

24.09 Minds and Machines

spring 2007

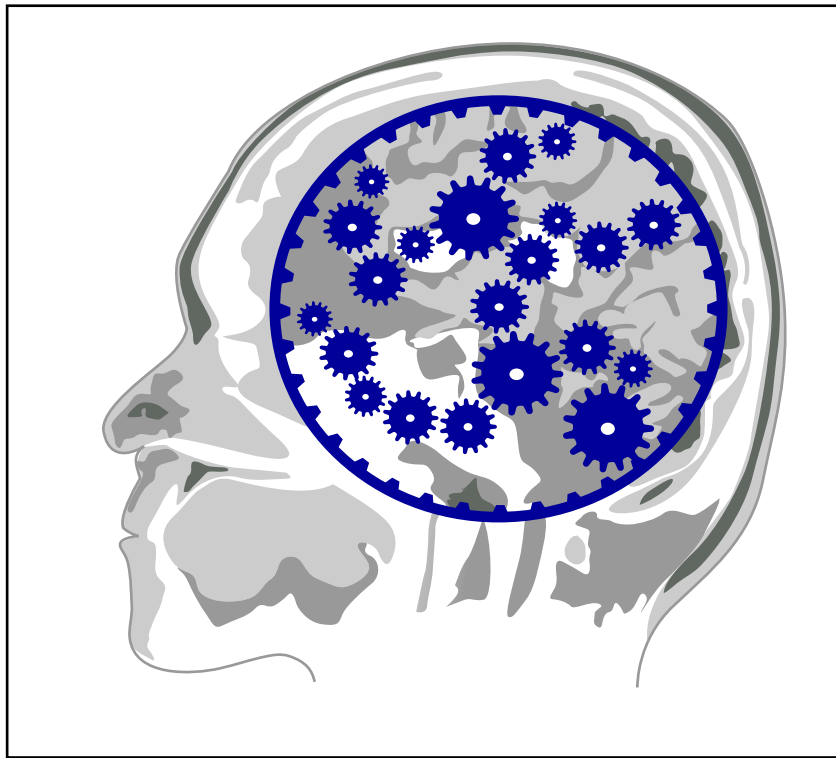


Figure by MIT OCW.

- evaluations
wednesday may 16
- final exam
may 24
- Stoljar, contd.
- McGinn's
mysterianism

an inconsistent tetrad

- 1) if physicalism is true, a priori physicalism is true
- 2) a priori physicalism is false
- 3) if physicalism is false, epiphenomenalism is true
- 4) epiphenomenalism is false

(1)-(4) are individually
plausible, but at least one
must be false

- 1) if physicalism is true, a priori physicalism is true
- 2) a priori physicalism is false
- 3) if physicalism is false, epiphenomenalism is true
- 4) epiphenomenalism is false

t-physicalism and o-physicalism

- P is a t-physical property iff P is (i) the sort of property that a (true) physical theory tells us about or (ii) a property which metaphysically supervenes on properties that satisfy (i)
- so: having +ve charge and having mass are t-physical properties (by (i): the theories of electromagnetism/gravity)
- either having +ve charge or having mass is a t-physical property (by (ii): necessarily if x and y are alike with respect to mass and +ve charge, they are alike with respect to the disjunctive property)
- also (very plausibly), properties like being a rock and being a cloud and will count as t-physical properties by (ii)
- n.b. this corrects the slide shown in class last week

- P is an o-physical property iff P is (i) the sort of property required by a complete account of the nature of paradigmatic physical objects or (ii) a property which metaphysically supervenes on properties that satisfy (i)
- so: having +ve charge and having mass are o-physical properties (by (i): needed for a complete account of sticks and stones)
- either having +ve charge or having mass is a t-physical property (by (ii): necessarily if x and y are alike with respect to mass and +ve charge, they are alike with respect to the disjunctive property)
- also (very plausibly), properties like being a rock and being a cloud and will count as t-physical properties by (ii)

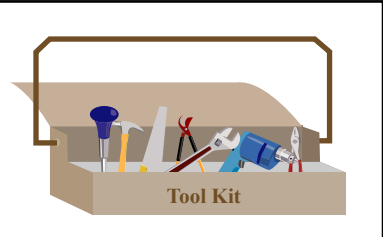


Figure by MIT OCW.

a reminder from the philosophical toolkit:



Figure by MIT OCW.

dispositions (powers, tendencies)

- a special kind of property
- examples: fragility, solubility, elasticity
- a fragile object is (to a first approximation) something that would break if it were struck
- a wine glass is fragile (has the property of fragility) even when it isn't manifesting the kind of behavior (breaking) distinctive of fragility

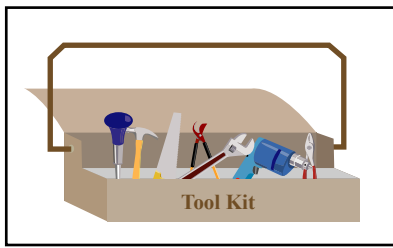


Figure by MIT OCW.

something new from the
philosophical toolkit:

categorical properties

- a special kind of property
- not a dispositional property
- the kind of property the possession of which explains the possession of a dispositional property
- in the case of a fragile vase, a property “whose instantiation makes it the case that the vase is fragile”



Figure by MIT OCW.

thesis 1: physical theory tells us only about dispositional properties

- (roughly) to be positively charged is to be disposed to be attracted by electrons, repelled by protons, etc.
- (roughly) to have mass is to be disposed to warp space-time
 - let's grant thesis 1 for the sake of the argument

thesis 2: if an object x has a dispositional property D, x has a categorical property C that explains why x has the dispositional property

- why would this vase break when struck (i.e. why is it fragile)?
- there must be an explanation, and if the explanation is in terms of more dispositional properties, we will need an explanation of why the vase has these dispositional properties
- so this chain of explanations must bottom out in an explanation in terms of categorical properties
 - let's grant thesis 2 for the sake of the argument

conclusion from **theses 1** and **2**

- paradigmatic physical objects have categorical properties (thesis 2)
- these categorical properties are not t-physical properties (thesis 1)
- but they are o-physical properties (by the definition of ‘o-physical’)
- so, some o-physical properties are not t-physical properties

two kinds of physicalism

- **t-physicalism**: everything supervenes on t-physical properties
- **o-physicalism**: everything supervenes on o-physical properties
- t-physicalism implies o-physicalism, but not conversely

back to 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

all the t-physical facts, or all the o-physical facts?



Figure by MIT OCW.

...all the t-physical facts

- both the conceivability argument and the knowledge argument show that “knowledge of every **t**-physical property a person has cannot by itself suffice to know which qualia, if any, his or her experiences instantiate”
- hence a priori **t**-physicalism is false



Figure by MIT OCW.

the knowledge and conceivability arguments give us reason to believe:

2-t a priori **t**-physicalism is false

but not:

2-o a priori **o**-physicalism is false

still an inconsistent tetrad

- 1-t if **t**-physicalism is true, a priori **t**-physicalism is true
- 2-t a priori **t**-physicalism is false
- 3-t if **t**-physicalism is false, epiphenomenalism is true
- 4 epiphenomenalism is false

but: do we have reason to believe 3-t?

3-t if **t**-physicalism is false,
epiphenomenalism is true

3-o if **o**-physicalism is false,
epiphenomenalism is true

- no, because if **t**-physicalism is false, **o**-physicalism might yet be true
- and if **o**-physicalism is true, there's no obvious reason why the mental is epiphenomenal—**o**-physical properties are presumably causally efficacious

a consistent tetrad

- 1 if (**t-/o-**) physicalism is true, a priori (**t-/o-**) physicalism is true*
- 2-t a priori **t-**physicalism is false
- 3-oif **o-**physicalism is false, epiphenomenalism is true
- 4 epiphenomenalism is false

*i.e. if t-physicalism is true, a priori t-physicalism is true, and if o-physicalism is true, a priori o-physicalism is true

the resulting position is type-F monism (panprotopsychism)

- “consciousness is constituted by the [categorical] properties of fundamental physical entities...phenomenal or protophenomenal [i.e. **o**-physical] properties are located at the fundamental level of physical reality” (Chalmers, C&IPIN)
- n.b. the nature of the protophenomenal [**o**-physical] properties is unknown, because physical theory does not tell us about them

a taxonomy of theories

- type-A materialism/a priori physicalism (Lewis, Dennett [apparently])
- type-B materialism/a posteriori physicalism (Tye, Levine)
- type-C materialism/a priori mysterianism (Nagel, McGinn [maybe???)
- type-D dualism/cartesian interactionism (Descartes)
- type-E dualism/epiphenomenalism (Jackson [when he wrote “epiphenomenal qualia”])
- type-F monism/panprotopsychism (Chalmers, Stoljar)

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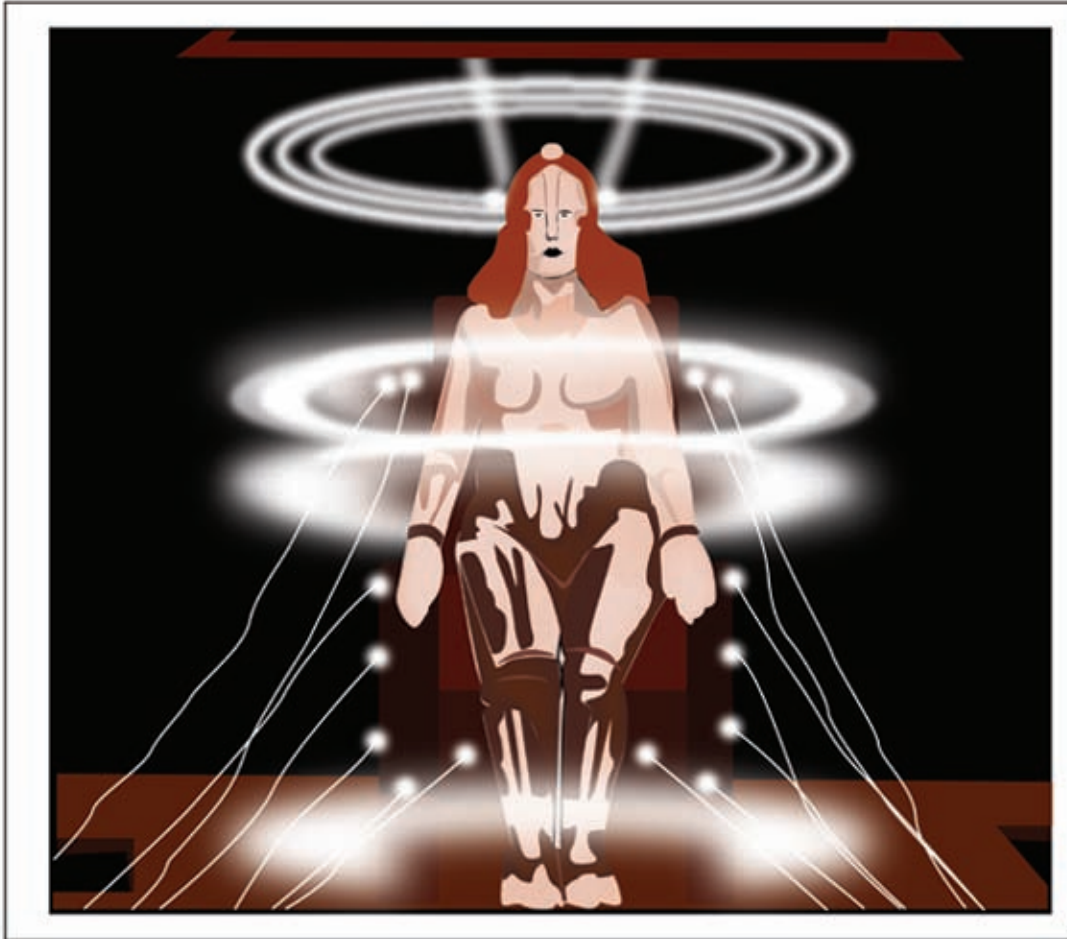


Figure by MIT OCW.

- read McGinn, 'Can we solve...'