

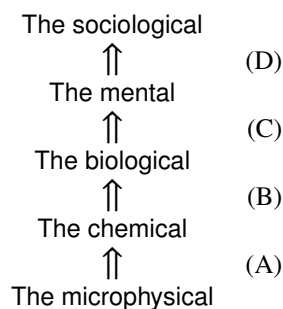
Has the analytic tradition created the ‘hard problem of consciousness’?

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1 Unitarianism

A familiar picture in the analytic tradition (Oppenheim and Putnam 1958, Lewis 1966):

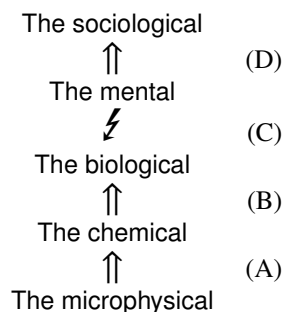


The ↑s signify the availability of **constitutive explanations** in terms of matters at each ‘lower level’ of matters at the ‘next level up’

2 Troubles for Unitarians

2.1 An ‘epistemic gap’?

Chalmers 2002, 3.4:



While (A) and (B), and maybe (D) are just fine, stage (C) is instead not at all in good order

2.2 Symptoms

- (a) The ordinary scientific strategies by which (A) and (B) are secured **yield no constitutive explanation** at stage (C) (Levine 1983, Chalmers and Jackson 2001)
- (b) A total biological/chemical/microphysical characterization **conceptually underdetermines** a mental characterization (Nagel 1970, Kripke 1972/1980, Kirk 1974, Chalmers 1996)
- (c) Knowing all the biological, chemical, and microphysical facts about a subject/subjects of a certain kind/subjects in a certain condition **does not yield knowledge of what it is like** for those subjects (Nagel 1974, Jackson 1982)

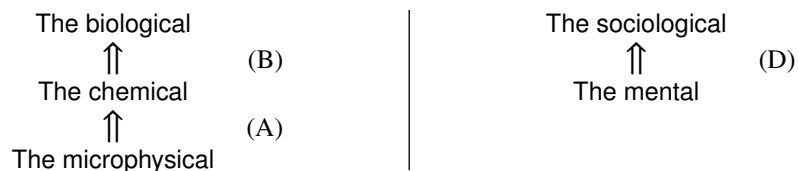
2.3 The ‘hard problem of consciousness’

- How can we replace the ⚡ at stage (C) with something more like an ↑↑?

3 Pluralism

3.1 Not a ‘gap’; rather, different ‘modes of reasoning’

The standard picture in the *hermeneutic* tradition (Dilthey 1883/1989, Gadamer 1975/1989; compare Collingwood 1946/1993):



Reasoning in the *natural sciences* goes by *description*; reasoning in the *human sciences* is fundamentally different, going by *interpretation*

3.2 Diagnoses

- (a) Positing stage (C) is a confusion because constitutive explanation cannot hop over ‘modes of reasoning’

- (b) The ‘conceptualization’ at issue is partial to *descriptive* reasoning, so it makes no sense to ask for ‘conceptual determination’ of the mental
- (c) Of course not: no amount of *descriptive* reasoning constitutes any amount of *interpretive* reasoning

3.3 No ‘hard problem’

- 4. There is no stage (C)—and so not even a *location* for either a ζ or an \uparrow

4 But what are these ‘modes of reasoning’?

4.1 *Das Verstehen*

A philosophical tradition from Dilthey (1883/1989) to Nagel (1986) sees an important distinction between the methods of the natural sciences and the methods of the social sciences, where the phrase ‘social sciences’ is broadly interpreted so as to include sociology, economics, political theory, anthropology, literary criticism, history, and psychology. According to this tradition, the natural sciences explain phenomena by exhibiting them as instances of orderly patterns, hierarchies of classification, and laws, whereas the social sciences typically require something more, namely, **an understanding of meaning, including what actions and experience mean to a person from the inside**. We can understand physics or chemistry without knowing what it is like to be an electron, but we cannot fully understand what people are doing or saying unless we have an understanding of how things are for them.

The required **subjective empathetic understanding, which Dilthey calls *Das Verstehen*, cannot in this view be arrived at solely through the methods of the natural sciences**. Suppose, for example, that we discover a regularity in the behavior of some social group. Every day at about six o’clock each member of the group stands up and turns in a circle five times. Even if we can predict this with great confidence, that is not yet to understand what they are doing. Is it a religious ritual? A moderate form of callisthenics? A method for getting water out of their ears? We have to know what meaning this action has for them, which is not just to place the action under one or another general principle. (Harman 1990, 262–3)

4.2 A ‘shift of perspective’

- 5. (a) Descriptive reasoning understands its subject-matter ‘from the outside’; interpretive reasoning, ‘(as) from the inside’
- (b) Descriptive reasoning presupposes a *distinction* from its subject-matter; interpretive reasoning purports an *identification* with its subject-matter
- (c) In descriptive reasoning, the ‘perspective’ is *on* the subject-matter; in interpretive reasoning, *from* the subject-matter

4.3 Noninformational belief

- 6. A person’s *information state* consists of a *set of possible worlds* containing just those they *take seriously* as *candidates for actuality* (Lewis 1974, Stalnaker 1984)
- 7. Information very plausibly *underdetermines* belief
 - (a) *Self-location* (Prior 1959, Castañeda 1966)
 - (b) *Coding* of information (Stalnaker 1990, 1991)
 - (c) *Individuation* (Rayo 2013)
 - (d) *Evaluative* belief (Gibbard 1990)
- 8. Perhaps there can be *belief by supposition*, which is not constituted by one’s being in any distinctive information state
 - (a) One may accompany one’s ‘root’ mental state with ‘suppositional’ mental states
 - (b) Perhaps to believe if ψ , φ is for the ‘most accessible’ ψ -believing mental state to be a φ -believing mental state (Hellie RCCR)
 - (c) ‘Prop-oriented make-belief’ (Walson 1990): suppositional mental states can be *constrained* by the root state
 - (d) Perhaps to *believe that*, in *Moby Dick*, φ is to *suppositionally believe that* φ in a state constrained by the text of *Moby Dick*
- 9. *Simulationism* (Heal 1986, 2003a, Gordon 1986): belief about other minds as prop-oriented make-belief
 - (a) To believe that Fred wants to visit Sarasota is to *suppositionally want to visit Sarasota* in a state constrained by Fred’s physiological/environmental condition
 - (b) More generally: to believe that s Ψ s at t is to **purport, qua s at t** , to Ψ

4.4 The Core Pluralist Thesis

- 10. **Purport-qua is belief about the mental at the fundamental level, and not rather by courtesy of informational belief**

5 Truth versus Pluralism

- 11. Any meaningful declarative sentence has a truth-condition
 - (a) *Logical Ubiquity*: For any meaningful declarative sentences ψ and φ , exactly one of the following is so: they are *logically equivalent*; $\psi \vdash \varphi$ (and not the other way around); $\varphi \vdash \psi$ (and not the other way around); they are *logically compatible*; they are *logically inconsistent*

- (b) **Frege's Thesis:** Logical relations between ψ and φ are determined by the *truth-conditions* of ψ and φ
12. One believes that φ only if one's information-state is compatible only with φ -worlds
- (a) One believes that φ just if one endorses $((\varphi))$
- i. *Endorsement* is 'implicit acceptance' by a mental state of a sentence of the subject's own language, constrained *by*, and indefeasibly constrained *only by*, logical consequence
- ii. $((\varphi))$ is an appropriate 'recentering' of φ —for example, Fred at t believes that his (Fred's) own shoes are then (at t) currently untied just if he then endorses 'my shoes are untied', so for him then $((\text{my shoes are untied}))$ maps to *his (Fred's) own shoes are then (at t) currently untied*—together perhaps also with appropriate translation—for example, Isabella at t' believes that her (Isabella's) own shoes are then (at t') currently untied just if she then endorses 'mis zapatos están desatados', so for her then $((\text{mis zapatos están desatados}))$ goes to *her (Isabella's) own shoes are then (at t') currently untied*
- (b) One endorses $((\varphi))$ just if one takes $((\varphi))$ to be true
- (c) One takes $((\varphi))$ to be true **only if** one takes the truth-condition of $((\varphi))$ to be met
- The presupposition of this principle comes from (11)
- (d) One takes the truth-condition of $((\varphi))$ to be met just if one's information state is compatible only with φ -worlds
13. \therefore Unless one's information state is compatible only with worlds in which $s \Psi$ s at t , one does not believe that $s \Psi$ s at t
- (a) This is compatible with the claim, by (9b), that to believe that $s \Psi$ s at t is to purport, qua s at t , to Ψ
- (b) But it strongly undermines (10), the claim that belief about the mental is purport-qua at the *fundamental level*
- (c) Rather, purport-qua is belief only to the extent that it provides a 'mode of presentation' for the holding of certain information

6 Beyond Frege's Thesis

6.1 Endorsement-logic

14. Logical relations between ψ and φ are determined by the *endorsement-conditions* of ψ and φ ; eg
- (a) $\psi \vdash \varphi$ just if φ is endorsed whenever ψ is

(b) ψ and φ are *inconsistent* just if never endorsed together

15. Truth-logic and endorsement-logic are isomorphic over *context-independent* languages (Humberstone 1981, Holliday 2014) and over *nonmodal* languages, but come apart when modality and context-dependence are combined (Yli-Vakkuri 2013, Hellie 2016a)
- (a) A B-operator, analogous to the A-operator of 2D modal logic, is such that φ and $B\varphi$ are equivalent, but $\neg B\varphi \neq \neg\varphi$ and $\psi \vee \varphi \neq B\psi \vee B\varphi$ (Hellie 2014)
- (b) B is therefore something like a 'Moorean' belief-avowal operator (Hellie 2011)
- (c) Mental ascription goes something like a Stalnaker conditional: 'Fred Ψ s at t ' is endorsed in a mental condition c just if, adjusting c minimally to reach a mental state c' which makes sense of (c 's information about) Fred's behavior at t , c' is a Ψ ing-condition
16. Independent attractions
- (a) Directly explains why consequence is exactly the indefeasible constraint on endorsement
- (b) Unifies the theory of logical relations across all categories of sentence (declarative, interrogative, imperative)
- (c) Neatly handles ferocious data about deontic modals (Hellie 2016a,b); intention avowals (Hellie 2018); indicative conditionals (Hellie RCCR)
- (d) Resolves the 'Frege-Geach Problem' for expressivism
17. In the present dialectic, (15a) is incompatible with (11), that every declarative sentence has a 'truth-condition'—without this presupposition, (12c) must be withdrawn

6.2 Frege's Thesis as a pillar for Unitarian ideology

18. A '**proportionality**' worry: Isn't it crazy to revise *logic*, which is utterly fundamental to all theory, to save *philosophy of mind*, which is just a local domain of theory?
19. —Well, no. For one thing, as noted, for the *nonmodal* (indeed, even for certain restrictions of the modal, such as the 'metaphysically' modal), and for the *context-independent*, logic stays the same; these are exactly the *natural-scientific* regions for which Frege developed modern logical apparatus in the first place
20. Moreover, Frege's Thesis became 'baked in' to the analytic tradition thanks to the ideologically-driven, evangelical Unitarian program of the Vienna Circle.

Otto Neurath was the 'ring-leader' of the group, and pushed the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* from the germ of an idea to a hugely collaborative international project, starting in Europe in the mid-1930s and then moving to the US with the outbreak of WWII. In his 1937 announcement of the *Encyclopaedia*, he confesses to a base-line aversion to Pluralism:

My own intellectual development in the direction of a comprehensive scientific view was influenced by Mach, Poincaré, and other modern thinkers, and especially by Gregorius Itelson. **My central conviction became** that the elaboration of the differences between the various sciences is an unessential task, but that, on the contrary, it was especially important to develop an account of all the sciences using only one kind of a scientific ‘style’. That is to say, I became convinced of **the possibility of speaking about the stars and about me with the same logical techniques and with the same scientific dispassionateness.** (Neurath 1937, 273–4)

And also stresses the utility for bolstering this program of Frege-style logic:

What is called modern symbolic logic or logistic has been cultivated not only as an autonomous discipline but **always in more or less close reference to its use as an instrument of the logical analysis of the sciences.**

[A]s an outcome of the fact that modern logic has as one of its roles the task of supporting the empirical sciences, the empiricism of our time has acquired an altered physiognomy. **The logical calculus in its widest sense becomes an essential apparatus of a unified science.** (Neurath 1937, 269)

Charles Morris, though largely forgotten today, was a University of Chicago philosopher who served as Neurath’s lieutenant in the US and co-editor of the *Encyclopedia*; for an indication of Morris’s long shadow, see Montague 1968, 99–100; Montague 1970, 123; Stalnaker 1970, 31–2; Harman 1988, 236; Williamson 1994, 79.

Morris conceived of the program of ‘semiotic’—today, *formal theory of meaning*—as explicitly a behaviorist program, in which mentality would be redescribed as sign-manipulation, and thence accorded a functional reduction:

The significance of semiotic as a science lies in the fact that it is a step in the unification of science, since it supplies the foundations for any special science of signs[]. The concept of sign may prove to be of importance in the unification of the social, psychological, and humanistic sciences, insofar as these are distinguished from the physical and biological sciences. And since it will be shown that signs are simply the objects studied by the biological and physical sciences related in certain complex functional processes, any such unification of the formal sciences on the one hand, and the social, psychological, and humanistic sciences on the other, would provide relevant material for the unification of these two sets of sciences with the physical and biological sciences. **Semiotic may thus be of importance in a program for the unification of science[].** (Morris 1938, 2)

This image of semiotic is brought out explicitly as a rejoinder to *Verstehen*-style Pluralist anxieties about Unitarianism:

A number of inquiries from various quarters make insistent the question as to what disposal the [unity of science] movement is to make of [] the *Geisteswissenschaften*, [] the socio-humanistic sciences. These inquiries must be met without evasion. **It is a frequent claim that the socio-humanistic sciences are concerned basically with meaning and value, and that these cannot be known by the methods operative in the natural sciences, but must be known by a special method of insight. The unity of science movement will remain a torso [] if it cannot give a full and convincing account of the whole domain of human cultural activities.**

[T]he theory of signs (semiotic) furnishes the key to the incorporation of the socio-humanistic sciences in the structure of unified science. [T]hese sciences are semiotical sciences[]; so in so far as the theory of signs can be developed by the objective methods used in the natural sciences, and in so far as the rules for the usage of terms can be stated by means of the rules for the usage of terms in the natural sciences, the socio-humanistic studies are incorporated with the natural sciences in a single scientific structure.

[S]emiosis [] is a complex functional relation between the same objects which are studied in the natural sciences. [I]f sign processes (‘meanings’) consist in certain functional relations between natural entities, they can be objectively studied in the same way that the entities themselves are studied in the natural sciences. **Semiotic thus supplies an objective scientific approach to what is vaguely referred to under the confused and misleading term ‘meaning’.** Semiotic as a science is [] in the same scientific structure as physics and biology. (Morris 1939, 511–12)

Verstehen is diminished to a mere convenience, its proponents derided as confused:

[T]here is no unique methodological problem raised by the social sciences. The claim that ‘insight’ is essential to these sciences, since human social processes involve meaning and value, reduces in part to the claim that scientific knowledge of meaning and value is facilitated by having a direct knowledge of the meanings and values in question, and by then using self-observation as a source of fruitful hypotheses about the meanings and values found in the culture in question[]. Wherever scientific knowledge of man’s social and cultural life is in question, an hypothesis, whatever its origin, must be confirmed in the same inter-subjective way as hypotheses in the natural sciences are confirmed. **The belief that ‘insight’ constitutes a special method for the study of meaning and value involves a confusion of scientific and esthetic discourse, and the confusion of having an experience with scientific knowledge of such an experience.** (Morris 1939, 514)

7 Conclusion

21. Pluralists should not be surprised to find the analytic tradition staunchly convinced that the ‘hard problem of consciousness’ is genuine:
 - (a) All sides agree on a big difference in reasoning
 - (b) But Neurath-esque insistence on the ‘same scientific dispassionateness’ and ‘same logical techniques’ entrench Unitarianism—the former by raising a high *barrier to articulating* the Core Pluralist Thesis, the latter by mounting a powerful *argument against* it
22. In the view of the Pluralist, however, this insistence is backed up *exclusively by force of tradition*—not by anything in the phenomena, nor by intuitive plausibility, nor by theoretical necessity.
23. The analytic tradition has indeed created the ‘hard problem of consciousness’; having recognized this, we can now destroy it.

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