

You attendance has been incredibly poor. I suggest attending all the lectures for your modules from now on.



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU

Y Drindod Dewi Sant

UNIVERSITY OF WALES

Trinity Saint David

Undergraduate Assignment Feedback Form

Ffurflen Adborth Aseiniad Isreddedig

(To be completed by marker / I'w gwblhau gan y marciwr)

Student Name:

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Enw Myfyriwr:

Module title:

Teitl Modiwl

Student number:

Rhif Myfyriwr

Assignment title:

For completion by marker / I'w gwblhau gan y marciwr –

Comments/Sylwadau

This essay contains quite a few inaccuracies & misunderstandings. There is an over-reliance on bits of the handout with little evidence of engagement with the actual reading material. This is an attempt at referencing, but endnotes 5-6 are completely missing*.

Overall, a much better understanding of the reading material is necessary in order to achieve a pass mark.

Also, be aware of presenting claims merely because you feel them to be true – always consider the arguments & counter-arguments.

Marker's signature / Llofnod marciwr:

Date / Dyddiad:

16/11/20

Provisional mark / Marc dros dro: 38

NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board

ON Mae pob marc yn farc dros dro hyd nes eu cadarnhawyd gan y bwrdd arholi terfynol

* At this stage, you are expected to know how to use scholarly conventions with regard to referencing. If you are struggling here, contact me or contact the library (the latter does workshops & one-to-one sessions).

Daisy Haines

Critically evaluate two of the following challenges to functionalism:

- The inverted qualia objection
- The absent qualia objection
- The Chinese room

In order to critically evaluate two of these objections in response to functionalism we must first look at what the functionalist theory is; "Functionalism in the philosophy of mind is the doctrine that what makes something a mental state of a particular type does not depend on its internal constitution, but rather on the way it functions, or the role it plays, in the system of which it is a part"¹. It is similar to the theory of philosophical behaviourism, as it looks at the stimulation which causes the internal state. For example, the theory of functionalism would characterize pain as a feeling which is caused by injury to the physical body which in turn causes the internal feelings of anxiety and causes the output of cries or wincing in pain. This theory would therefore say that only beings or animals capable of having these internal states are capable of being in pain. Although functionalism is particularly attractive to materialists, it is neutral between materialism and dualism as it does not dismiss that there are mental states, only that this is caused by physical stimuli. I've chosen to look at the inverted qualia objection and the absent qualia objection as a response to philosophical functionalism as I feel that they contrast not only functionalism but each other to a certain extent and found researching these objections to be quite interesting.

✓
Explain here how you'll do this.

The first objection is the inverted qualia objection. First, I must clarify what is meant by the term "qualia". In philosophy qualia is a term used to describe a subjective, personal or conscious experience of a living being. This is conclude anything from pain of a broken bone to the taste of cheese. The objection of the inverted qualia uses the example of seeing colours. This example consists of two people; Fred and George. Both men are functionally the same however have different qualia. Let's suppose both men are looking at the colour red, George experiences Y whereas Fred experiences X, although they experience different qualia they are both experiencing what that perceive to be red. Until recently we had no explanation for this yet we now know this occurrence to be colour blindness. Which means that we had no knowledge that Fred and George were experiencing different qualia. This could be referred to as the inverted spectrum problem which is where you have the same behavioural outputs by stimuli but have experienced different things; so if Fred was colour blind he may not see the same red as George but he will still stop at traffic lights while driving. In functionalism, Putnam does not account for qualia which is the main reason why I think that the inverted qualia objection holds a strong foundation while taking on functionalism as there is a strong need to understand that people don't experience everything in the same way especially in our modern day society. This is because by doing so we will become more inclusive; I would go as far to argue that this objection points out that the functionalist view is far too objective and does not allow for the idea that people differ from one another.

Raw data

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The main reason (2)

The functionalist would combat this with two arguments "(1) those aiming to show that two systems might be functionally identical even though only one of them has any qualia at

¹<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/functionalism/#:~:text=Functionalism%20in%20the%20philosophy%20of,which%20it%20is%20a%20part.>

Full ref. Author, etc. needed.

all, and (2) those aiming to show that two systems might be functionally identical even though they have vastly different qualia from one another"². The first corresponding argument states that only one of the qualia's that two people may experience is valid. Looking back at our example of Fred and George, although we might say that they both have subjective experiences, only George's is valid as he sees a "true red". I find this argument to be very weak as it diminishes the experience of Fred and follows too closely to a value consensus, as there is no evidence to suggest that what Fred sees is in fact the "true red" instead of George. The second argument is, in my opinion, much stronger than that of the first. It simply states that although the two men may experience different qualia their functional experiences are still the same and so the argument is centred around the idea that both functionalism and the inverted qualia do not have to correspond one another and can in fact work alongside one another. Even though I view this argument to be stronger than the first I still do not feel as though you can argue that two experiences can be functionally the same if you do find that some people respond with different qualia. I think that the inverted qualia objection does very well at criticising the functionalist theory.

The next objection I looked at was the absent qualia objection; or the objection which includes the idea of "philosophical zombies". This is the idea that in order to have an experience of something you have to have a conceptual idea of this; as an example we will use pain. There could be people or animals that experience pain or certain states of pain yet have no concept of it and so do not show an output or physical or verbal reaction to this. This presents a problem. As Functionalism doesn't account for conscious mental thought processes, the absent qualia objection would suggest a being which has all the organisational properties mentioned by Putnam yet it doesn't have any of the subjective experience. The idea of philosophical zombies comes from this idea; they are beings that appear to be just like the rest of us yet on the inside they have no evidence of personal experience. It is to say that these creatures are functionally the same a person yet possess no qualia. We know that people like this do exist, although we do not call them philosophical zombies. The zombie argument by Chalmers goes as follows:

1. It's conceivable that there are molecule-for-molecule duplicates of oneself with no qualia (zombies).
2. Whatever is conceivable represents a real metaphysical possibility.
3. Zombies are possible.

"The conceivability of zombies seems...obvious to me...While this possibility is probably empirically impossible, it certainly seems that a coherent situation is described; I can discern no contradiction in the description"³. One issue with the zombie argument is that although the argument is valid it is not sound as there are some problems with the premises: There is nothing to suggest that both the first and second premise are correct, it is not therefore accurate and so there is no evidence to suggest that we should believe this arguments ideas. Most functionalists would deny that a molecule-for-molecule duplicate of someone without qualia could exist; it could even be argued that those people who do exist in our world who appear to have no qualia as they may not show a physical reaction to stimuli. Yet we must consider the possibility that the lack of reaction may in fact be their qualia as no reaction may be a reaction in itself. Other philosophers have argued that arguing in favour of the existence of philosophical zombies undermines our existence; Daniel Dennet said 'when philosophers claim that zombies are conceivable, they invariably underestimate the task of conception

² <https://iep.utm.edu/qualia/#H2>

³ (Chalmers 1996, p.96)

* Confusion this challenge with HOT (Higher-order thought theories) (?)

This needs better thought

(or imagination), and end up imagining something that violates their own definition⁴. This is to say that by suggesting the idea of a copy of you but without any subjective thought or qualia is demeaning towards yourself. I however, do not view this to be a valid response to the argument as I believe that what makes you 'you' is your qualia and personal experience and so I do not agree that this will be demeaning to a person. It is also for this reason that I do not think that the absent qualia objection is a good criticism for philosophical functionalism as I believe that the have someone who does not any qualia or subjective thought is nearly impossible and that philosophical zombies are in fact not possible as qualia brings you alive and without it you would not be here.

Ref
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suggestion?

In conclusion, I found that the inverted qualia objection holds a very strong foundation and supports the individuality in people and is very good at battling functionalism. I myself, found this objection to fit easily with my original thoughts on qualia before this topic. However, I found the absent qualia objection is not strong founded and does not do a very good job at arguing against functionalism. Although I am certainly not a functionalist, I found myself to agree more with the arguments in favor of this rather than the ones which oppose it. Which to me only suggests that the argument cannot be strong enough to hold any validity. I also think that the main problem that this objection had was the premises found in D. J. Chalmer's explanation, although his view was shown as a valid argument the lack of correctness in his premises is what let him down. Rather than presenting it in the way that he did with the information he attempted to use, he should've left a brief explanation and focus on solidifying the points he held as so not to have any small gaps in which philosophers such as D.C.Dennett could criticise his thoughts and theory. It is to say that I do feel as though the absent qualia objection does hold some value towards the theory of functionalism yet I do not feel that it is as strong as the inverted qualia theory.

But you need to
evaluate counter-
argument

⁴ (Dennett, 1995. p. 322)

References

1. Janet, I., 2020. *Functionalism (Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy)*. [online] Plato.stanford.edu. Available at: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/functionalism/#:~:text=Functionalism%20in%20the%20philosophy%20of,which%20it%20is%20a%20part.>> [Accessed 11 November 2020].
2. Janet, I., 2020. *Functionalism (Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy)*. [online] Plato.stanford.edu. Available at: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/functionalism/#:~:text=Functionalism%20in%20the%20philosophy%20of,which%20it%20is%20a%20part.>> [Accessed 11 November 2020].
3. Block, 'Qualia', in Richard L. Gregory (ed.), *Oxford Companion to the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Block cites O. Flanagan, *Consciousness Reconsidered* (MIT Press, 1992).
4. D. J. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Last accessed 12/11/20).
5. D. C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1991) last accessed 12/11/20).
6. Ned Block, 'Troubles with Functionalism', in Block (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Psychology, Volumes 1 and 2* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp.268–305 (last accessed 13/11/20).
7. Todd W. Griffith and Michael D. Byrne, 'Qualia: the Hard Problem,' *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*, 1996, University of California, San Diego. (accessed but not used. 13/11/20).
8. Robert Kirk, 'The Inaugural Address: Why There Couldn't Be Zombies', *Aristotelian Society Supplementary*, Vol. 73, No. 1, 1999. (accessed but not used 13/11/20).

Where are these
notes in the body
of the essay