

1. What is eliminative materialism?
2. Give an example of a kind of thing that scientists used to believe in, but which they no longer do.
3. Why does Churchland think we should do away with “folk psychology”?

Functionalism

Each kind of mental state is defined in terms of the role it plays in producing behavior, causing other mental states, and being caused by certain perceptual inputs.

- e.g., A creature's pain is whatever state of its brain or body is (normally) caused by damage to the body (etc.) and is (normally) responsible for causing pain behavior and the desire to avoid the pain's cause.

Functionalism

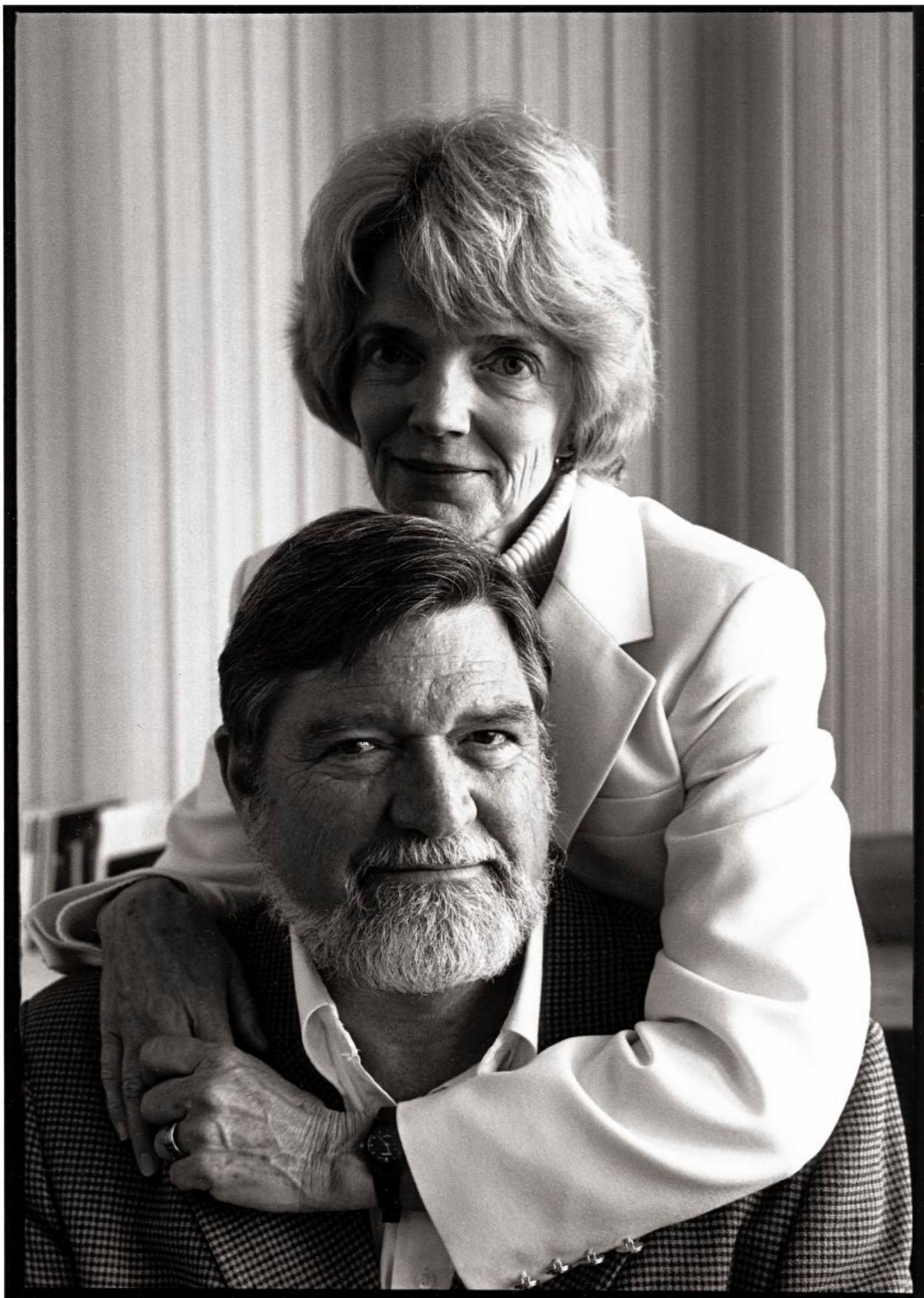
Each kind of mental state is defined in terms of the role it plays in producing behavior, causing other mental states, and being caused by certain perceptual inputs.

- How would a functionalist define the belief that MoMA is on 53rd Street?

Functionalism

Another way of putting the point:

Functionalism identifies as a mental state whichever part of a person plays the right role in a good **explanation** of the person's mental life, including perceptual inputs, behavioral outputs, and inferences.



Paul Churchland
**Eliminative
Materialism**

1. What is eliminative materialism?

“Eliminative materialism (or eliminativism) is the radical claim that our ordinary, common-sense understanding of the mind is deeply wrong and that some or all of the mental states posited by common-sense do not actually exist.” (—William Ramsey)

Our explanations of one another's behavior will appeal to such things as our neuropharmacological states, the neural activity in specialized anatomical areas, and whatever other states are deemed relevant by the new theory. Our private introspection will also be transformed, and may be profoundly enhanced by reason of the more accurate and penetrating framework it will have to work with--just as the astronomer's perception of the night sky is much enhanced by the detailed knowledge of modern astronomical theory that he or she possesses.

2. Give an example of a kind of thing that scientists used to believe in, but which they no longer do.

3. Why does Churchland think we should do away with “folk psychology”?

First Argument:

Folk psychology doesn't explain our mental lives very well. There must be something better.

So much of what is central and familiar to us remains a complete mystery from within folk psychology. We do not know what sleep is, or why we have to have it, despite spending a full third of our lives in that condition. (The answer, "For rest," is mistaken. Even if people are allowed to rest continuously, their need for sleep is undiminished. Apparently, sleep serves some deeper functions, but we do not yet know what they are.) We do not understand how learning transforms each of us from a gaping infant to a cunning adult, or how differences in intelligence are grounded. We have not the slightest idea how memory works, or how we manage to retrieve relevant bits of information instantly from the awesome mass we have stored. We do not know what mental illness is, nor how to cure it.

Second Argument

Folk psychology is our first attempt to explain the mind. But our first attempts to explain everything else have turned out to be way off.

Our early folk theories of the structure and activity of the heavens were wildly off the mark, and survive only as historical lessons in how wrong we can be. Our folk theories of the nature of fire, and the nature of life, were similarly cockeyed. And one could go on, since the vast majority of our past folk conceptions have been similarly exploded. All except folk psychology, which survives to this day and has only recently begun to feel pressure. But the phenomenon of conscious intelligence is surely a more complex and difficult phenomenon than any of those just listed. So far as accurate understanding is concerned, it would be a miracle if we had got that one right the very first time, when we fell down so badly on all the others.

Third Argument

It is very unlikely that each of our psychological concepts matches up to a unique kind of brain process or a unique function that different brain processes might play.

Objection:

Eliminative materialism is
incompatible with introspection.

Churchland's Response

When you introspect, you are systematically misclassifying your mental states and processes because you have a bad system of concepts with which to classify them.