

Philosophy of Mind Glossary

Behavior: externally observable bodily actions, e.g. wincing, walking towards drinking fountain, saying, “I’m hungry”.

Sensory Stimuli: something that stimulates someone’s senses; e.g., the sight of a dog, the sound of a police siren, a knife being stabbed into your leg.

Disposition: something has a disposition in virtue of what it *would* do *if* put in certain circumstances.

Behavioral Disposition: a condition something has iff it *would* behave in such-and-such ways *if* it were presented with such-and-such sensory stimuli; e.g., being such that you would say “Yes” if asked “Are you in pain?” or being such that if you were in the presence of rain, you would open your umbrella, or being such that you would walk over to a drinking fountain if there were one visible nearby.

Physical State: a state that is characterized in physical/physiological term. E.g., having your C-fibers firing, having a high concentration of serotonin in your amygdala, having your pineal gland wiggling forwards and backwards. (Behaviors are physical, but when Identity Theory says mental states are physical states, they are thinking internal physical states, i.e. brain states.)

Functionalism says a person is in mental state M iff they are in some (probably physical) state that a) would be caused to occur if such-and-such sensory stimulations and/or such-and-such mental states were to occur, and b) that would cause such-and-such behaviors and such-and-such other mental states if such-and-such sensory stimulations and such-and-such other mental states were occurring.

The mental map I’ve often sketched has circles that represent states it is *possible* for the system to be in. My brain has all sorts of states it *is* in, and many more that it *could* be in. My C-fibers are not firing. That’s one state my brain is in (having my C-fibers not firing). But my C-fibers are hooked to other neurons in a way that they could be caused to fire, so one state my brain could be in is to have my C-fibers firing. My brain doesn’t have any D-fibers, so the state of having D-fibers firing is not a state my brain could be in. The way my brain operates, the concentration of serotonin in my amygdala could range from 1 to 10 ml/g. Having a concentration of serotonin in my amygdala of 2 ml/g is a possible state my brain could be in; having a concentration of 55 ml/g is not a possible state. Each circle in the mental map represents a *possible* state I could be in, and the arrows leading from X to Y represent that if X were to occur, it would cause Y to occur.

So my brain has gads of possible states it could be in, but according to functionalism some of them are actually connected in the way the map says. Moreover, it says they have to be connected in these ways for you to have mental states.