

24.09 Minds and Machines

spring 2007

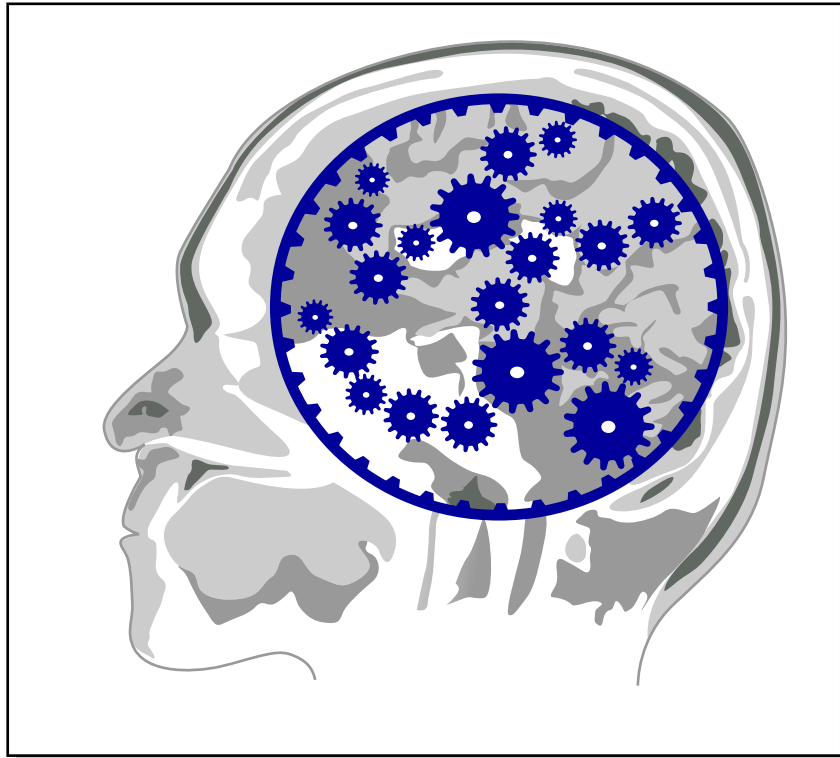


Figure by MIT OCW.

- problem set 10
- Jackson's knowledge argument, contd.
- Chalmers on consciousness and its place in nature

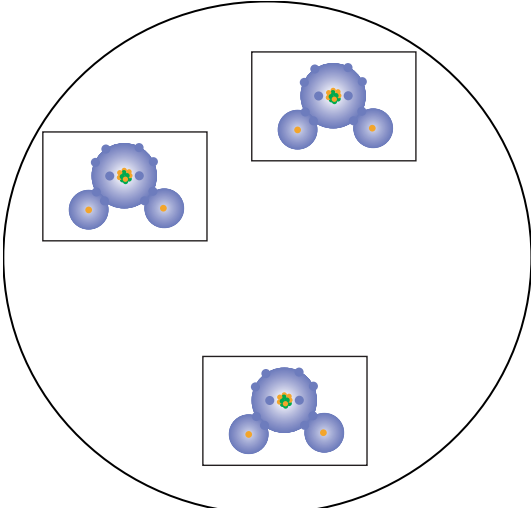


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an example of supervenience

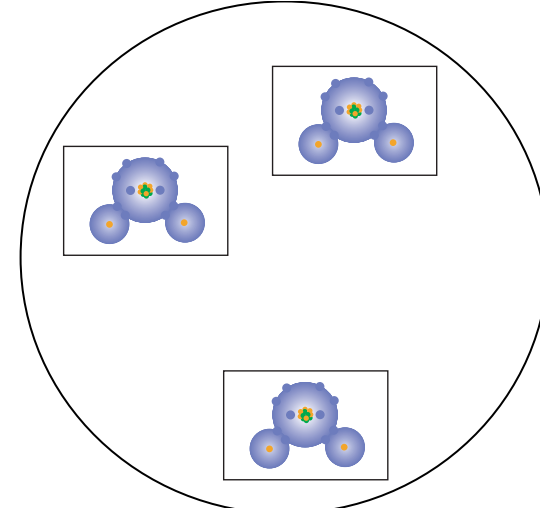


Figure by MIT OCW.

- “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

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

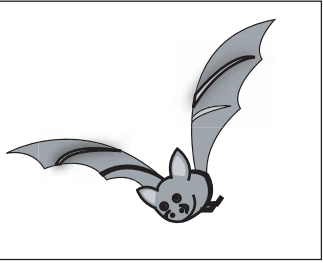


Figure by MIT OCW.

self-locating knowledge explained (we'll skip discussion of this, but see the handout)



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 A: deny 1

- 1 imprisoned Mary knows all the physical facts
 - not really necessary to suppose Mary knows all the physical facts
 - why would you need special experiences to know some physical facts?



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

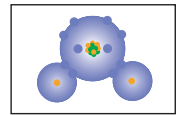


Figure by MIT OCW.

option C: deny 3

- 3 after her release, Mary learns something—something she couldn't have known while imprisoned
- after all, it's a pretty weird case to wrap your mind around
 - “It is of course true that in any realistic, readily imaginable version of the story, Mary would come to learn something, but in any realistic, readily imaginable version she might know a lot, but she would not know everything physical” (Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*)
 - see also Dennett, “What Robomary knows”

option D: deny 4

4 if Mary learns something, she learns a fact

Mary learns, but she doesn't learn a fact: rather, she acquires “know-how”, and thereby an ability (an ability to remember, imagine and recognize the experience of seeing something red) (see Lewis, “What experience teaches”)



Figure by MIT OCW.

knowledge-how and knowledge-that

- Ryle argued that “knowledge-how” (e.g. knowing how to swim) is not reducible to “knowledge-that” (e.g. knowing that kicking one’s legs makes one swim faster)
- does Mary really just acquire “know-how”?
- after all, it looks as if she could express her new knowledge she leaves the room by saying “Aha!, I didn’t know before that seeing red is like this, but now I do know that seeing red is like this”

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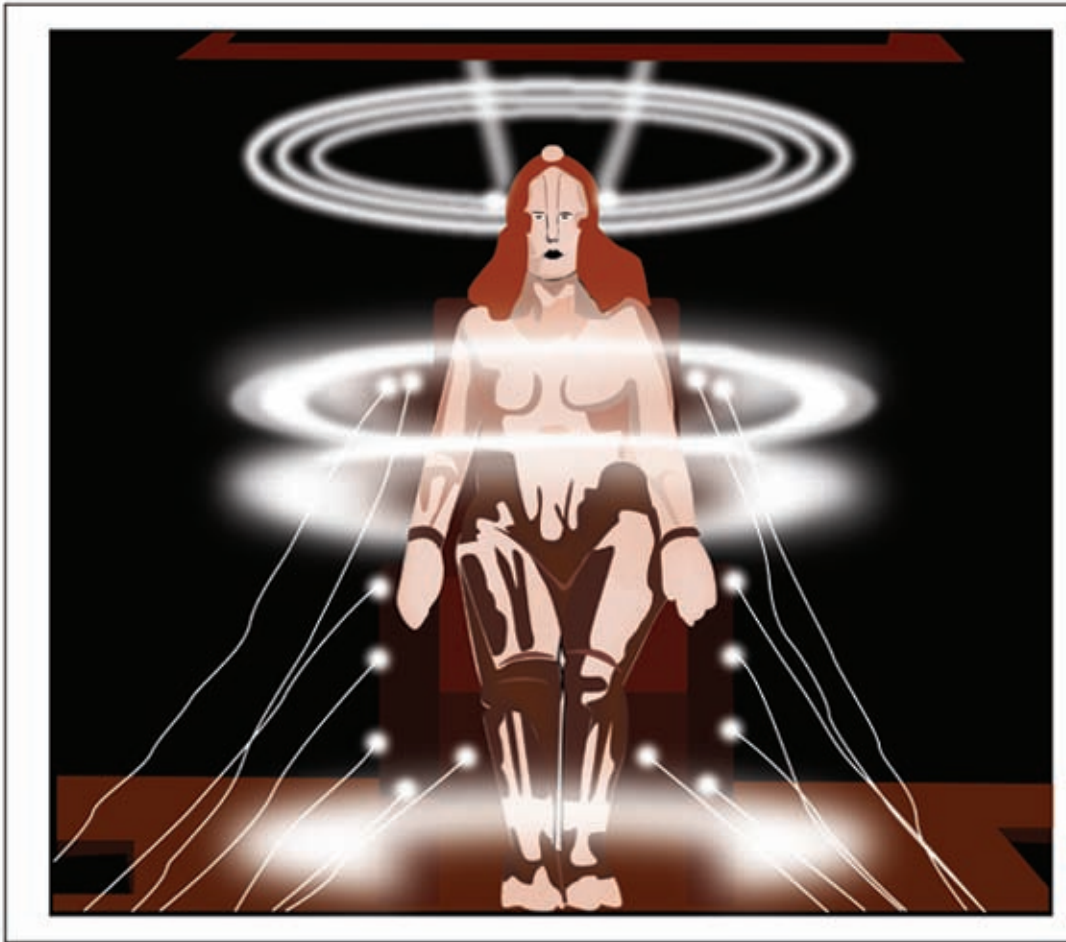


Figure by MIT OCW.

- read Chalmers, 'Consciousness and...'