
 - what is visible to us - behavior
- What vindicates folk-psychology is the predictive leverage that we get from it

The Life World

- Conway's 'Game of Life' (check out wiki!)
- A grid of cells where each cell can be 'on' or 'off'
- Time is discrete ($t_1, t_2, t_3 \dots$)
- One law of physics:
 - If two neighbours are 'on' then stay same, if three neighbors are 'on' then 'on', else 'off'

The Physical Stance

- The ontology of the 'physical stance' consists in cells that can be 'on' or 'off'
- The state of the lifeworld at t_2 can be predicted by the state of the lifeworld at t_1 + the law of physics
- 100% accuracy

The Design Stance

- Run the program so that time becomes continuous
- A new ontology emerges:
 - Objects persist through time
 - Block of 4 'on' cells
 - Flasher flashes indefinitely
 - Objects move through space
 - Gliders

The Design Stance

- We can make true generalizations about the behavior of these objects:
 - ‘An eater can eat a glider in four generations. Whatever is being consumed, the basic process is the same. A bridge forms between the eater and its prey. In the next region the bridge region dies from over-population, taking a bite out of both eater and prey. The eater then repairs itself. The prey usually cannot. If the remainder of the prey dies out as with the glider, the prey is consumed’.

The Design Stance

- The predictive leverage that we get from the design stance is less than 100%
 - Provided nothing else encroaches
- Do the objects from the design stance 'really exist'?
 - Temptation to say 'sure - look for yourself!'
- Can the objects from the design stance be identified with physical cells?
 - They are multiply realized

The Design Stance

- While we can predict the next state of the lifeworld with 100% accuracy from the physical stance it doesn't seem to be able to capture some things:
 - 'An eater can eat a glider in four generations...'
- Temptation to say that if one didn't see the ontology of the design stance (the flashers etc) one would be missing something that was really there