

Zombies

Published: 30 June 2006

Sir, -Dean W. Zimmerman's review of Gregg Rosenberg's book *A Place for Consciousness* is admirably detailed, his review of Daniel C.

Dennett's *Sweet Dreams* less so; both reviews are indecisive (April 28). Are Rosenberg's detailed arguments based on what he can imagine about "zombies" - hypothetical creatures that can "think" and act, but cannot feel - an intellectually rigorous exercise? Or is Dennett right to think not? Zimmerman takes no stance and doesn't give the reader a basis for taking one either. He does, however, restate in passing a truism in philosophy, the truth of which it might be useful to call into question: "there is . . . no . . . 'way that it feels' to believe the Pythagorean Theorem".

Most of what we believe/think/know is latent or "implicit". I don't carry around, actively, my knowledge of what is and is not bigger than a breadbox, or that a mouse, in particular, is not. But when I am actually thinking about whether or not a mouse is bigger than a breadbox, and have it in mind that it is not, there is something that "online" belief-state feels like, just as there is something that a tickle or seeing yellow feels like. Yet surely it is the capacity for that online feeling-state that distinguishes me from a zombie that has all my offline thinking and acting capacity, but no feeling.

So it won't do to try to offload the problem of thinking onto computation, and try to treat the problem of feeling separately.

The real zombie problem is not whether or not there can be zombies, but how and why we are not zombies. And that problem (the "mind/body" problem) is hard (and, I think, insoluble) for one simple reason: "how" and "why" are causal, functional questions, and feelings can only have causal power on pain of telekinetic dualism ("mind over matter"), which surely all evidence from physics contradicts. So Dennett might well be right that this problem cannot be solved by an exercise in imagination (although he is surely wrong that it is not a problem at all!).

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