



CaSE:
Consciousness and Semantic Externalism

Titles, Speakers, and Abstracts

FRIDAY MAY 12

19 Washington Square North
New York, NY 10011
Events Space (2nd Floor)
May 12, 2017

&

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5 Washington Place
New York, NY 10003
Room 202
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The Concept-Mastery Explanation of Mary's New Knowledge

Torin Alter (University of Alabama)

Burge-style externalist arguments (Burge 1979) threaten a proposition endorsed by both critics and proponents of Frank Jackson's (1982, 1995) knowledge argument: the proposition that Jackson's Mary comes to possess phenomenal-color concepts only after leaving the black-and-white room (Ball 2009, Tye 2009). One response is to replace that proposition with one about concept mastery: even if she possesses phenomenal-color concepts while still in the room, she does not master them until after she leaves (Rabin 2011, Alter 2013). In this paper, I defend that response against attacks by Gabriel Rabin (2011) and Derek Ball (2013). Along the way, I consider general issues about how to use premises about ideal reasoners such as Mary to establish conclusions about a priori deducibility.

The Knowledge Argument, Rationality, and the Individuation of Belief

Derek Ball (University of St. Andrews)

What happens when Mary sees colour for the first time? I develop an account on which she forms a new token of a type of belief that she had already — a new copy of an old belief. Although this copy belief is true and may be knowledgeable, it makes her overall belief system — her theory of the world — worse. Forming it is therefore (in a sense I make precise) irrational (though excusable). The existence of copy beliefs and irrationalities of this kind is predictable given plausible forms of semantic externalism.

Zombies, Illuminati and Metaphysical Gridlock

Kati Balog (Rutgers - Newark)

In this paper I propose that the reference of “property” and “law” and “concept” is indeterminate between interpretations that make physicalism true, and ones that make dualism true. I argue for this on the basis of an examination of the dialectic between anti-physicalist arguments and physicalist responses. Having developed a master argument against the anti-physicalist, I then notice that there is a puzzling symmetry between dualist attacks on physicalism and physicalist replies. Each position can be developed in a way to defend itself from attacks from the other position. My suggestion is that we might want to look more seriously at the view that the reason for the seeming unresolvability of the problem is that there is no determinate fact about the metaphysical grounding of mind.

Hallucinations Ain't in the Head

Alex Byrne (MIT)

Is there a kind of neural activity sufficient for consciousness? Hallucinations are often thought to show that there is. The paper argues that they show no such thing. Hallucinations are just as world-involving as other mental phenomena.

From externalism to expressivism

Benj Hellie (University of Toronto)

Sam, a consciousness-externalist, sometimes endorses (M) 'A and B have matching experience' even when she thinks A and B differ in consciousness. What does Sam mean by (M), if not to describe A and B's identity in consciousness? If something about /indiscriminability/ (compare Martin 2002, 2004), the devil is in the details: *whose* discrimination, and *by which means*? A bad answer: /the subject's/ discrimination, /by reflection/ (compare Siegel 2004, 2006; Hawthorne and Kovakovitch 2006; Byrne and Logue 2008). A better answer (Hellie 2010): /the interpreter's/ discrimination, /by simulation/ -- after all, the issue is what *Sam*, as interpreter, means by *her* 'match'-claim (M), in application to the *others*, A and B; and the general idea is that if she doesn't mean A and B are the same, then she means that she can't tell A and B apart. But how are Sam's simulations connected to her endorsement of (M)? A bad answer, vulnerable to familiar anti-contextualist worries: (M) *describes* a triadic relation Sam believes to hold among herself, A, and B. A better answer (Hellie, 2011): (M) *expresses* Sam's simulations of A and B. As a local side benefit, a general expressivist approach to 'faultless disagreement' quiets sources of concern about the status of externalism itself.

Color Experience as Partly Representational

Janet Levin (USC)

Many representationalists about perceptual experience endorse the following theses:

- (1) Colors are objective physical properties.
- (2) Color experiences are strongly representational: all phenomenal similarities and differences in color experiences are (or supervene on) similarities and differences in what they represent.
- (3) Representation is some sort of causal-covariational relation between experiences and the items in the world that they represent.

However, these theses are hard to square with the Inverted Spectrum Hypothesis, namely, that there could be populations whose color perceptions are phenomenally green just where ours are phenomenally red—and so on for the entire spectrum—but discriminate colors and use color terms just as we do.

In this paper I'll argue that the best way for a representationalist to deal with this possibility is to reject (2) and maintain that color experiences are partially representational—that is, characterizable in terms of their representational contents and also some non-representational features of those experiences. I'll argue further that partial representationalism has a number of other attractive features as well.

Twinning Qualia Terms: A Meta-Semantical Journey

Gabriel Rabin (NYU Abu Dhabi)

There is an intuitive distinction between those terms which are “semantically neutral”, in the sense that they are not susceptible to a twin-earth case in the style of Putnam [1975], and those terms which are susceptible to such a case - which we call “semantically non-neutral”. It has been thought that phenomenal terms (terms for certain varieties of conscious experience) are semantically neutral. This claim plays a vital role in conceivability arguments against physicalism. In this paper, I argue that phenomenal terms are in fact not semantically neutral. They can be “twin-earthed”. This result can be used to rebut the conceivability arguments against physicalism. In addition, I use the twin-earthing of phenomenal terms as a springboard to discuss the nature of linguistic competence, deference, and the division of linguistic labor. In particular, I stress the role of demonstrative labelings in the generation of meaning. The upshot is a strong form of semantic externalism according to which the generation of meaning is a far less cognitively sophisticated affair than one might have thought.