

NATURAL PHENOMENON TERMS

Analysis, 66, No.2, 141-148, 2006.

ABSTRACT. In lecture III of *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke extends his claim that names are non-descriptive to natural kind terms, and in so doing includes a brief supporting discussion of terms for natural phenomena, in particular the terms 'light' and 'heat'. Whilst natural kind terms continue to feature centrally in the recent literature, natural phenomenon terms have barely figured. The purpose of the present paper is to show how the apparent similarities between natural kind terms and the natural phenomenon terms on which Kripke focuses are outweighed by more significant differences. Thus, rather than providing additional support for non-descriptivism, natural phenomenon terms turn out to challenge that thesis.

ON THE CONCEPT OF A SENSE

Synthese, 147, No.3, 461-475, 2005.

ABSTRACT. Keeley has recently argued that the philosophical issue of how to analyse the concept of a sense can usefully be addressed by considering how scientists, and more specifically neuroethologists, classify the senses. After briefly outlining his proposal, which is based on the application of an ordered set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for modality differentiation, I argue, by way of two complementary counterexamples, that it fails to account fully for the way the senses are in fact individuated in neuroethology and other relevant sciences. I suggest substantial modifications to Keeley's account which would both solve the problem cases and make better sense of the actual classifications made by scientists. I conclude by noting some limits to the way of classifying the senses that I suggest.

WHAT SYNAESTHESIA REALLY TELLS US ABOUT FUNCTIONALISM

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J. A. Gray et al. have recently argued that synaesthesia can be used as a counterexample to functionalism. They provide empirical evidence which they hold supports two anti-functionalist claims: disparate functions share the same types of qualia and the effects of synaesthetic qualia are, contrary to what one would expect from evolutionary considerations, adverse to those functions with which those types of qualia are normally linked. I argue that the empirical evidence they cite does not rule out functionalism, rather the reverse. The fact that the effects of synaesthesia are adverse shows that understanding synaesthetic experiences requires a concept of dysfunction, which in turn presupposes a functionalist account. Such an account, moreover, shows how tokens of the same types of qualia can be associated with different causal histories, thus disarming their first objection.

TYE'S REPRESENTATIONALISM: FEELING THE HEAT?

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ABSTRACT. According to Tye's PANIC theory of consciousness, perceptual states of creatures which are related to a disjunction of external contents will fail to represent sensorily, and thereby fail to be conscious states. In this paper I argue that heat perception, a form of perception neglected in the recent literature, serves as a counterexample to Tye's radical externalist claim. Having laid out Tye's 'absent qualia' scenario, the PANIC theory from which it derives and the case of heat perception as a counterexample, I defend the putative counterexample against three possible responses: (1) that heat perception represents general (i.e. non-disjunctive) intrinsic properties of objects, (2) that heat perception represents the non-specific heat energy that is transferred between a subject's body and another body and (3) that heat perception exclusively represents heat properties of the subject's own body.

SYNAESTHESIA AND MISREPRESENTATION: A REPLY TO WAGER

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Wager has argued that synaesthesia provides material for a counterexample to representational theories of the phenomenal character of experience. He gives a series of three cases based on synaesthesia; he requires the second and third cases to bolster the doubtfulness of the first. Here I further endorse the problematic nature of the first case and then show why the other two cases do not save his argument. I claim that whenever synaesthesia is a credible possibility its phenomenal character can be understood in terms of misrepresentation.

COGNITIVE MODULES, SYNAESTHESIA AND THE CONSTITUTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL NATURAL KINDS

Philosophical Psychology, 14, no. 1, 65-82, 2001.

Fodor claims that cognitive modules can be thought of as constituting a psychological natural kind in virtue of their possession of most or all of nine specified properties. The challenge to this considered here comes from synaesthesia. Synaesthesia is a type of cross-modal association: input to one sensory modality reliably generates an additional sensory output that is usually generated by the input to a distinct sensory modality. The most common form of synaesthesia manifests Fodor's nine specified properties of modularity, and hence, according to Segal, it should be understood as involving an extra module. Many psychologists believe that synaesthesia involves a breakdown in modularity. After outlining how both theories can explain the manifestation of the nine alleged properties of modularity in synaesthesia, I discuss the two concepts of function which initially motivate the respective theories. I argue that only a teleological concept of function is properly able to adjudicate between the two theories. The upshot is a further application of so-called externalist considerations to mental phenomena.

