

## Spring 2008 BQE Text Exam

Instructions: Answer **ONE** question from Part A and **ONE** question from Part B for a total to two questions. Make sure that you clearly identify the questions you choose by their section letter and question number at the beginning of the answer. You should think carefully before you begin to write, since a premium will be placed on thoughtfulness, cogency, and organization. Your test will be graded exclusively on whether your answers demonstrate expository skills, evaluative skills, a mastery of the material, and an ability to critically evaluate and/or apply the theses, concepts, and arguments in the texts. It is of critical importance that you respond to every aspect of the prompt.

### Part A

1.) (A) Do the following two quotations from Searle's "Minds, Brains, and Programs" express the same thesis? (B) Explain in detail why the theses prove identical or nonidentical. (C) Discuss Fodor's commentary on Searle's article (p.431) in light of your answer. (D) How does Searle respond to Fodor, and is it effective? (p.454)

From the abstract of "Minds, Brains, and Programs:"

"(2) Instantiating a computer program is never by itself a sufficient condition of intentionality. The main argument of this paper is directed at establishing this claim. The form of the argument is to show how a human agent could instantiate the program and still not have the relevant intentionality. These two propositions have the following consequences: (3) The explanation of how the brain produces intentionality cannot be that it does it by instantiating a computer program."

From the second paragraph of "Minds, Brains, and Programs:"

"My discussion here will be directed at the claims I have defined as those of strong AI, specifically the claim that the appropriately programmed computer literally has cognitive states and that the programs thereby explain human cognition. When I hereafter refer to AI, I have in mind the strong version, as expressed by these two claims."

2.) In the second paragraph of "Minds, Brains, and Programs," Searle identifies Strong AI with two claims: "My discussion here will be directed at the claims I have defined as those of strong AI, specifically [A] the claim that the appropriately programmed computer literally has cognitive states and [B] that the programs thereby explain human cognition. When I hereafter refer to AI, I have in mind the strong version, as expressed by these two claims." In criticizing Shank's story comprehension program, Searle identifies the following two specific versions of Strong AI claims: "1. the machine can literally be said to understand the story and provide the answers to questions, and that what the machine and its program do explains the human ability to understand the story and answer questions about it." Do the latter formulations, i.e., 1 and 2, represent a specific formulation of the general claims identified as [A] and [B] as implied by Searle? To wit: Is 1 a specific formulation of [A]? Is 2 a specific formulation of [B]? If you

answer affirmatively for either [A] to 1 or [B] to 2 or both, then explicitly identify the elements of former in the latter. If you answer no to either [A] to 1 or [B] to 2 or both, then discuss the impact, if any, of your answer(s) on the general conclusions Searle wishes to draw for his Chinese Room thought experiment.

3. In the abstract, tells readers that "(2) Instantiating a computer program is never by itself a sufficient condition of intentionality. The main argument of this paper is directed at establishing this claim." Searle draws the following conclusion from his Chinese Room thought experiment: "1. As regards the first claim, it seems to me quite obvious in the example that I do not understand a word of the Chinese stories. I have inputs and outputs that are indistinguishable from those of the native Chinese speaker, and I can have any formal program you like, but I still understand nothing." (p. 418) (A) Given Searle's conclusion from the Chinese Room, does the Chinese Room establish (2)? Explain and argue for your answer. (B) To what extent, if at all, does Searle explicitly explicate the relationship between understanding and intentionality in the article? (C) Searle again switches from talk of understanding to talk of intentionality in the last three sentences of his reply to the robot argument. (p. 420). Given your answers to (A) and (B), explain why this switch is either problematic or unproblematic.

## **Part B**

1. Briefly outline Searle's Chinese Room argument. Explicate Block's criticism of Searle's argument in your own words. (pp. 425-6) What is Searle's response to Block? (p. 451) Is Searle's response consistent with his description of the Chinese Room as a "Gedankenexperiment"? Why or why not? Be sure to explain your answer completely. In light of Searle's response, what is the force of Block's criticisms in your view?

2. Searle's article presents a negative thesis (i.e., criticizes a view) and a positive thesis (i.e., outlines a view). Clearly state each thesis in your own words. Dennett criticizes both of Searle's theses. (pp. 428-430) Choose one of those criticisms, present it, and critically evaluate it in light of Searle's response. (p. 451, 452)

3. Searle's article presents a negative thesis (i.e., criticizes a view) and a positive thesis (i.e., outlines a view). Clearly state each thesis in your own words. Haugeland criticizes Searle's positive view. (pp. 432-433) Give a clear formulation of Haugeland's criticism. Give a clear formulation of Searle's response (pp. 452-3). Does Searle's response adequately address Haugeland's criticism? Be sure to explain/defend your answer.