ASSC 23 POSTER SESSION

Title: Qualitative physicalism

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Abstract: 2.26

One discusses the “colored-brain thesis”, or qualitative physicalism. This thesis was proposed by Thomas Case (1888), in a non-materialistic context, and is close to the view of Edwin Boring (1933). Qualitative physicalism involves three basic statements: (i) perceptual internalism, and realism of qualia, (ii) ontic physicalism, and (iii) mind-brain identity thesis. In addition, (iv) structuralism in physics, and, to distinguish the present version from that suggested by Feigl and Pepper, (v) realism of the physical description. An explanation is given for why the greenness of a visually perceived avocado, which (according to this view) is present in the brain as a physical-chemical attribute, would not be seen as green by a neurosurgeon who opens the observer’s skull. This conception is compared with two close views, Russellian (or Schlickian) monisms and panprotopsychism (including panqualityism). One adopts a modified hylemorphism, for which any thing involves a materiality w [omega] and a network of causal relations, its organization Σ. According to the view presented here, the phenomenal experience of a quale q consists of a combination of (1) the materiality associated with the brain, and (2) the organization of the relevant elements of the brain, including in this organization the structure of the self: (Σw)q. In epistemological terms the “explanatory gap”, between the experience of subjective states (Σw)q and the scientific theoretical description of the brain Σ (which follows from structuralism in physics), is seen as being bridged only by unexplained principles involving w, and not by “explanations” in a deductive sense. A model is presented in which qualia are produced when a certain pattern of neural spikes Σ falls upon a certain region of the brain (the sensorium) of specific materiality w, clarifying Dennett’s (1988) Brainstorm machine, in which someone has access to the brain of another person who inverts the color spectrum.