

24.09 Minds and Machines

spring 2007

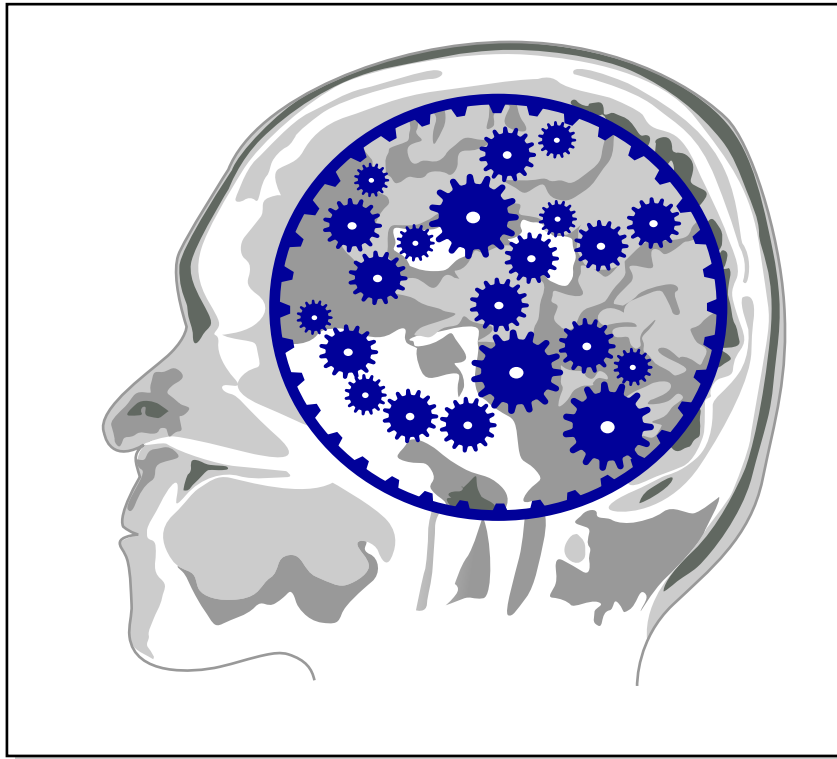


Figure by MIT OCW.

- Jackson's knowledge argument

physicalism (materialism)

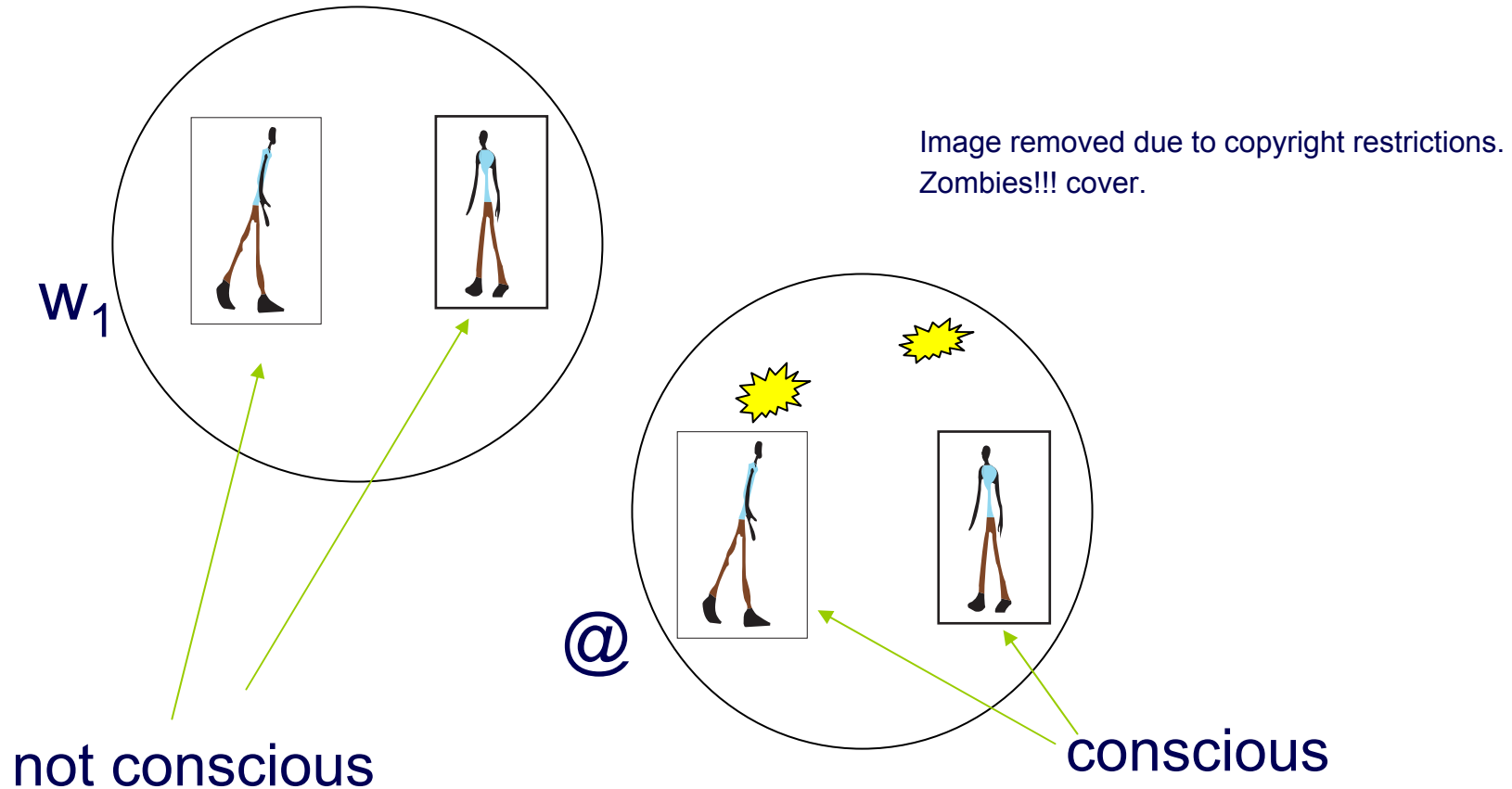
- a minimal (and slightly oversimplified) statement of the view:

any possible world that is a physical duplicate of the actual world is a duplicate simpliciter

- in particular, there are no “zombie” worlds
- this an example of a supervenience thesis

a zombie world

w_1 is a molecule-for-molecule replica of @



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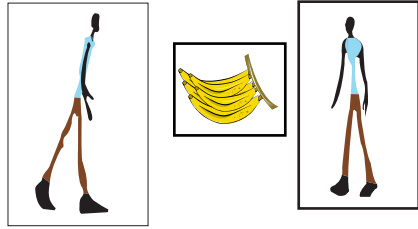


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an example of a supervenience thesis

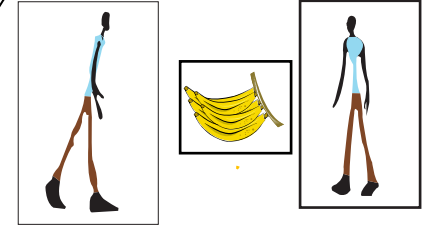


Figure by MIT OCW.

- the supervenience of the moral on the descriptive
any possible world exactly alike our world (the actual world) “descriptively” is exactly alike it morally
 - so, if in fact Alfred ought to give Alice her bananas back, in any possible world that is descriptively exactly alike this world, Alfred ought to give Alice her bananas back

another example

- baldness supervenes on hair distribution

any possible world exactly alike our world (the actual world) in its distribution of hair on people's heads is exactly alike it in its distribution of bald people

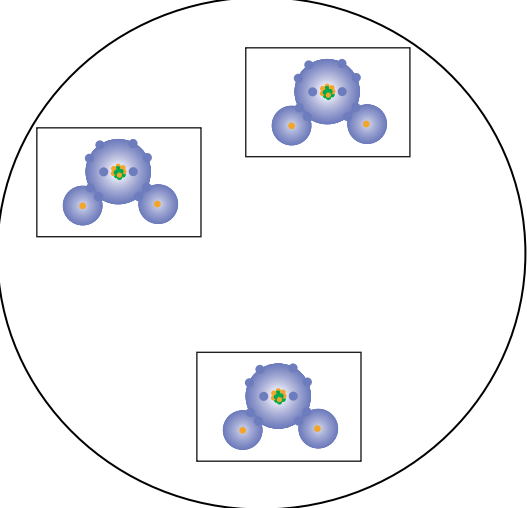


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another example

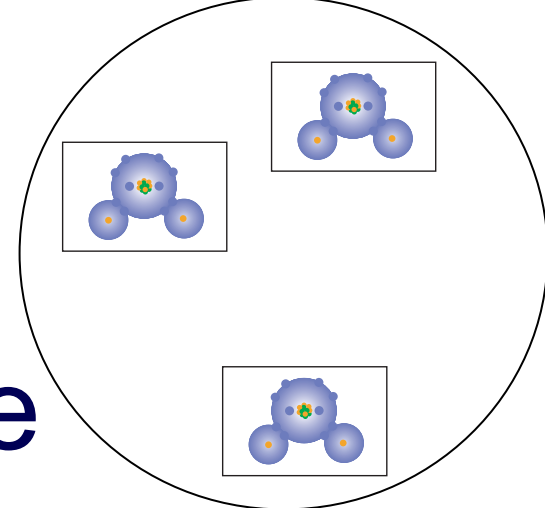


Figure by MIT OCW.

- “H₂O-ism”

any possible world exactly alike our world (the actual world) in its distribution of H₂O is exactly alike it in its distribution of water

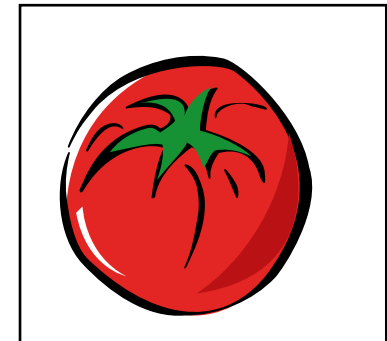
- so, if in fact there's water in Cambridge, in any possible world that is exactly alike this world in its distribution of H₂O, there's water in that very spot

“Epiphenomenal qualia”

- sets out the “knowledge argument” against physicalism
- physicalism is the thesis “that all (correct) information is physical information”
- that is, more or less, all facts are physical facts
- but it’s clearer to understand physicalism in the way explained before, as a supervenience thesis

black-and-white Mary

- “Mary is a brilliant scientist...forced to investigate the world from a black and white room via a black and white television monitor”
- she “acquires, let us suppose, all the physical information there is to obtain when we see ripe tomatoes...use terms like ‘red’...and so on”
- “what will happen when Mary is released from her black and white room?”



Figures by MIT OCW.



“Will she learn anything or not?”

Figure by MIT OCW.

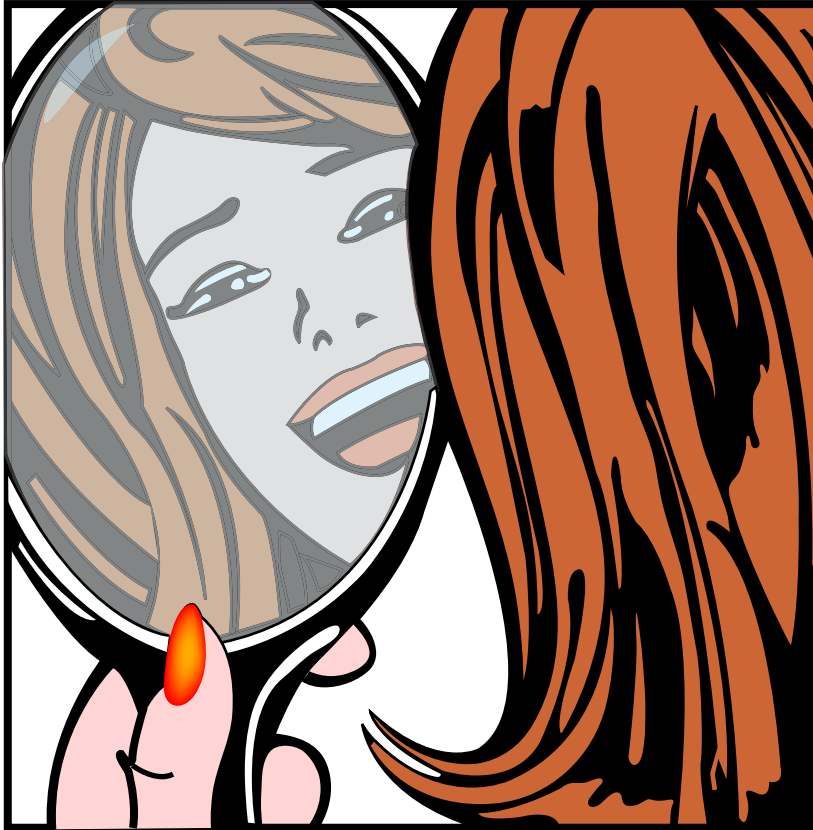


Figure by MIT OCW.

“It just seems obvious that she will learn something about the world and our experience of it...But she had all the physical information.
Ergo...Physicalism is false”

the knowledge argument

- 1 imprisoned Mary knows all the physical facts
hence:
- 2 if physicalism is true, Mary (before her release)
knows all the facts
- 3 after her release, Mary learns something—something
she couldn't have known while imprisoned
- 4 if Mary learns something, she learns a fact
hence (from 3, 4):
- 5 Mary learns a fact
hence (from 2, 5):
- 6 physicalism is false



Figure by MIT OCW.

the knowledge argument

Jackson draws a further conclusion

7 our experiences have “qualia”

(“The whole thrust of the knowledge argument is that Mary...does not know about certain qualia...” (Jackson, “What Mary didn’t know”))

Qualia are “certain [nonphysical] features of bodily sensations [and] perceptual experiences...the hurtfulness of pains, the itchiness of itches [etc.]”

- contrast Tye’s “qualia” and “Qualia” (in ‘Visual Qualia...’)



Figure by MIT OCW.

the move from 1 to 2



Figure by MIT OCW.

- 1 imprisoned Mary knows all the physical facts hence:
- 2 if physicalism is true, Mary (before her release) knows all the facts

rationale: not knowing something is not being able to decide between rival possibilities—in other words not being able to tell what possible world one is in; so if imprisoned Mary doesn't know something then she can't tell exactly what possible world she is in; but if physicalism is true she plainly can tell what possible world she in, because if physicalism is true then the totality of the physical facts eliminates all possibilities but one, and she knows all the physical facts

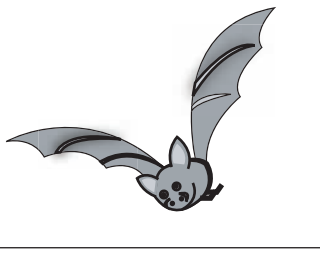


Figure by MIT OCW.

Mary, Fred, and the bat



Figure by MIT OCW.

- “It is important to distinguish [Nagel’s argument] from the Knowledge argument”
- “I was not complaining that we weren’t finding out what it is like to be Fred, I was complaining that there is something about his experience, a property of it, of which we were left ignorant...No amount of knowledge about Fred, be it physical or not, amounts to knowledge “from the inside” concerning Fred”
 - but this is a bit unfair: “The point of view in question is not one accessible only to a single individual. Rather it is a type.” (p. 222)



Figure by MIT OCW.

Mary, Fred, and the bat



Figure by MIT OCW.

- only Fred can know (what he would express by saying) “It is I myself who is...”
 - but: Nagel thinks we don’t know something about the general kind of experience enjoyed by bats, not that we don’t know what Bill the bat knows when he says “It is I myself who is...”

self-locating knowledge explained



Figure by MIT OCW.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- only Fred can know (what he would express by saying) “It is I myself who is...” (see also Lewis, “The Third Way”, 283)
- one can (apparently) know exactly which possible world one is in without knowing (what one would express by saying) “It is I myself who is in 32-124” (etc.)

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Map of the MIT campus.

resisting the knowledge argument

- 1 imprisoned Mary knows all the physical facts ←
- hence: ←
- 2 if physicalism is true, Mary (before her release) knows all the facts
- 3 after her release, Mary learns something—something she couldn't have known while imprisoned ←
- 4 if Mary learns something, she learns a fact ←
- hence (from 3, 4):
- 5 Mary learns a fact
- hence (from 2, 5):
- 6 physicalism is false



Figure by MIT OCW.

option B: resist the move from 1 to 2

- 1 imprisoned Mary knows all the physical facts
hence:
- 2 if physicalism is true, Mary (before her release) knows all the facts
 - motivation: might superchemist Sally (who knows all the facts about the distribution of H₂O) still be ignorant of the fact that water comes out of taps?
 - yet that wouldn't show that there are two worlds alike in their distribution of H₂O that differ in their distribution of water (i.e. that "H₂O-ism" is false)
 - see Chalmers, "Consciousness and...", for a reply

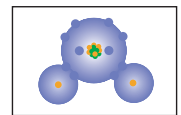


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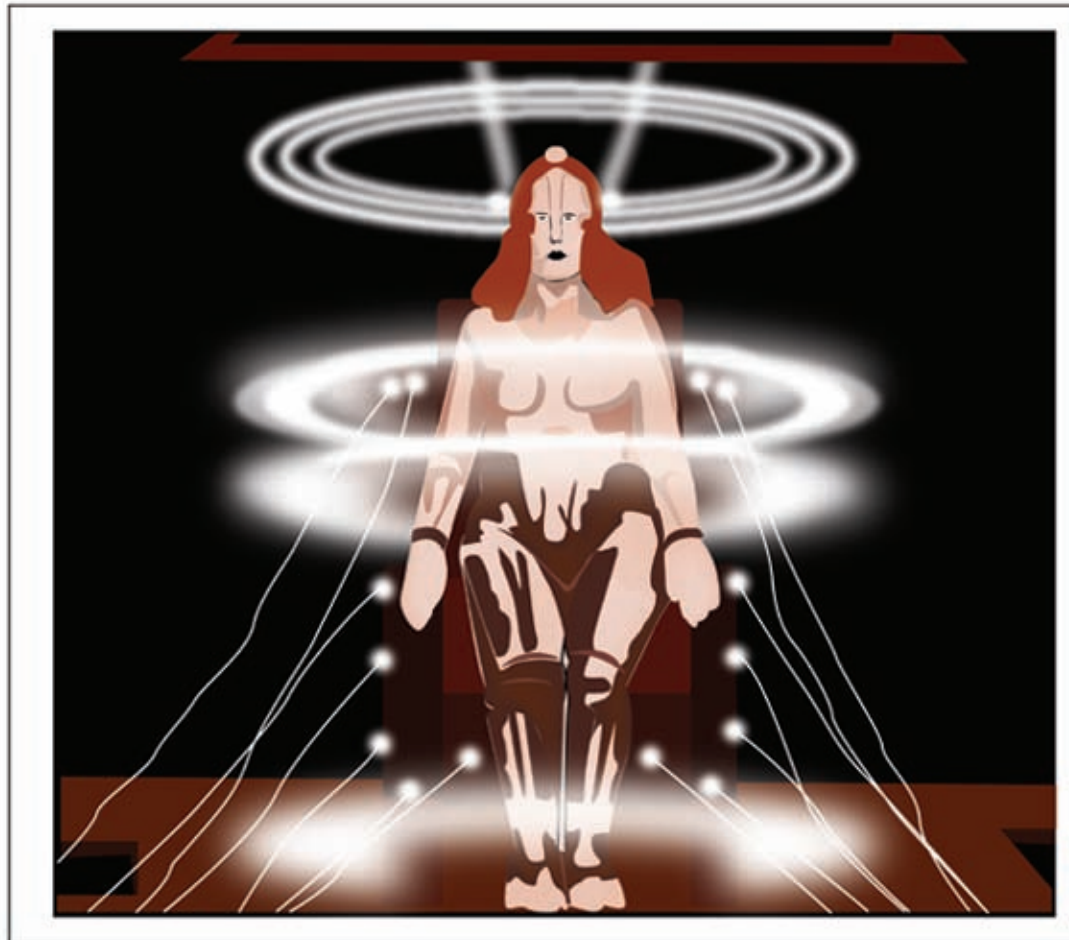


Figure by MIT OCW

- read Chalmers, 'Consciousness and...'