

24.09 Minds and Machines

spring 2007

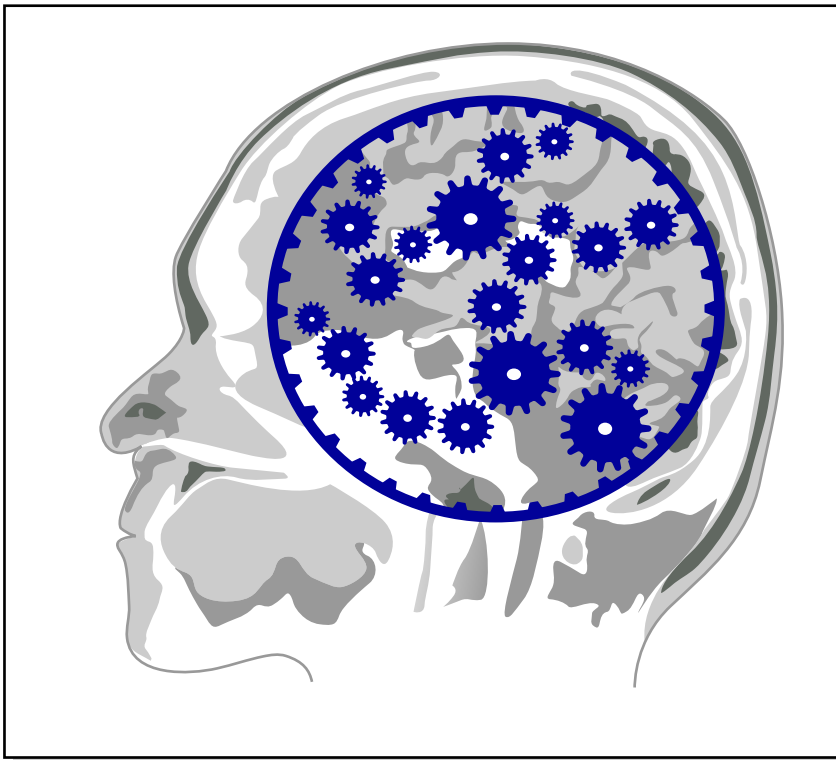


Figure by MIT OCW.

- consciousness and intentionality

“Visual qualia and visual content revisited”

- “Experiences vary widely”

Images removed due to copyright restrictions.

Pictures of sandpaper, a skunk, a hand, a purple square, and an angry man.

- “In each of these cases, I am the subject of a mental state with a very distinctive subjective character”

qualia and Qualia

- **qualia** are “the introspectively accessible properties of experiences that characterize what it’s like to have them”
- “in this standard, broad sense of the term, it is hard to deny that there are qualia”
- **Qualia** are the introspectively accessible nonrepresentational properties of experiences that characterize what it’s like to have them
- **Qualia** “are a philosophical myth”

representational properties

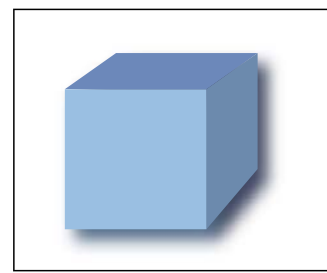


Figure by MIT OCW.

- perceptual (in particular, visual) experiences have representational properties (e.g. the property of representing the perceiver's environment as containing a blue cube)
- so visual experiences have intentionality
- visual experiences also have **qualia**
- they have **Qualia** just in case:
 - two visual experiences can be alike in representational properties but differ in **qualia**
 - But: "I know of no such counterexample"
 - warning: most of the examples Tye considers do not even purport to be cases of two experiences alike in representational content but which differ in **qualia**

the argument from introspection

- “Was I not here delighting in the phenomenal aspects of my visual experience? And if I was, doesn’t this show that there are visual Qualia?”
- “my experience certainly wasn’t blue. Rather, it was an experience that represented the ocean as blue”
- “What I was really delighting in...was a quality represented by the experience, not a quality of the experience”

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
Aerial of the surface of the ocean.

Peacocke's puzzle cases

1: monocular/binocular vision

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
A room with furniture.

- Suppose you look at an array of pieces of furniture with one eye closed...Imagine now you look at the same scene with both eyes. The experience is different. [sensationally but not representationally]” (Peacocke, p. 439)
- “When I view the situation with both eyes, I see a little more at the periphery of my visual field...An appeal to Qualia is not required”



the inverted spectrum

- how the scene looks to us



- how the scene looks to Tom, a victim of “spectrum inversion”



the inverted spectrum

- 1) since Tom has been “spectrally inverted” from birth, his experience when viewing a red pepper is of “the sort that is usually produced in him when viewing red objects and that usually leads him to believe that a red object is present”
- 2) “so he, like you and me, in viewing the [pepper] has an experience that represents the [pepper] as red”
- 3) so Tom’s experience and your experience of the pepper have the same representational properties but differ in **qualia**
- 4) hence: there are **Qualia**



the inverted spectrum

- “One might respond to this argument by denying that a behaviorally undetectable inverted spectrum is possible”
 - but Tye finds this implausible
- rather: Tom’s experience of the pepper “represents green”— the pepper looks green to him
- since Tom sincerely says (speaking English) “the pepper looks red to me”, he has “a false belief about the content of his experience”



the inverted spectrum

- but: it's not obvious what was wrong with the argument that Tom's experience represents red
- and: what if Tom is alone—not in a community of non-inverted English speakers?
 - he might still have beliefs about how things look, and wouldn't they be correct?
 - if Tom-alone believes that the pepper looks green, why would placing him in a community of non-inverted English speakers make that belief vanish?

first moral

- if consciousness is mysterious, so is intentionality
- conversely, if intentionality isn't mysterious, neither is consciousness

second moral (I)

It was the color, blue, not anything else that was immediately accessible to my consciousness and that I found so pleasing. This point...seems to be the sort of thing G. E. Moore had in mind when he remarked that the sensation of blue is diaphanous. (Tye, 448)

- see also Stoljar, 323

- [T]he moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see what, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. When we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous.

G.E. Moore, The refutation of idealism
(1903)

- we know very little about the experience of blue—only that it's of blue

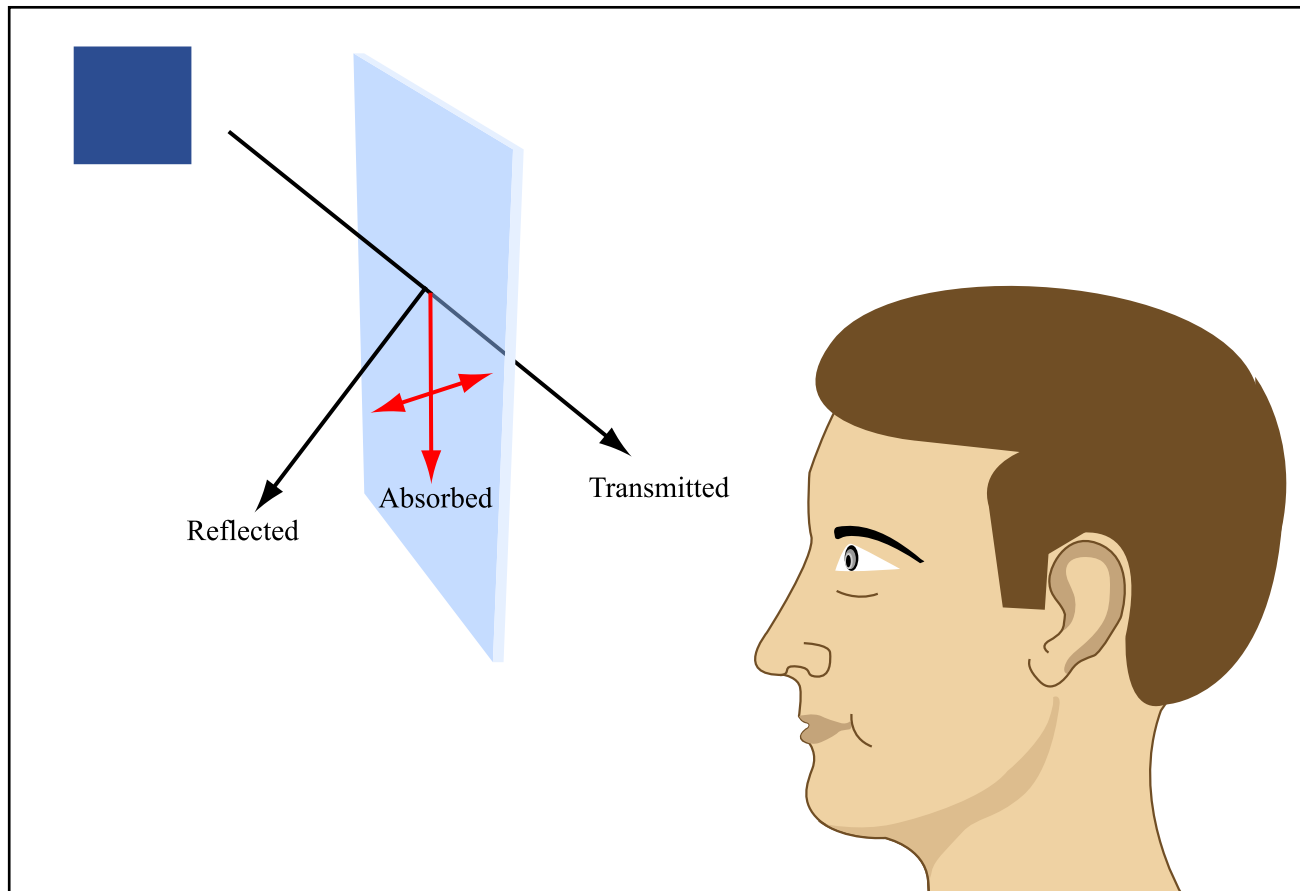


Figure by MIT OCW.

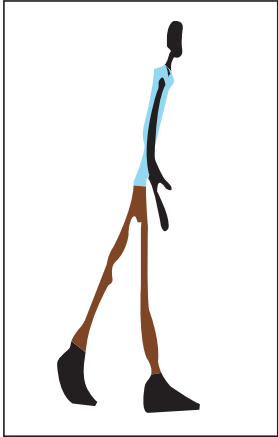
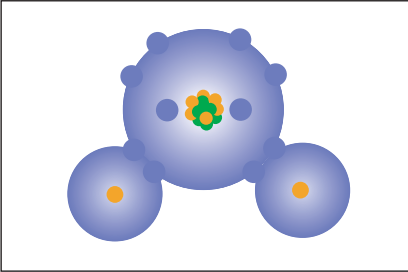
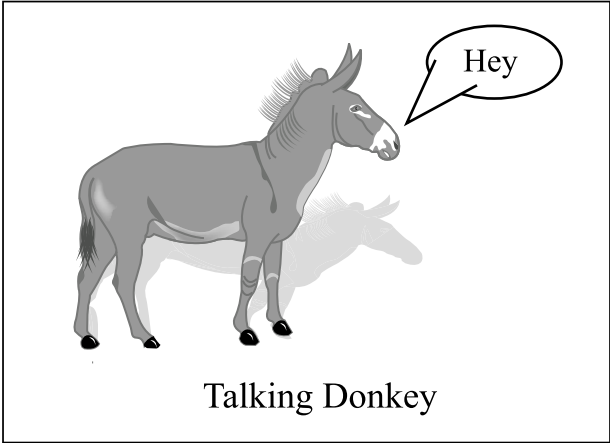
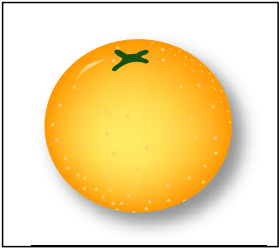
second moral (II)

- if we know so little about the experience of blue (only that it's of blue), it's hard to see how introspection and philosophy could tell us that it's non-physical
- given our ignorance, we should treat the claim that zombies are possible with some scepticism
 - Argument K probably goes wrong somewhere, but where?

Zombies!!!



Figures by MIT OCW.



the final exam (may 24)

- closed-book, closed notes
- first third (35-40%):
 - quote identification, plus a sentence or two explaining the significance or point of the quote
 - multiple choice questions
 - short answer questions
- last two thirds:
 - two essay questions drawn from a list of four distributed in advance (last week of term)

1. Could a suitably fancy robot think? More specifically, could a robot believe that the Stata Center is on Vassar Street? (Take the robot to be constructed from the usual materials: microprocessors, cables, servomotors, etc., with a variety of external sensors like cameras and microphones.) Could a suitably fancy robot have conscious experiences? More specifically, could a robot feel pain, or have a yellowy-orange afterimage? Approach these questions by considering how they might be answered by various philosophers we have encountered, for instance Descartes, Searle, Smart, Block, Lewis, Putnam, and Chalmers. (You are not expected to mention all of these philosophers in your answer.)

2. Nagel, Jackson, and McGinn all think that consciousness poses a problem for physicalism, on somewhat similar grounds. Critically compare and contrast their views. Is it true that “with consciousness, [the mind-body problem] seems hopeless”?

3. In “Two Conceptions of the Physical”, Stoljar suggests that we are (and always will be) ignorant of facts concerning the categorical properties of fundamental physical entities, and that these unknown facts explain consciousness (or are an essential part of an explanation of consciousness). In his recent book, *Ignorance and Imagination*, he defends a weaker view, the “Ignorance Hypothesis”. According to the Ignorance Hypothesis, we are ignorant of some physical facts that explain consciousness (or are an essential part of an explanation of consciousness). It is not built into the Ignorance Hypothesis that we always will be ignorant of these facts, nor that they concern categorical properties. Explain Stoljar's argument for his view in “Two Conceptions of the Physical”. Can the Ignorance Hypothesis be defended without also defending the stronger view in “Two Conceptions...”? Why or why not? Is the Ignorance Hypothesis at all plausible?

4. In section IV of “Epiphenomenal Qualia”, partly reproduced below, Jackson attempts to rebut three objections to the claim that qualia are epiphenomenal. Do any of the objections work? Does Jackson succeed in rebutting them? Are qualia epiphenomenal? Begin your answer by explaining Tye's distinction between “Qualia” and “qualia” (in “Visual Qualia...”), and how Jackson's use of “qualia” relates to Tye's two-fold sense of the term. Make sure to explain what it means to say that qualia are epiphenomenal.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- remember, all four of us (AB, EG, APC, DN) will be available for meetings, etc. up to the final exam



VOTE

