

# Functionalist theories of phenomenal properties

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In our terms, a functionalist theory of phenomenal properties will be a theory according to which what it is for a subject to instantiate some phenomenal property  $F$  is for the subject to be in some internal state  $s$  such that for some relation property  $R$ ,  $R(s)$  & necessarily,  $\forall x, Fx$  iff  $\exists y$  ( $y$  is a state of  $x$  &  $Ry$ ).

We could also state a corresponding property identity:

$$F = \text{the property of being in some internal state } y \text{ such that } Ry$$

Functionalist theories are often opposed to biological, or type-type identity theories. The difference between functionalist and biological theories is just in the fact that  $R$  is a relational property in the one case, and not in the other.

Why this is a less demanding definition of ‘functionalism’ than is often given.

One main motivation for a functionalist theory, to which we will return: the argument from multiple realizability.

Functionalist theories might or might not in externalist theories — though most these days are.

To see what, intuitively, the relevant relational properties have to do, it will be useful to remember the form of the proposed identity between representational and phenomenal properties. The idea was that a phenomenal property  $F$  is identical to a conjunctive property of the following form: bearing the relation of sensing to  $P$  & attending to  $Q$ .

Hence the relational properties specified by the functionalist theory of  $F$  must do three things:

1. It must give necessary and sufficient conditions for a state to have the content  $P$ .
2. It must give necessary and sufficient conditions for a state to involve the phenomenal relation of sensing rather than some non-phenomenal relation.
3. It must be capable of explaining the difference between the distinct phenomenal relations of sensing and attention.

Each of the three poses problems of its own — we’ll discuss these in turn.