

Against Functionalism

1. Overview

The functionalist says that each type of experience can be defined in functional terms. For example, *pain* is whichever state is typically caused by bodily damage and typically causes screaming, flinching, etc.

The opponent of functionalism argues that functional definitions of experience leave out the most important part: consciousness! They try to show this by pointing to experiences for which functionalism seems wholly inadequate—notably, color experiences (spectrum inversion problem) and understanding (Chinese Room Argument).

The strategy:

- Provide an example in which *X* is *functionally equivalent* to the typical human being. That means an example in which *X* is in states with the same inputs/outputs as *our* states
- But sketch the example so that *X* has different *experiences* (or qualia) than the typical human being. That might mean the individual has none at all!

The argument:

- (1) If functionalism is true, then *X* has the same experiences (qualia) as us.
- (2) *X* does *not* have the same experiences (qualia) as us.
- (3) So, functionalism is false.

2. Chinese Room Argument



Reply:

- True, Hal doesn't understand Chinese
- But the whole system does!
- Plus, the system isn't even functionally equivalent to a human being (e.g., it can't use words to point to things in the world)

Fallacy of composition:

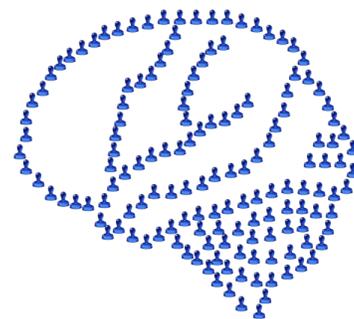
- If parts A, B, C lack/have some feature, then the whole they comprise must lack/have that feature
- BAD: Each judge serving on the Supreme Court is less than 100 years old, so the Supreme Court is less than 100 years old
- BAD: Hal doesn't understand Chinese, so the Chinese Room doesn't understand Chinese

Searle's reply:

- Put the whole thing inside a robot body

3. The China-Body ProblemThe argument:

1. If Functionalism is true, the China-Body system has a mind (has beliefs, feels pain, etc.).
2. But it doesn't.
3. So, functionalism is false.

Reply:

- It really does feel pain! We just fail to see the forest for the trees

Puzzle:

- A. The China-Body system lacks feelings.
- B. But the silicon man has feelings.
- C. The China-Body system and the silicon man can be functionally equivalent!

Question: How might the ship of Theseus example help illuminate this puzzle?

MENTAL STATE TYPES	
Inherently conscious	Need not be conscious
Feelings, experiences, etc.	Beliefs, desires, fears, etc.