

24.09 Minds and Machines

Fall 11 HASS-D CI

Chalmers on
consciousness and its
place in nature

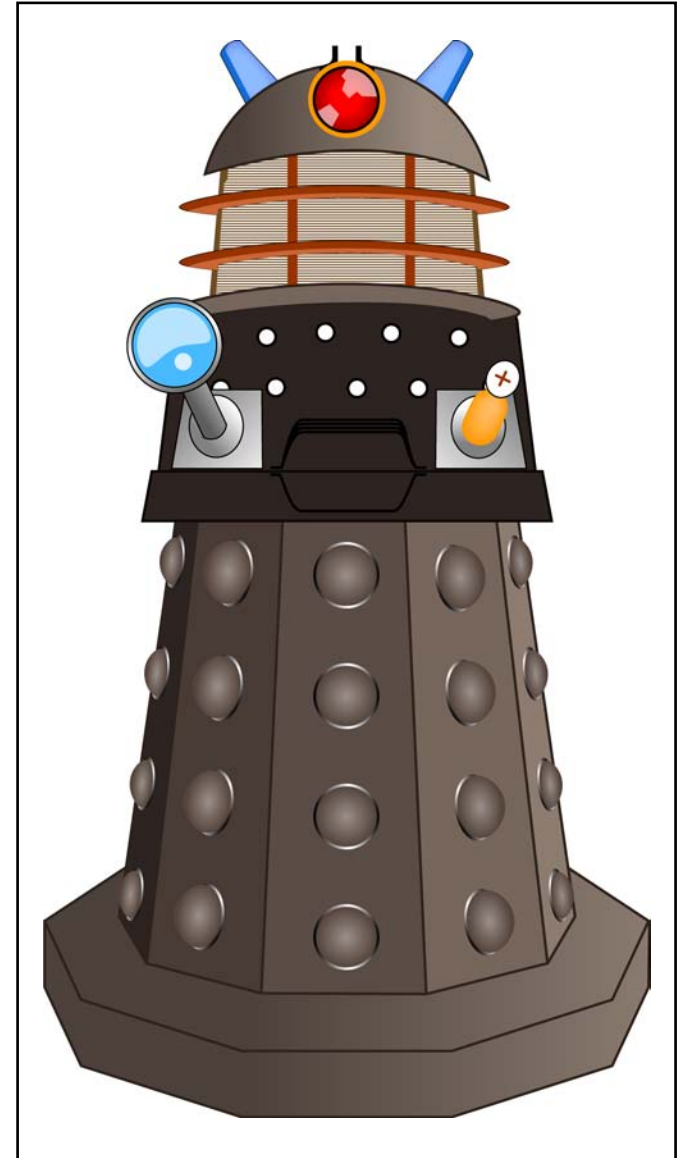


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Chalmers, 'Consciousness and its Place in Nature'

'Consciousness fits uneasily into our conception of the natural world. On the most common conception of nature, the natural world is the physical world. But on the most common conception of consciousness, it is not easy to see how it could be part of the physical world. So it seems that to find a place for consciousness within the natural order, we must either revise our conception of consciousness, or revise our conception of nature.'

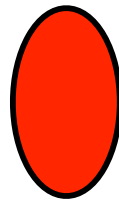
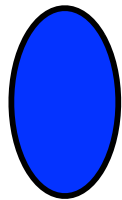
Chalmers on the 'easy' and 'hard' problems

the easy problems of consciousness'

how do we 'discriminate stimuli...report information...monitor internal states...?'

the 'hard problem of consciousness'

'how and why do physical processes give rise to experience? why do not these processes take place 'in the dark', without any accompanying state of experience? This is the central mystery of consciousness.'



reminder: 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

reminder: a zombie world

w_1 is a molecule-for-molecule replica of @

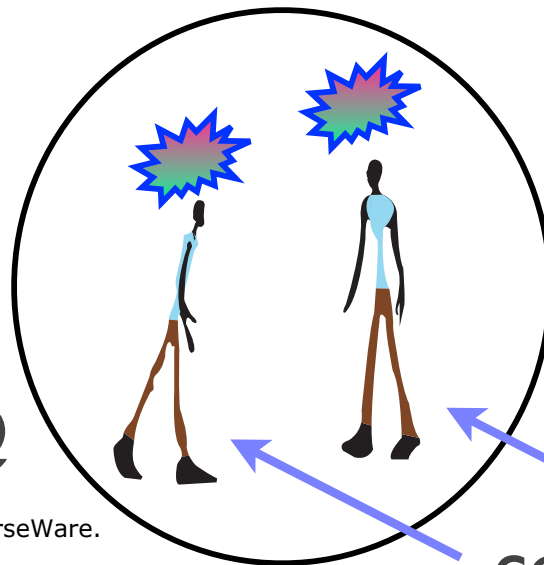
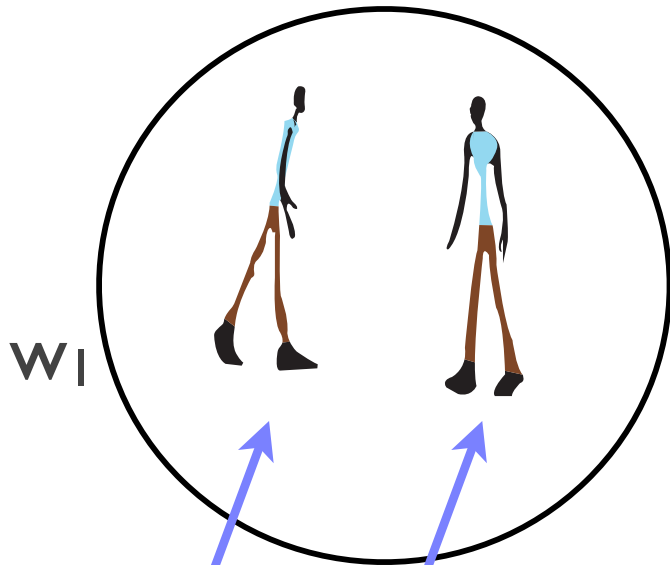


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The "Zombies!!" widescreen edition home video cover.

not conscious

conscious

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the conceivability argument (compare argument D+)

1. it is conceivable that zombies exist
2. if (1), it is metaphysically possible that zombies exist (there could have been zombies; there is a possible world in which zombies exist)
3. if it is metaphysically possible that zombies exist, then consciousness is nonphysical
4. consciousness is nonphysical

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two other arguments

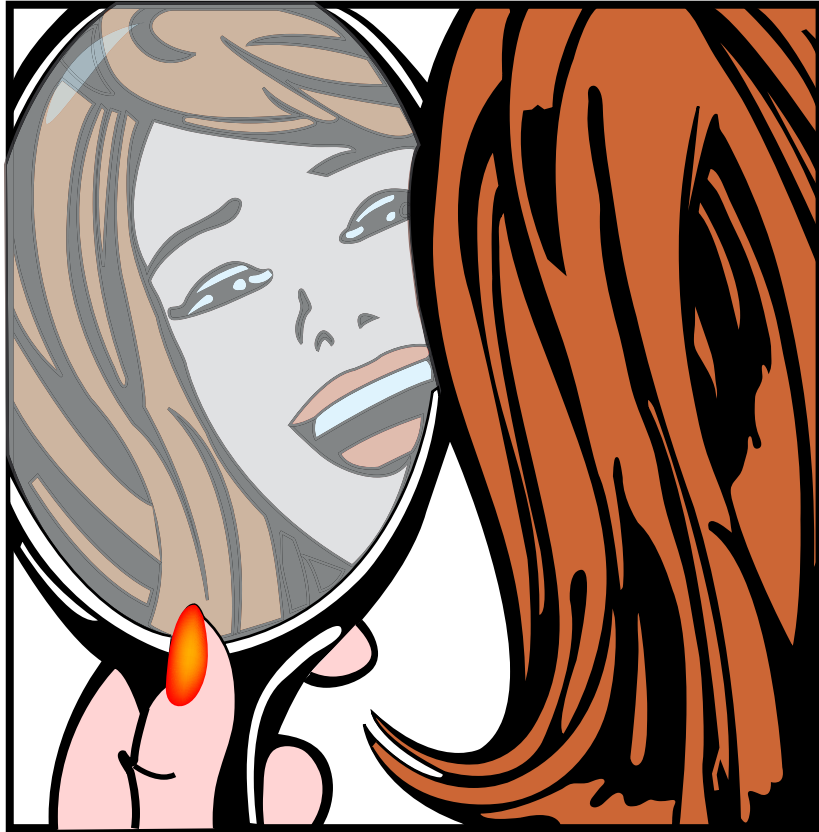


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the knowledge
argument

omitted: the
explanatory argument

the menu

type-A materialism (a priori physicalism)

type-B materialism (a posteriori physicalism)

type-C materialism (a priori mysterianism)

type-D dualism (cartesian interactionism)

type-E dualism (epiphenomenalism)

type-F monism (panprotopsychism)

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type-A materialism

denies premise 1: it is conceivable that zombies exist

‘The obvious problem with type-A materialism is that it appears to deny the manifest. It is an uncontested truth that we have the various functional capacities of access, control, report, and the like, and these phenomena pose uncontested explananda (phenomena in need of explanation) for a science of consciousness. But in addition, it seems to be a further truth that we are conscious, and this phenomenon seems to pose a further explanandum...’

‘...To flatly deny the further truth, or to deny without argument that there is a hard problem of consciousness over and above the easy problems, would be to make a highly counterintuitive claim...even among materialists, type-A materialists are a distinct minority.’

type-B materialism

denies premise 2:

if it is conceivable that zombies exist, it is metaphysically possible that zombies exist

the main problem for type-B materialism is related to Kripke's objection to the identity theory: apparent counterexamples to the idea that if p is conceivable, p is possible, turn out not to be counterexamples

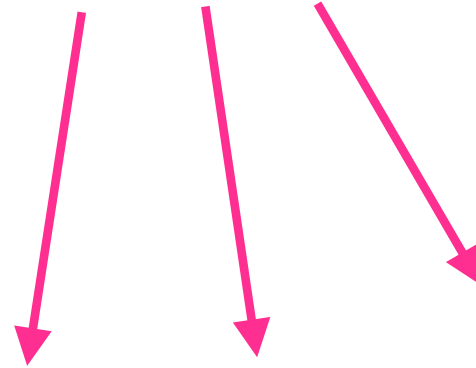
'heat without mke'

recall Kripke's
objection to the
identity theory



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absence of mke,
felt as heat



this situation is possible

but: it's not a situation in which there's heat but
no mke

it's a situation in which there's the sensation of
heat but no mke

'mke without heat'

mke, not felt as
heat

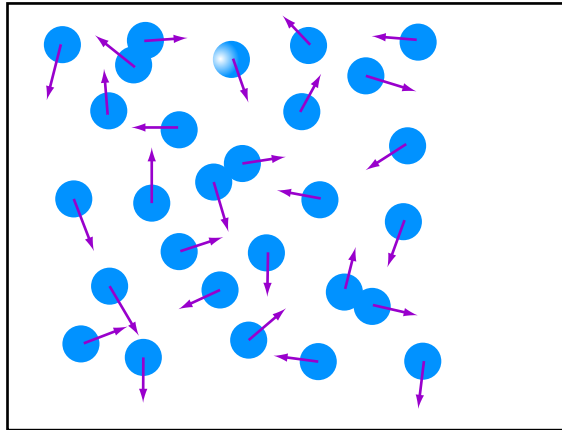


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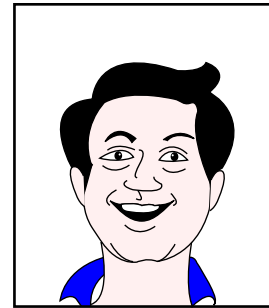


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this ('zombie heat') situation is possible

but: it's not a situation in which there's mke
with no heat

it's a situation in which there's mke but no
sensation of heat

the disanalogy with heat

absence of
c-fibers
firing, felt as
pain

c-fibers firing,
but not felt as
pain

A



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i.e. pain!

B

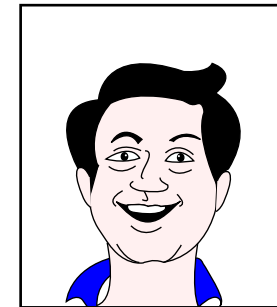


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i.e. no pain!

situations A and B are possible (apparently)

B is a ('zombie') situation in which there's c-fiber firing but no sensation of pain (we may also imagine the person behaving as if she is in pain)

but: this is a situation in which there's c-fiber firing
without pain

a similar disanalogy in the zombie case

actual (conscious) Paris and Nicky



Image by MIT OpenCourseWare.

zombie Paris and Nicky



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the apparently possible zombie situation is one in which Paris and Nicky are physically just as they actually are, but do not ‘feel conscious’

but: this is a situation in which Paris and Nicky are physically just as they actually are, but aren't conscious!

type-B materialism denies premise 2:

if it is conceivable that zombies exist, it is metaphysically possible that zombies exist

but this has little motivation

the heat-mke case does not break the link between conceivability and possibility (what you are conceiving is possible, but it's not a situation in which there is mke but no heat)

and once premise 2 is granted, it is very hard to deny premise 1: there is no possible situation that we might mistake for a situation in which there are zombies

final exam info, and
more Chalmers

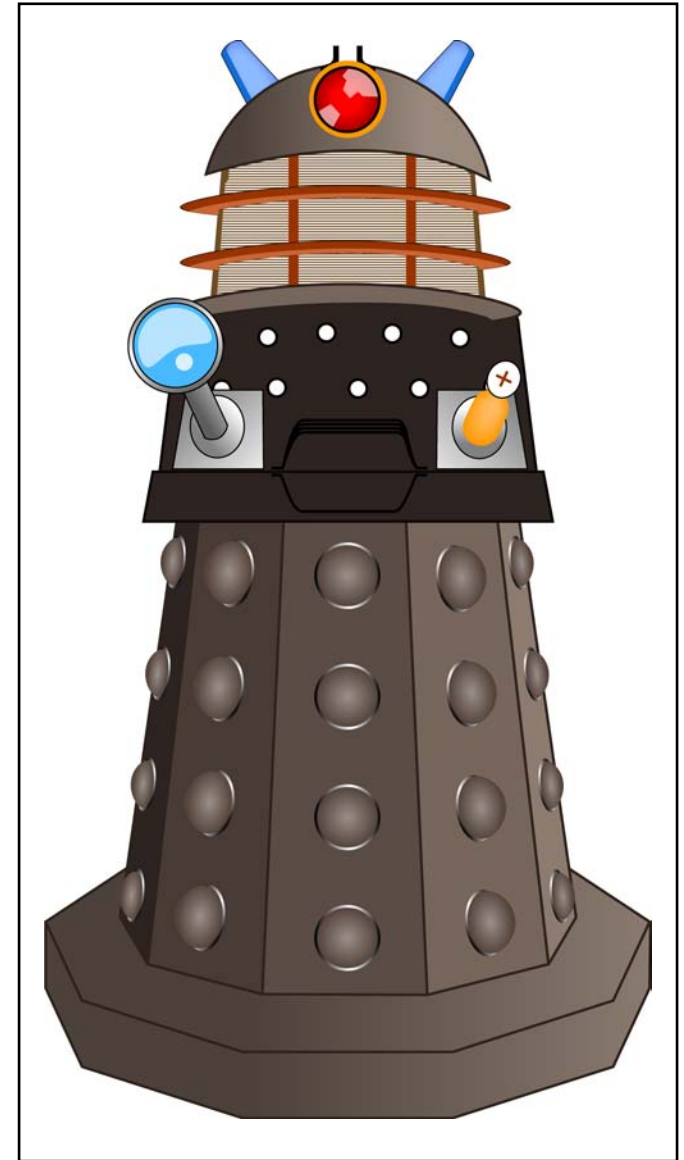


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