

FUNCTIONALISM, IDENTITY THEORIES, THE UNION THEORY¹

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Abstract. A person's mind includes a sequence of mental or conscious events – sensations, perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, desires, intentions, and the like. A person's mind may also be taken to include a set of dispositions to mental events, no doubt to all of the mentioned kinds of them. The dispositions, including a supposed sexy sub-set to which Freud paid attention, are neural, since there is not anything else they can be. That a neural structure (or anything else) is a disposition is merely the fact that it is persistent and the fact that it together with something else will or would make up a causal circumstance for a later event, say my conscious hope at this moment that this paper will persuade you of something.

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Hume has the fame of first seeing that there seems no reason to take a person's mind to be any more than the sequence of mental events – we could as well say mental states – and the set of dispositions.² (Of course there is the implicit fact that the sequence is internally related in several ways, most notably in that some of the events are memories of others – that is what makes it a single sequence.) Hume has the fame, more particularly, of noting that when we observe our mental lives, or better, when we recollect the moment just past of our mental lives, we never recollect anything but mental events. That is, we never recollect anything in any sense mental which is external to mental events, which thing possesses, underlies or organizes them. A person is not such a mental entity, but, in so far as mental facts are concerned, just a single sequence of mental events. Hume's truth should neither be overlooked or taken for anything else. It is not a denial of the subjectivity of mental events, of which more in due course.

¹ This paper in its second and third sections is hardly more than a summary of what is laid out elsewhere, mainly in Chs. 1-6 of my *A Theory of Determinism: The Mind, Neuroscience, and Life-Hopes* (Oxford University Press, 1988), and identically in a paperback of Chs. 1-6 of that book, *Mind and Brain* (Oxford University Press, 1990). For a short, untechnical account, see Chs. 1-6 of *How Free Are You? The Determinism Problem* (Oxford University Press, 1993). For comments on earlier drafts of the present paper, I am really grateful to Jonathan Blamey, Tim Crane, John Heil, Jennifer Hornsby, O. R. Jones, E. J. Lowe, Paul Noordhof, Jane O'Grady, and Mike Targett. We are not all in agreement. Perhaps not in perfect mutual comprehension either.

² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book 1, Part 4, Section 6.