

Comment on Fodor's "Cognitive Science and the Twin Earth Problem"

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If a man on Twin Earth says, "There is a glass of water on the table", then I will translate his utterance homophonically. In some cases, a footnote will remark that the liquid called "water" on Twin Earth is actually XYZ and not H₂O. In other cases, I will not bother with the footnote (depending on why I am translating or interpreting the Twin Earth utterance in the first place). In cases of the second type, I treat the Twin Earth word *water* as differing in *meaning* (not "content") from earth "water"; in cases of the first type I treat it as the same word.

What of the context of lexicography? I think (for reasons developed at length in "The Meaning of 'Meaning'") that a lexicographer should treat the difference in extension as a difference in meaning. (But no good translator relies too heavily on dictionary "meanings".)

I will *not* fall into the trap of answering a question Fodor poses in Fodor's own philosophical jargon. I have great admiration for Jerry's acumen and ingenuity; I am sure he can move around in *his* system of thought far better than I could ever learn to do. My view agrees with Quine's: to think of "meanings" (or "contents") as mental or platonic entities is just a *mistake*.¹ They are obscure entities at best; to say they are needed for "cognitive psychology" is to say the obscure is needed for the obscure. (If "psychology" just means informal belief-desire explanation, then my position isn't that "the sky is falling", but that such talk works fine *in context*, given good reasons for talking that way, given, as Wittgenstein says, a whole language in place.)