

PHILOSOPHY 101

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MID-TERM REVIEW

PHYSICALISM & CONSCIOUSNESS

Physicalism:

Everything that is or could exist is ultimately physical in nature

The "Hard Problem" of Consciousness:

Why do the physical processes that characterize life result in conscious experience?

NAGEL'S "WHAT ITS LIKE" ARGUMENT

1. *If Physicalism is true then all aspects of reality are amenable to being “given a physical account”*
2. *Giving a physical account of something means giving an account that is accessible from many different points of view*
3. *Facts about phenomenal consciousness are accessible from only one point of view*
4. *There are phenomenal facts (i.e. facts about phenomenal consciousness)*
5. *∴ Physicalism is false (or we can't understand how it could be true)*

THE PHENOMENAL ZOMBIE ARGUMENT

1. *If physicalism were true, then the complete physical information about a subject would entail an answer as to whether she was phenomenally conscious*
2. *But no amount of physical information about a person logically entails that a person is phenomenally conscious —i.e. phenomenal zombies are logically possible*
3. *∴ Physicalism is false*

JACKSON'S "KNOWLEDGE" ARGUMENT

1. *Before her release from the B&W room Mary has all the physical information concerning human color vision*
2. *Mary learns something new about color when she leaves the room*
3. *∴ There is some information about human color vision which Mary doesn't know*
4. *∴ Not all information is physical information (i.e. physicalism is false)*

LEWIS'S "ABILITY HYPOTHESIS"

- Learning "what it is like" to experience something is not learning a new bit of propositional knowledge, it is learning how to:
 - remember
 - imagine
 - recognize

1. *The only relevant alternative to the Ability Hypothesis (AH) is the Hypothesis of Phenomenal Information (HPI)*
2. *HPI is incompatible with physicalism*
3. *AH is both compatible with physicalism and explains everything that HPI explains*
4. *∴ We should choose AH over HPI*

BLOCK ON CONSCIOUSNESS

Phenomenal Consciousness:

A mental state with "experiential properties" that constitute "what it is like" to experience something

Access Consciousness:

A mental state that is poised for free use in reasoning and for direct "rational" control of action and speech.

1. Abnormal psychological conditions, such as blindsight and "absent" seizures, may indicate the function of consciousness
 2. When consciousness is missing under such conditions, subjects cannot
 - report or reason about the relevant nonconscious representations, nor use them in guiding action
 - exhibit flexibility and creativity in their thought and action
 3. ∴ Consciousness enables information represented in the brain to be used in reasoning, reporting, and rationally guiding action
 4. ∴ Consciousness promotes flexibility and creativity in thought and action
-
- Block argues that the confusion between A & P consciousness foils this kind of reasoning

REPRESENTATION

- What is a representation?
- How do representations represent?
- Is there a fundamental representational kind?
- How might mental representation be different from other kinds?

AI & THE CHINESE ROOM ARGUMENT

Strong AI:

thinking is constituted by the manipulation of formal symbols,
such as occurs in a computer program

Weak AI:

thinking may be modeled by formal symbol systems, such as
computer programs

- Turing test
- Set-up of Chinese Room argument

Syntax:

the formal or structural features of a symbol system which determine which expressions are legitimate members of the system and which are not

Semantics:

The system of meanings assigned to a symbol system, given by determining the referents of the symbols and the truth conditions of symbol strings

- Systems objection
- Implementation objection

MID-TERM FORMAT

STRUCTURE

1. Argument extraction (2, 10 pts)
2. Definitions (2, 5 pts)
3. Multiple choice (10, 3 pts)
4. Short essay (2, 20 pts)

ARGUMENT EXTRACTION

Analyze the text and extract the argument in premise/conclusion form. Pick two of three:

There is no reason to think that there are any absolute moral truths. We can see this when we consider different cultural outlooks concerning what is morally required. For example, indigenous Inuit culture considered infanticide to be morally permissible. But modern American culture clearly thinks infanticide is morally wrong. So what's morally right or wrong is just a matter of opinion, which can vary from culture to culture.

1. If moral truths were absolute then they would not vary from culture to culture
2. What's considered morally right or wrong does vary from culture to culture
3. \therefore There are no absolute moral truths

DEFINITIONS

Give the definition of the word. Pick **two** of three:

Physicalism:

everything that could exist is either physical or depends on the physical

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Nagel's argument concerning consciousness aims to show what?

- A. What it is like to be a bat*
- B. That physicalism is false*
- C. That we cannot understand how physicalism could be true*
- D. That physicalism is true*

SHORT ESSAY

Write a *short* essay—two to three paragraphs. Pick *two* of three:

- Explain how the knowledge argument is a challenge to physicalism

- explain what physicalism is
- state the knowledge argument
- state the challenge which the knowledge argument poses to physicalism

