

# Review Questions on the Mind-Body Problem

Assignment for  
FLF5256 – Philosophy and History of MindBrain Science  
(Filosofia e História da Ciência do Mentecéfalo)  
Instructor: Osvaldo Pessoa Jr.

Due date (in paper): **November 27, 2019**

- 1) Please summarize your personal views on the mind-body problem, including opinions on the following questions. (a) In your view, what is mind, or consciousness, or the soul? (b) What is the relation between mind (or consciousness, or soul) and the body, or matter? (c) What happens when you die?
- 2) What is functionalism, and its antithesis “psychosubstantialism”? How do you place yourself in the functionalist spectrum? Would you say that a machine can be conscious?
- 3) Do you agree with Locke (Bk. II, Ch. VIII, § 17) that whiteness or coldness are not really in the bodies? Explain.
- 4) What is the supervenience thesis concerning the mind? How do you place yourself in the supervenientist spectrum?
- 5) What conclusions do you derive from Mary’s room thought experiment? How would you compare this with the discussion of Molyneux’s experiment?
- 6) In your opinion, what’s the ontological status of a green after-image? Do you agree with Place that there’s a “phenomenological falacy”? Explain.
- 7) “Mind does not move matter” (Herrick, 1956, p. 281). Do you agree with this? How would you call this position?
- 8) Consider the following quote from James Corman (1962, p. 490), on the explanatory gap:

We can talk about intense, unbearable, nagging, or throbbing pains. And yellow, dim, fading, or circular after-images. And dogmatic, false, profound, or unconscious beliefs. On the other hand we can also discuss publicly observable, spatially located, swift, irreversible physical processes. Thus if the Identity Theory is correct, it seems that we should sometimes be able to say truthfully that physical processes such as brain processes are dim or fading or nagging or false [or yellow], and that mental phenomena such as after-images are publicly observable or physical or spatially located or swift.

How are we to deal with these problems? That is: (i) about qualia, such as yellowness; (ii) about mental properties such as naggingness and dimness; (iii) about truth values, such as false.

- 9) What is your position concerning emergentism? Do you think you agree with Sperry in the following quotation?

The whole has properties as a system that are not reducible to the properties of the parts, and the properties at higher levels exert causal control over those at lower levels. In the case of brain function, the conscious properties of high-order brain activity determine the course of the neural events at lower levels. (Sperry, 1977, p. 120)

- 10) Please formulate one or more questions expressing your doubts concerning what was covered in the course.