Answers: Midterm

Philosophy of Mind

1...am I a Materialist?
No. According to the definition of materialism, you are a materialist if and only if you believe that any possible world that is a minimal physical duplicate of our world is a psychological duplicate of our world. That means if you believe that it is possible to have a world that is a physical duplicate of our world and not a psychological duplicate, you are not a materialist. The position detailed in the question explicitly holds that God ensures a physical / psychological match through his benevolence – and that this is the best of all possible worlds as a result. That means that it is possible that God could let the mental and physical separate, or in other words, that there is a possible world that is exactly like ours physically, but not psychologically. Therefore, I am not a materialist.

Note: Arguing “The position described is Leibniz’s, everyone know that Leibniz was not a materialist, therefore you are not a materialist” doesn’t explain why I am not a materialist.

Also, atheism may imply materialism, but materialism does not imply atheism. I can believe that there are no spiritual or psychological existences w/out physical existences and still believe in God. The two theses are independent.

4 What does the Twin Earth case show about the descriptive theory of reference? Why?
It shows that the descriptive theory of reference is false. According to the descriptive theory of reference, words are a kind of short-hand for a description. That means that the sentences in which a given word appears can only be true if the sentence is true when the description is substituted for the word in question. For example, if ‘water’ means ‘the stuff that flows out of taps, fills lakes, etc.’ the sentence ‘that is water’ can only be true if ‘that is the stuff that flows out of taps, fills lakes, etc.’ is also true.

The twin earth case shows us that, when I am pointing at H2O on twin earth, and say ‘that is water’, I am speaking the truth (based on intuition), but I cannot say ‘that is the stuff that flows out of taps, fills lakes, etc.’ Therefore, the descriptive theory of reference is false.

6 To what does ‘pain’ refer, according to the common-sense functionalist? the behaviourist? the empirical functionalist (two different versions)?
According to the common-sense functionalist, pain refers to a state that plays a characteristic functional / causal role, as specified by our common-sense folk psychology. That is, ‘pain’ refers to a state that is typically caused by bodily damage, typically causes beliefs that bodily damage causes pain, desires not to have bodily damage again, and typically causes movement away from the source of the bodily damage. These clauses are flexible, as they are filled out by cluster terms, and depend on our folk psychology.

According to the behaviourist, ‘pain’ refers to a disposition to behave in such-and-such a way, as specified by our ‘cluster’ concepts.

According to the empirical functionalist, ‘pain’ refers to the states of the brain that fill the common-sense functional roles in exemplars of pain (I), Further internal functional roles (II), states of the brain that are specified in terms of inputs and outputs of the brain (III), a
machine table (IV), the internal architecture of normal observers (exemplars) (V), and internal functional nature, but specified in terms of inputs to the organism (VI).

These empirical functionalism are crucially different than common-sense functionalism, insofar as they give the authority to fix the reference to the experts – whether they are cognitive scientists, neuroscientists, computer scientists, or information-processing architects. Common-sense functionalism gives the authority to the ‘folk’ in ‘folk psychology’

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What, if anything, can we conclude from Block’s “China Brain” thought experiment?
Two different answers: nothing, because the intuitions upon which Block concludes that the China Brain has no qualia disappear upon closer reflection, or
That functionalism is false, because according to functionalism, if something has internal states that fill the same functional roles as humans, that thing has mental states. But the china brain has internal states that fill all the relevant functional roles, but it is not at all clear that there is anything it’s like to be the China Brain. That is, it lacks the intrinsic, subjective qualities of experience, or ‘qualia’.