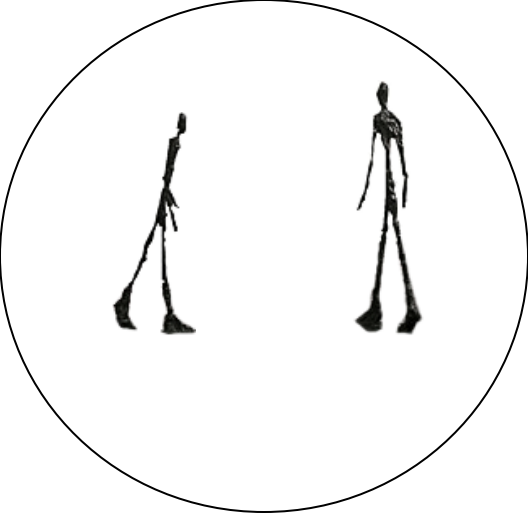


preliminaries

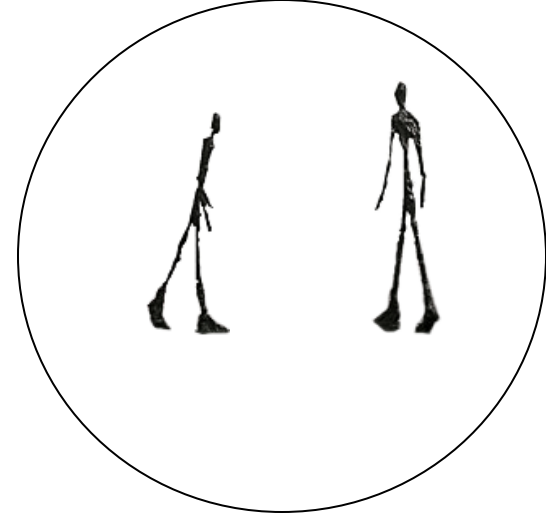
- evaluations next week
- no more problem sets

“Epiphenomenal qualia” (recap)

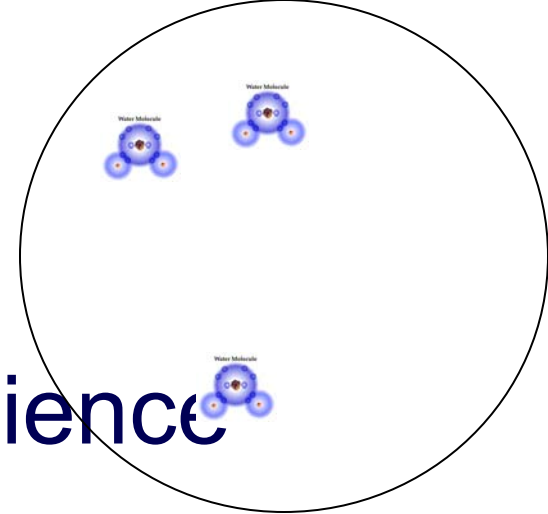
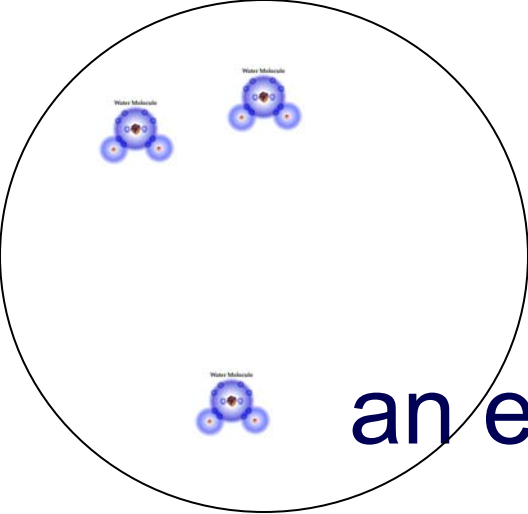
- sets out the “knowledge argument” against physicalism
- physicalism is the thesis “that all (correct) information is physical information”
- that is, more or less, all facts are physical facts
- it’s clearer to understand physicalism as a *supervenience* thesis



physicalism



- physicalism
any possible world exactly alike our world (the actual world) physically is exactly alike it mentally
(more generally: ... is exactly alike it *simpliciter*)
- this is not quite right, but it will do for our purposes
(see Lewis, 286-7)



an example of supervenience

- “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 Cambridge)

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?”



“Will she learn
anything or not?”

“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

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...” (“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.]”

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

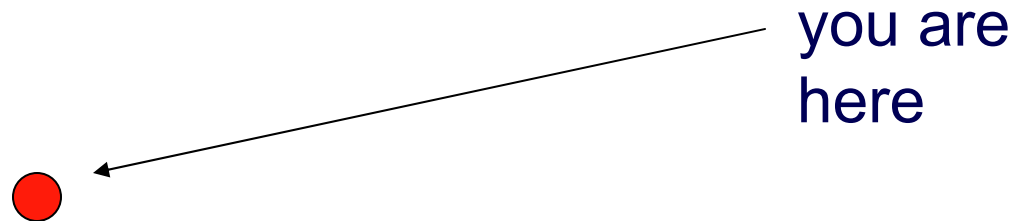
rationale: not knowing something is not being able to decide between rival possibilities—in other words not being able to tell what possible world one is in; so if imprisoned Mary doesn't know something then she can't tell exactly what possible world she is in; but if physicalism is true she plainly *can* tell what possible world she is 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

Mary, Fred, and the bat

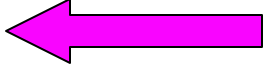
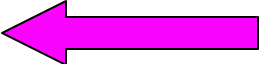
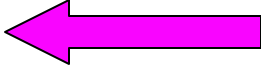
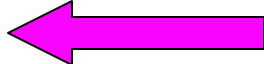
- “It is important to distinguish [Nagel’s argument] from the Knowledge argument”
- “I was not complaining that we weren’t finding out what it is like to *be* Fred, I was complaining that there is something *about* his experience, a property of it, of which we *were* left ignorant...No amount of knowledge about Fred, be it physical or not, amounts to knowledge “from the inside” concerning Fred”
- only Fred can know (what he would express by saying) “It is *I myself* who is...”
- 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)
- Nagel thinks we don’t know something *about* batty experience, not that we don’t know what Bill the bat knows when he says “It is *I myself* who is...”

self-locating knowledge explained

- only Fred can know (what he would express by saying) “It is / *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 / *myself* who is in 4-231” (etc.)

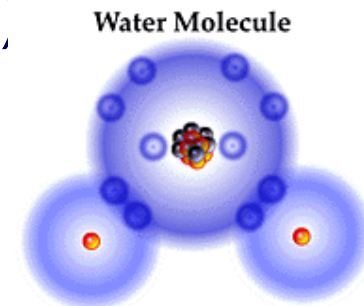


resisting the knowledge argument

- 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

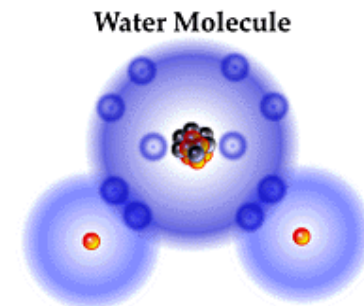
option B: resist the move from 1 to 2

- 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 "H₂O-ism" is false)



option B: resist the move from 1 to 2

- this option basically convicts Jackson of illicitly deriving a “metaphysical” conclusion (that physicalism is false) from epistemological considerations (in particular, that imprisoned Mary would not know everything)
- see Chalmers, “Consciousness and...”, for a reply (we’ll read this paper next week)



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”)

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*”

is the knowledge argument just an argument against *physicalism*?

- “let *parapsychology* be the science of all the nonphysical things...”
- let us suppose that Mary learns “ever so much parapsychology”
- “...she still won’t know what it’s like”
- “Our intuitive starting point wasn’t just that *physics* lessons couldn’t help the inexperienced...It was that *lessons* couldn’t help”
- so, if Lewis is right, *dualism* is just as vulnerable to the knowledge argument as physicalism

recall Nagel on the “general difficulty with psychophysical reduction”

- “Experience itself...does not seem to fit the pattern. The idea of moving from appearance to reality makes no sense here.”
- that is, “a move in the direction of greater objectivity” takes us *further* away from understanding the subjective character of experience, and hence reductive accounts cannot explain consciousness
- one could put Lewis’s claim in Nagel’s preferred terms by saying that any “objective” theory, whether physical or not, would not allow Mary to know what it’s like to see red

Minds and Machines

spring 2003

The explanatory gap and
Kripke's argument revisited

“Materialism and qualia: the explanatory gap”

- Levine’s position is similar to Nagel’s: physicalism is (or may well be) true, but we don’t understand how it’s true
- Levine arrives at this conclusion by “transform[ing] Kripke’s argument from a metaphysical one into an epistemological one”
- Levine would accuse Jackson of “transforming an *epistemological* argument into a *metaphysical* one”

“Materialism and qualia: the explanatory gap”

- Kripke argues that pain \neq c-fibers firing (a “metaphysical” conclusion)
- Levine thinks this argument does not work, but a related argument shows that “psycho-physical identity statements leave a significant explanatory gap”
- although Levine’s argument does not show that physicalism is false, it does “constitute a problem for materialism”

Minds and Machines

spring 2003

- read Levine, Hill