

Physicalism and Consciousness

Course description

Lecturers: Dr. Bruno Mölder (bruno.moelder@ut.ee) & Prof. Dr. Daniel Cohnitz (cohnitz@ut.ee)

Course code: FLFI.04.033 (3 ECTS)

Also as *Undergraduate Research Seminar (Eriseminar)*, 6 ECTS, FLFI.00.022 and *Theoretical philosophy II* 3 ECTS, FLFI.04.017

Time and place: Lossi 3-223, on Tuesdays 14.15-15.45

Annotation: What are the main philosophical obstacles to the physicalist account of consciousness?

The aim of the seminar is to introduce the contemporary discussion over the prospects of the physicalist approach to consciousness. We cover main arguments against physicalism such as Kripke's argument, which has been an important source for later "zombie" discussions and Frank Jackson's "Knowledge Argument". These arguments charge physicalism that it is unable to account for several features of our experiences and that it has trouble in accommodating our nonphysicalist intuitions. We look in depth at two defences of physicalism by John Perry and David Papineau, respectively, that both relate to these arguments. These defences circumvent the charges to physicalism by explaining these features in terms of the properties of phenomenal concepts that we use to refer to phenomenal states.

Study Materials

There will be one introductory meeting and 12 seminars. Readings for seminars are available for photocopying in the philosophy department, some papers can be downloaded from the ŌIS.

Assessment

Examination criteria: Students have to write in alternate groups 4 sets of replies to questions about seminar texts (every other week). The questions are provided. The final mark will consist of the marks of homework units (all together 50% of the final mark) and the performance in class (50%). The course passing requirement is a regular attendance and having all four reply sets marked better than 'F'. It is allowed to miss a seminar up to three times, provided one writes a summary of the seminar text (if it was one's groups turn to hand in a reply set, then also this would be needed in addition to the summary).

Those attending the Undergraduate Research Seminar are required to write a seminar paper ca. 10 pages, 3500-4000 words (Deadline 15.05.2011). The topic for the BA thesis will be formulated by 15.06.2011.

Schedule

Changes might occur

1. 15.02 **INTRODUCTORY MEETING** (Daniel Cohnitz)
2. 22.02 **SEMINAR 1: Arguing for materialism** (Bruno Mölder)
Papineau, D. 2002. "The case for materialism." Ch. 1 of *Thinking about Consciousness*, Oxford: Clarendon Press
3. 01.03 **SEMINAR 2: To explain consciousness** (Daniel Cohnitz)
Van Gulick, Robert 1995. "What would count as explaining consciousness?" T. Metzinger (ed.), *Conscious Experience*. Schöningh: Paderborn / Imprint Academic, 61-79
4. 08.03 **SEMINAR 3: The metaphysics of consciousness: a typology** (Bruno Mölder)
Chalmers, D. 2003. "Consciousness and its place in nature", S. Stich, T. Warfield, *Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Mind*, Blackwell, 102-42.
5. 15.03 **SEMINAR 4: The modal argument** (Daniel Cohnitz)
Kripke, S. 1980. *Naming and necessity* (excerpt, pp. 144-155). Harvard University Press. /in Estonian: *Nimetamine ja paratamatus*. Tlk Anto Unt. Tartu: TÜ Kirjastus, 2001/
Repr. D. Chalmers, *Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford University Press 2002, 329-334
6. 22.03 **SEMINAR 5: The knowledge argument** (Bruno Mölder)
Jackson F. 1982. "Epiphenomenal qualia." *Philosophical Quarterly*, 32, 127-36 /in Estonian: "Epifenomenilised kvaalid." Tlk Bruno Mölder. Akadeemia, 2004, nr 4, lk 733-748/
Jackson, F. 1986. "What Mary Didn't Know." *Journal of Philosophy*, 83, 5, 291-95.
7. 29.03 **SEMINAR 6: Nida-Rümelin on the knowledge argument** (Daniel Cohnitz)
Nida-Rümelin, M., 1995. "What Mary couldn't know: Belief about phenomenal states", T. Metzinger (ed.), *Conscious Experience*, Schöningh: Paderborn / Imprint Academic, 219-241
8. 05.04 **SEMINAR 7: Functionalism about qualia** (Bruno Mölder)
D. Dennett, D. 2007. "What RoboMary Knows." T. Alter, S. Walter, *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge*, Oxford University Press, 15-31
9. 12.04 **SEMINAR 8: Perry on the knowledge argument** (Daniel Cohnitz)
Perry, John 2001. "What Mary learned." Ch 7 of *Knowledge, Possibility and Consciousness*, The MIT Press 2001
10. 19.04 **SEMINAR 9: Phenomenal and material concepts** (Bruno Mölder)
Papineau, D. 2002. "Conceptual dualism." Ch 2 of *Thinking About Consciousness*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
11. 26.04 **SEMINAR 10: Papineau on the modal argument** (Daniel Cohnitz)
Papineau, D. 2002. "The impossibility of zombies." Ch 3 of *Thinking About Consciousness*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
12. 03.05 **SEMINAR 11: Papineau on the explanatory gap** (Bruno Mölder)
Papineau, D. 2002. "The explanatory gap." Ch 5 of *Thinking about Consciousness*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
13. 10.05 No seminar (Moral psychology workshop)
14. 17.05 **SEMINAR 12: Origins of the dualism intuition** (Bruno Mölder)
Papineau, D. 2002. "The intuition of distinctness." Ch 6 of *Thinking About Consciousness*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Papineau, D. 2010. "What Exactly is the Explanatory Gap?" *Philosophia*, forthcoming