

24.09 Minds and Machines

Fall 11 HASS-D CI

Jackson's knowledge
argument

slides for
unplugged
lecture

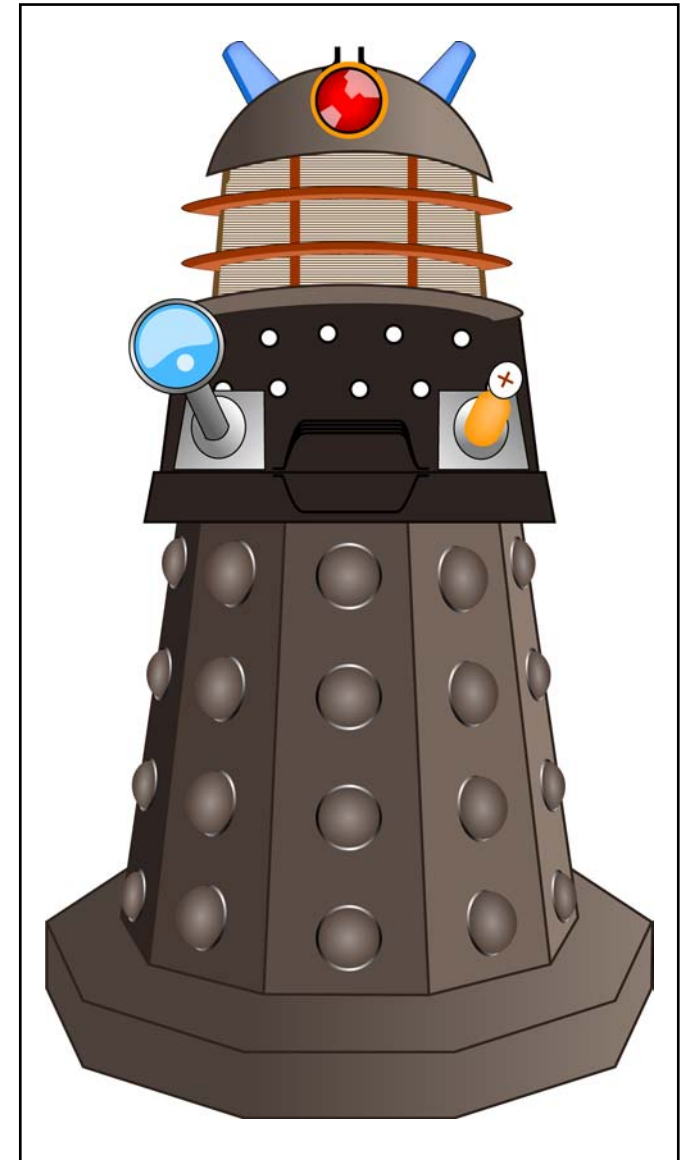


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roadmap

Jackson's
knowledge
argument

argument D+ (D)

an argument against
physicalism and for
attribute dualism

perception,
consciousness,
intentionality

functionalism

perception

externalism

materialism (physicalism)

a minimal (and slightly oversimplified)
statement of the view:

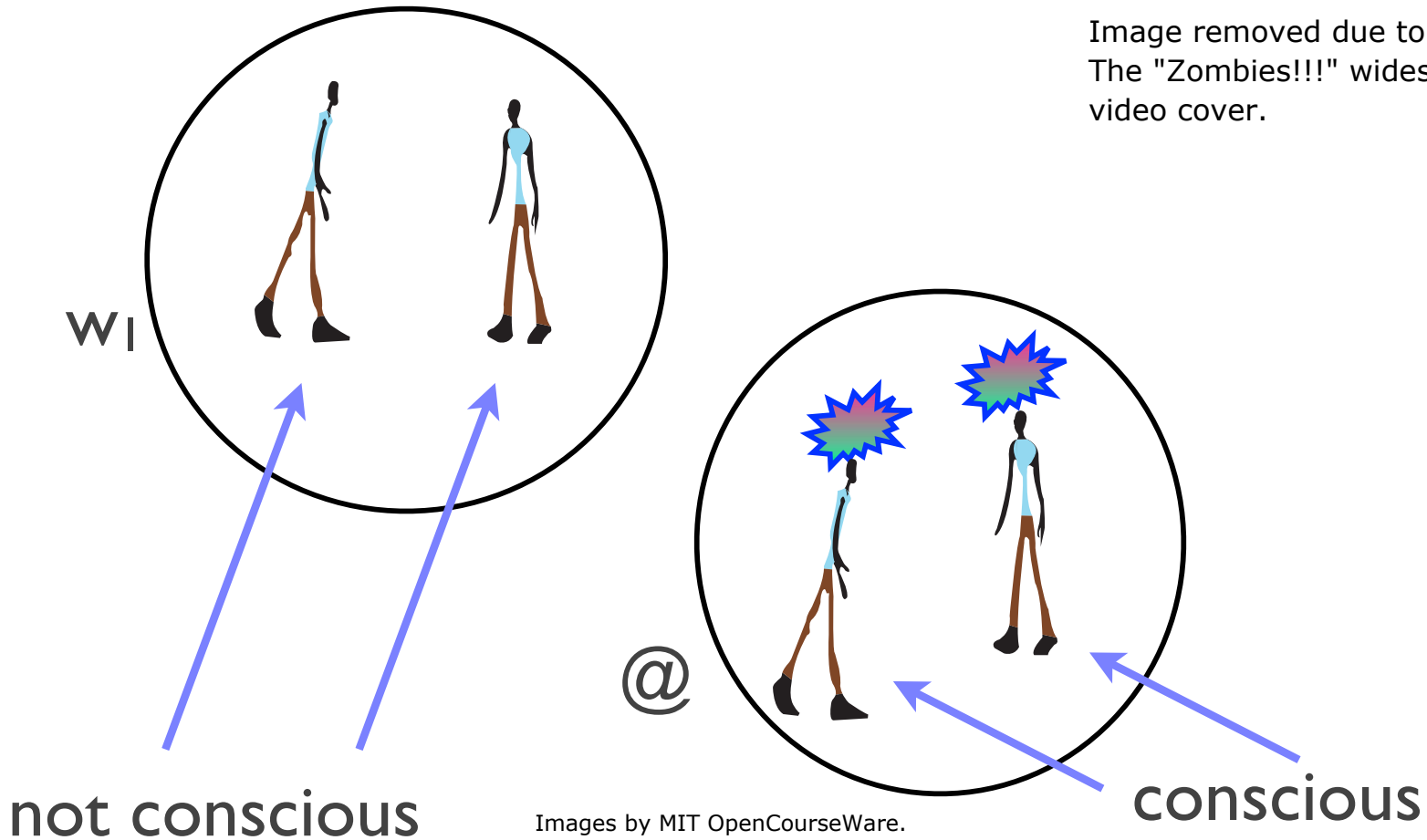
any possible world that is a physical
duplicate of the actual world is a duplicate
simpliciter

in particular, there are no 'zombie' worlds
this an example of a supervenience thesis

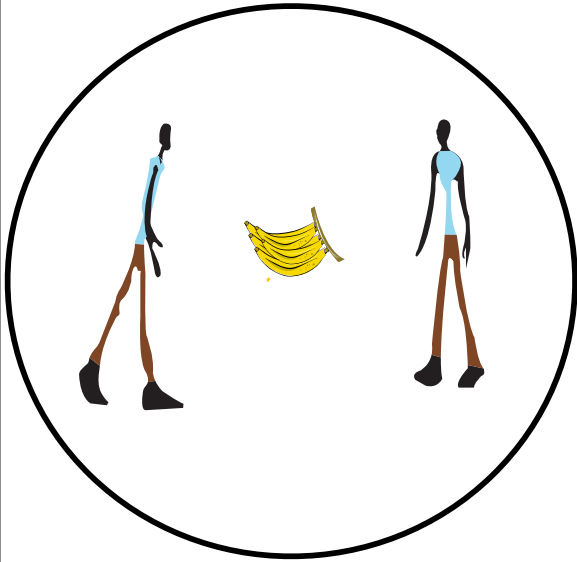
a zombie world

w_1 is a molecule-for-molecule replica of @

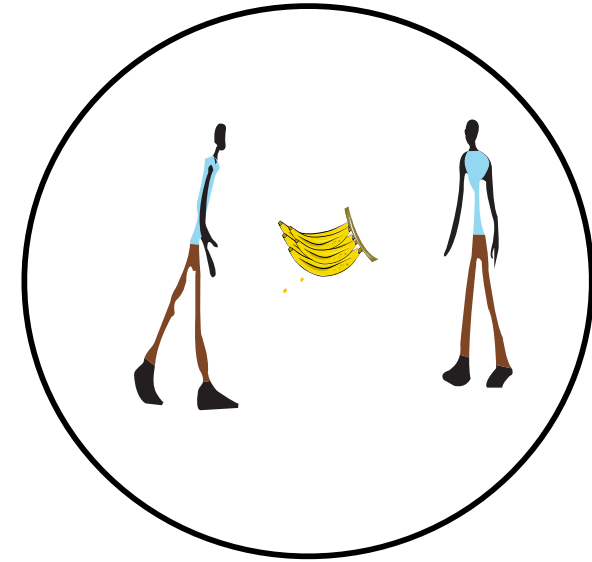
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The "Zombies!!!" widescreen edition home
video cover.



another example of a supervenience thesis



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the supervenience of the moral on the descriptive:

any possible world exactly alike our world (the actual world) 'descriptively' is exactly alike it morally

so, if in fact Alfred ought to give Alice her bananas back, in any possible world that is descriptively exactly alike this world, Alfred ought to give Alice her bananas back

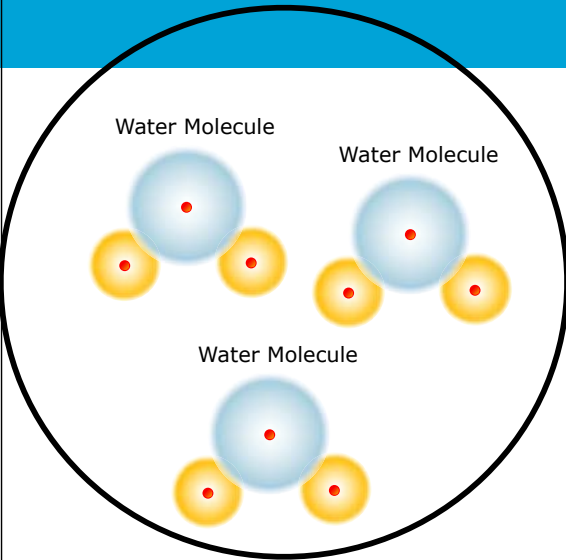
another example

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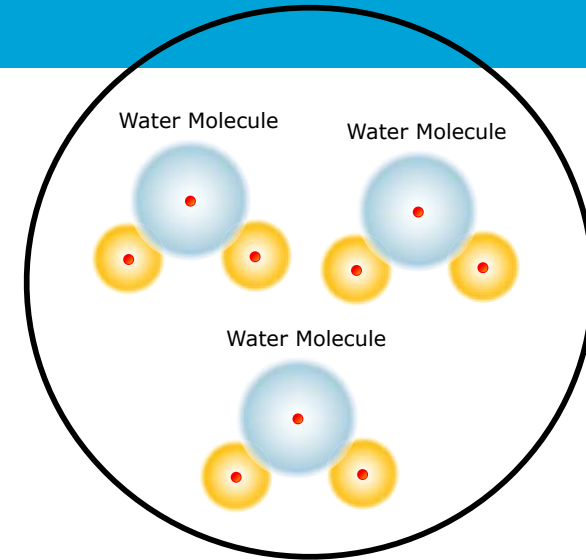
baldness supervenes on hair distribution:

any possible world exactly alike our world (the actual world) in its distribution of hair on people's heads is exactly alike it in its distribution of bald people

yet another example



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‘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 that very spot

'Epiphenomenal Qualia'

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

but it's clearer to understand physicalism in the way explained before, as a supervenience thesis

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?’



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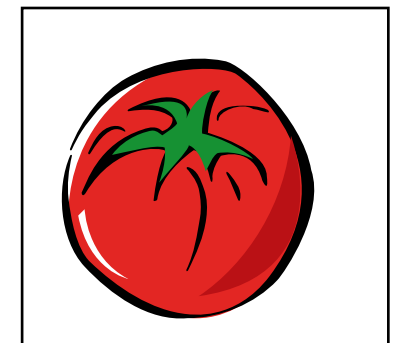


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the crucial question



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‘Will she learn anything or not?’

she will, according to Jackson

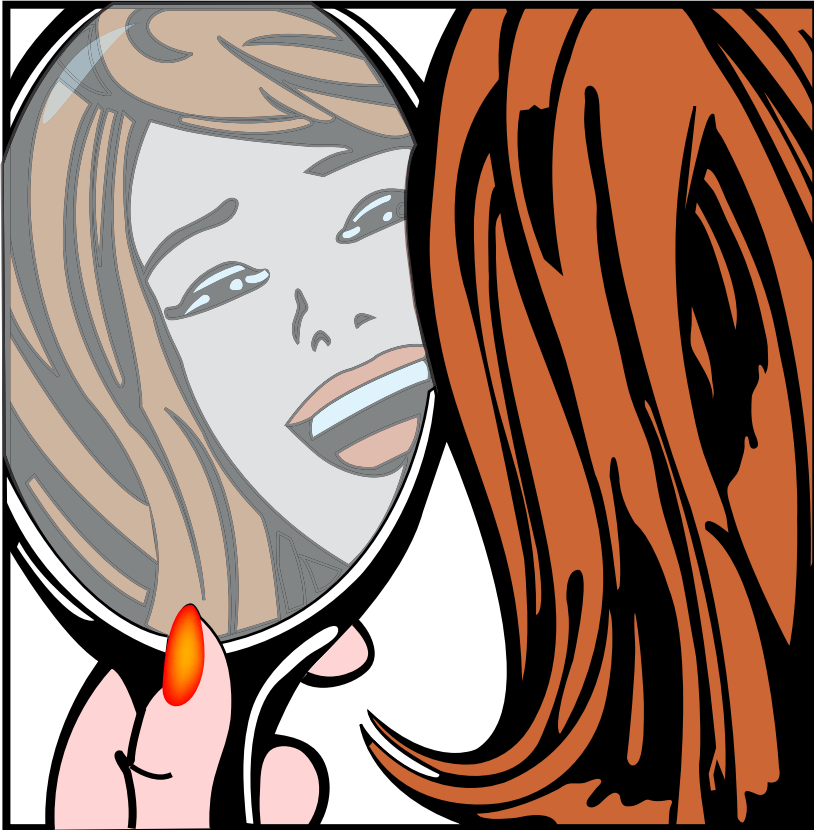


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‘It just seems obvious that she will learn something about the world and our experience of it...But she had all the physical information. Ergo... Physicalism is false’

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



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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
- after her release, Mary learns something—something she couldn't have known while imprisoned
- 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



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a further conclusion

Jackson draws a further conclusion, namely that our experiences have ‘qualia’

‘The whole thrust of the knowledge argument is that Mary...does not know about certain qualia...’ (Jackson, ‘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.]’

contrast Tye’s ‘qualia’ and ‘Qualia’ (in ‘Visual Qualia...’)



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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



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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

option A: deny (I)

I. imprisoned Mary knows all the physical facts
not really necessary to suppose Mary knows
all the physical facts

just the ones relevant to color and color
experiences

and anyway why would you need special
experiences to know any physical facts?



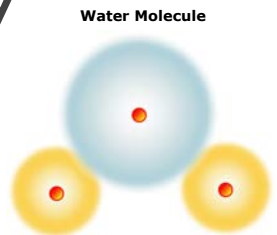
option B: resist the move from (1) to (2)

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)

see Chalmers, 'Consciousness and...', for a reply



Nagel

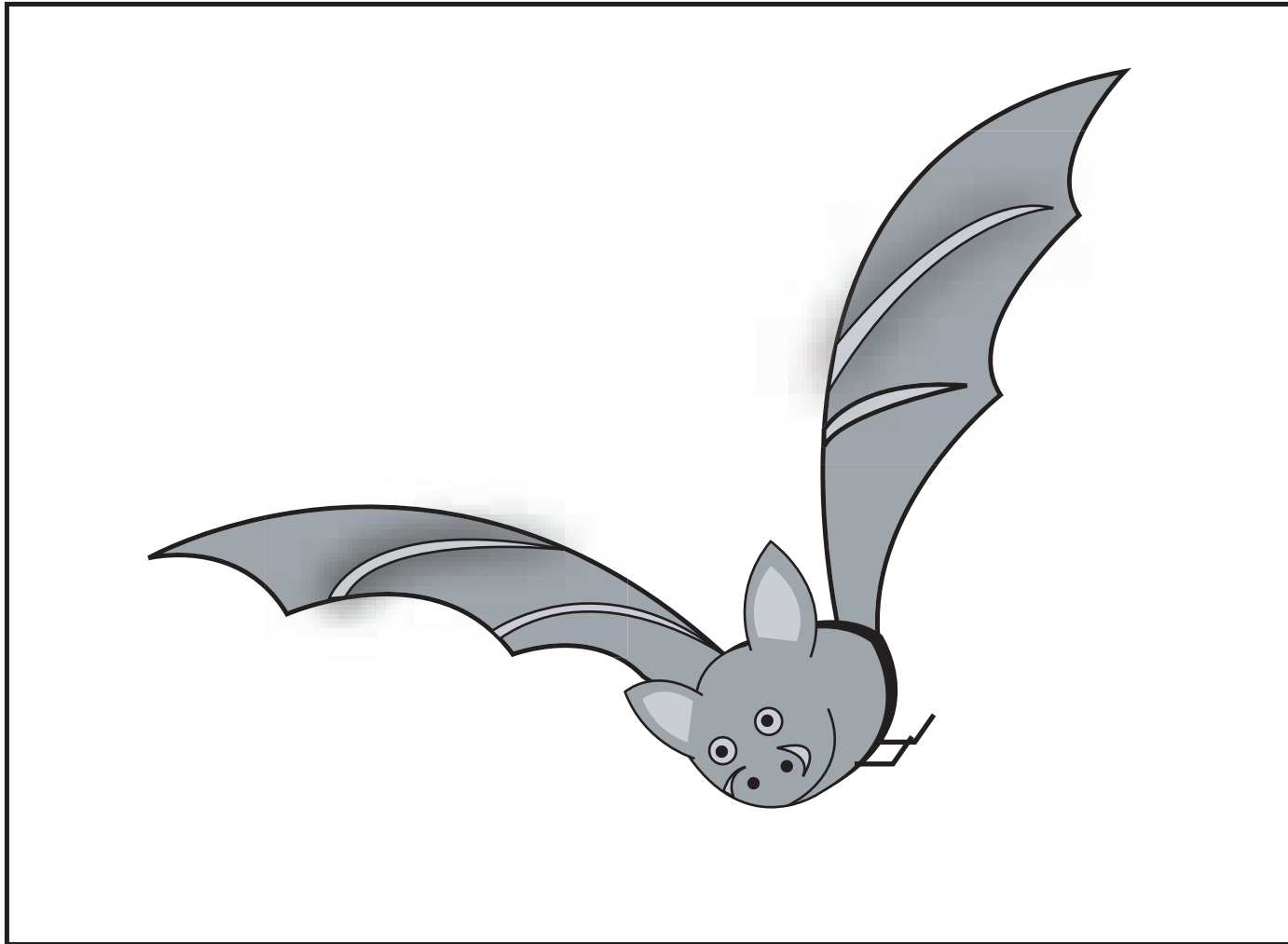


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