

# 24.09 Minds and Machines

## spring 2007

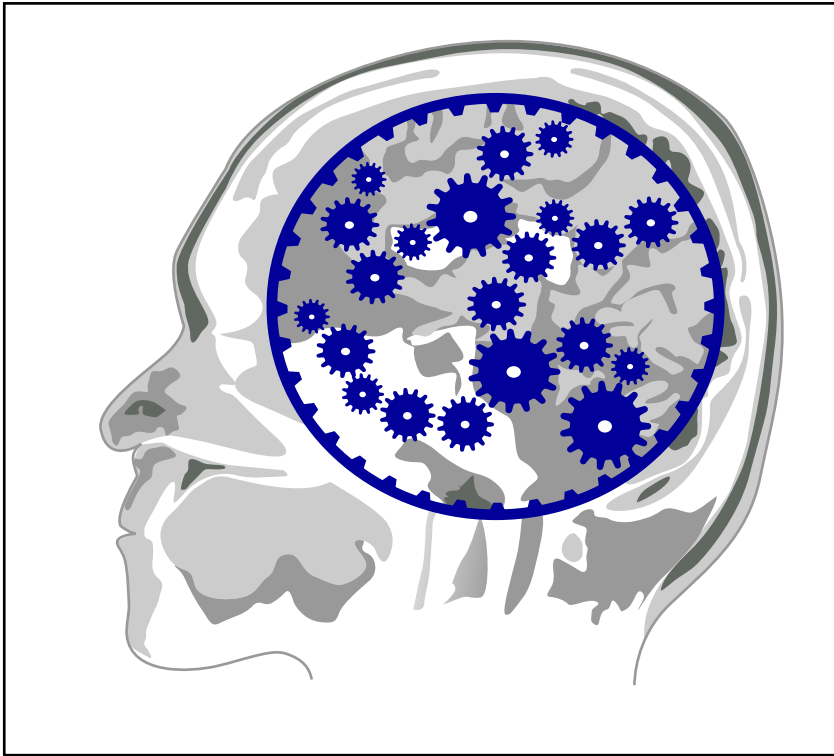


Figure by MIT OCW.

- handout on the knowledge argument
- Chalmers on consciousness and its place in nature, contd.

# the conceivability

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## argument (a.k.a. “argument D”)

1. it is conceivable that zombies exist
2. if (1), it is metaphysically possible that zombies exist (there is a possible world in which zombies exist)
3. if it is metaphysically possible that zombies exist, then consciousness is nonphysical
4. consciousness is nonphysical

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- type-A materialism (a priori physicalism)
- type-B materialism (a posteriori physicalism)
- type-C materialism (a priori mysterianism)
- type-D dualism (cartesian interactionism)
- type-E dualism (epiphenomenalism)
- type-F monism (panprotopsychism)

# type-E dualism (epiphenomenalism)

- accepts the conclusion
- accepts the causal closure of the physical:
  - the correct causal explanation of a physical event (e.g., the rising of Fred's arm) can always be given in solely physical terms
- “physical states cause phenomenal states, but not vice versa”
- see the “zombie twin” objection on p. 264
- “epiphenomenalism is a coherent view...[but] it is an inelegant view, producing a fragmented picture of nature”

# Dave and Zombie Dave



consciousness is a mystery!

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- on the E-type view, Zombie Dave also writes *The Conscious Mind*, exclaims “consciousness is a mystery!”, etc.

# type-F monism (panprotopsychism)

- accepts/denies ??? (wait for discussion of Stoljar this week)
- “consciousness is constituted by the intrinsic properties of fundamental physical entities...phenomenal or protophenomenal properties are located at the fundamental level of physical reality”

# type-F monism (panprotopsychism)

- the “combination problem” (James)
  - “our phenomenology has a rich and specific structure...[how can] a large number of individual microphysical systems, each with their own protophenomenal properties...add up to this rich and specific structure...?”

“type-F monism...may ultimately provide the best integration of the physical and the phenomenal within the natural world”

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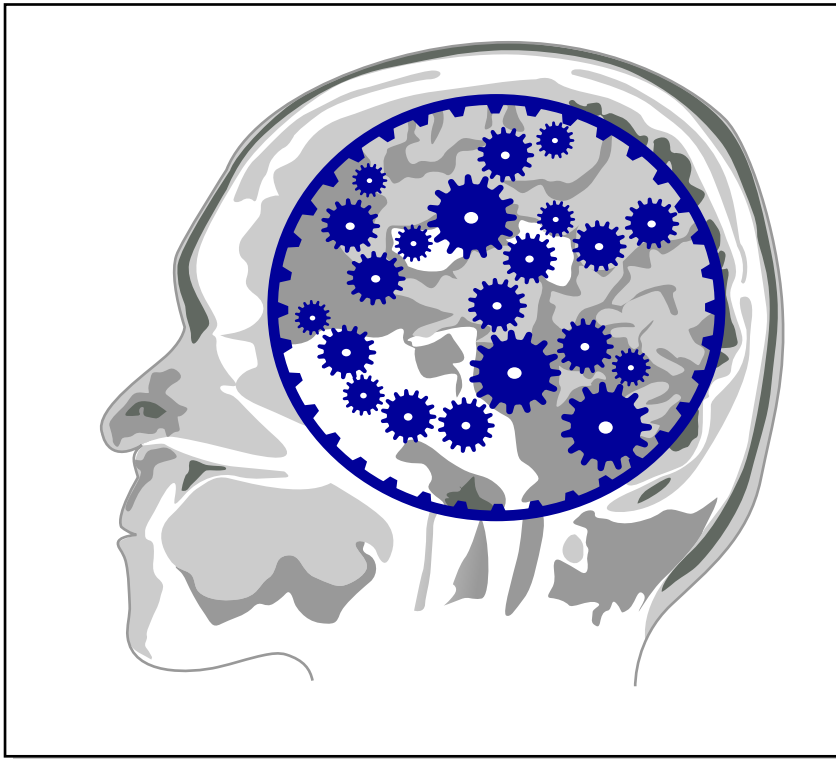


Figure by MIT OCW.

- the two-dimensional argument against type-B materialism (Chalmers, 255-7)



# type-B materialism

- denies premise 2:
  - if it is conceivable that zombies exist, it is metaphysically possible that zombies exist
- let us gloss premise 2 as follows: if the existence of zombies cannot be ruled out a priori (by reasoning and logic alone), then it is metaphysically possible that zombies exist

# more carefully...

- let ' $\Phi$ ' be a big sentence in the language of some hypothetical complete physics, stating all the physical facts
- 'zombies exist' is shorthand for this claim:

$\Phi$  & no one is conscious

*Zombies!!!*

Figure by MIT OCW.

the existence of zombies cannot be ruled out a priori (by reasoning and logic alone)

means:

it is not knowable a priori that not- $(\Phi$  & no one is conscious)

and

it is not knowable a priori that not-( $\Phi$  & no one is conscious)

is equivalent to:

it is not knowable a priori that if  $\Phi$  then someone is conscious

['not-(P&Q)' is equivalent to 'if P then not-Q']

# so the type-B materialist

in denying premise 2:

- if it is conceivable that zombies exist, it is metaphysically possible that zombies exist

and in conceding that it is conceivable that zombies exist

is saying...

it is not knowable a priori that if  $\Phi$  then someone is conscious

and

it is not possible that zombies exist (it is not possible that  $\Phi$  and no one is conscious); in other words:

it is necessary that if  $\Phi$  then someone is conscious

so the type-B materialist holds  
that

- if  $\Phi$  then someone is conscious

is necessary and a posteriori

(the type-A materialist holds that it's  
necessary and a priori)

# just as

- if  $H_2O$  comes out of taps then water comes out of taps

is necessary and a posteriori



Figure by MIT OCW.

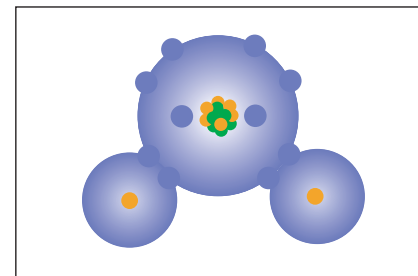


Figure by MIT OCW.



# recall: 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  $H_2O$ ) 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  $H_2O$  that differ in their distribution of water (i.e. that "H<sub>2</sub>O-ism" is false)

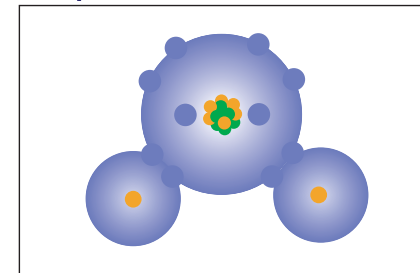


Figure by MIT OCW.

Sally knows all the facts about the distribution of  $H_2O$ , in particular that it comes out of taps, but she will still be ignorant of the fact that water comes out of taps, because

if  $H_2O$  comes out of taps then water comes out of taps

is not a priori (i.e. it's a posteriori)

- it's also necessary (i.e. “ $H_2O$ -ism” is true)

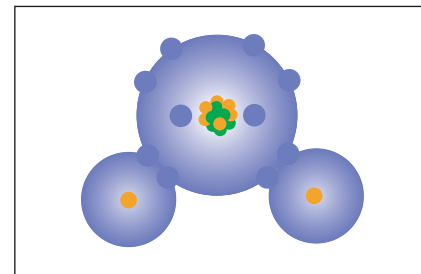


Figure by MIT OCW.

# the two-dimensionalist response

- ‘water’ means (something like):  
the substance that in the actual world is  
a clear liquid which falls as rain and  
flows in rivers

so, it is a priori that water is the  
substance that in the actual world is a  
clear liquid which falls as rain and flows  
in rivers

- second, if superchemist Sally knows all the chemical-physical facts ( $H_2O$ 's distribution, its density, its optical properties, ...) she will be able to know that:

$H_2O$  = the substance that (in the actual world) is a clear liquid which falls as rain and flows in rivers

- so Sally (armed with all the physical/chemical facts) can argue as follows:
  1. water = the substance that is a clear liquid which falls as rain and flows in rivers (a priori; a “conceptual truth”)
  2.  $H_2O$  = the substance that is a clear liquid which falls as rain and flows in rivers (a posteriori)
  3.  $H_2O$  comes out of taps (a posteriori)

hence:

water comes out of taps!

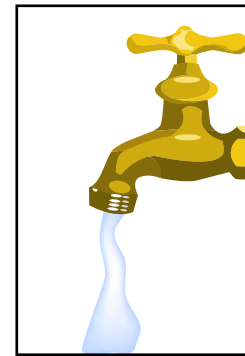


Figure by MIT OCW.

# summing up

Sally (at least if we extend her physical/chemical knowledge) would know that water comes out of taps, and so

if  $\Phi$  then water comes out of taps

is a necessary and a priori

- but now the type-B materialist can't support her view by saying 'if  $\Phi$  then someone is conscious' is just like Kripke's examples of necessary a posteriori truths

# further reading

- the presentation given here is closest to the one in Jackson, 'Finding the mind...'
- see also Chalmers, 'Consciousness and...'
- for criticism see Block and Stalnaker, 'Conceptual analysis, dualism,...'



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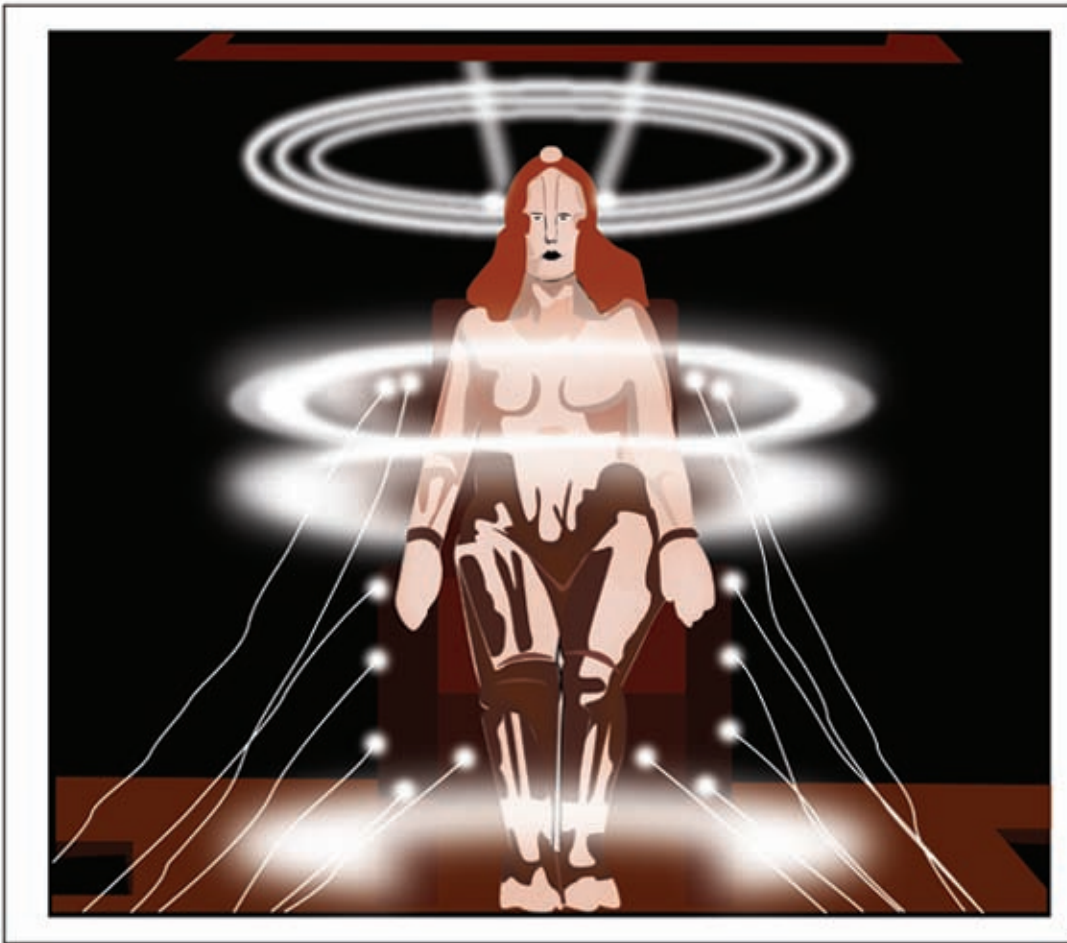


Figure by MIT OCW.

- read Stoljar, 'Two Conceptions...'