

# Reaction to Fodor

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By Dennis J. Darland

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## Concepts and Necessity

I have read the first three chapters of Jerry A. Fodor's Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong. I just want to say a little about the nature of the truth that Jerry believes that necessarily all bachelors are unmarried. Jerry's concept of BACHELOR includes being UNMARRIED. Here we identify Jerry's concepts by using the English words in all capitals. However, the words in English for bachelor and unmarried might have been different. I started to work out modal notation at [http://dennisdarland.com/philosophy/my\\_modalB\\_001.html](http://dennisdarland.com/philosophy/my_modalB_001.html) But it is difficult, so I will just paraphrase. The statement would then be

Belief<sub>r</sub>(Jerry,now,necessarily,all,x,'bachelor',x,'unmarried',x) & variable(Jerry,now,x) & symbol(Jerry,now,'bachelor',bachelor) & symbol(Jerry,now,'unmarried',unmarried)

I'm not going into the logic terms now. But here I have used 'bachelor' as a symbol Jerry has for bachelor (the thing in the world corresponding to Jerry's concept 'bachelor' (what Fodor would call BACHELOR. Likewise for 'unmarried'. Now Jerry learned 'bachelor' and 'unmarried' from other people. I think Chomsky is basically right that there is a universal grammar. (I've only read a couple of his books.) But I don't think 'bachelor' or 'unmarried' are innate. They are learned. But not necessarily by definitions. I think even when words are learned by definitions, they usually are absorbed into our conceptual scheme. We do not substitute in or think of definitions when we use concepts learned through definitions. They are in effect what I think Jerry calls 'atomic'. I don't think any concepts need be innate, though we need an innate ability to learn them. We learn concepts through public usage of language. But we think in private concepts we learned through this public usage. The public noises and marks making up the public words have meaning only because of correlations between them and the things they stand for in people's minds. Because of the usefulness of communication there have grown (evolved) linguistic communities which mostly use the same sounds and marks (words) for the same things (objects). But there are many variations within a linguistic community. Given that Jerry and another member of the linguistic community mean the same concepts by 'bachelor' and 'unmarried' (and other symbols involved) they will both find the statement of this necessity true. Other linguistic communities might have other words for these concepts, or no words for them at all. If they have other words for the concepts, the statement would still be true of them, though they would not recognize how I expressed it. "bachelor" and "unmarried" would be each be

replaced in the two places they occur in the analysis. 'bachelor' and 'unmarried' would both still occur in one place. That is why in my analysis of belief I use existentially quantified variables where these concepts occur. Thus it would be analyzed:

$(\exists y)(\exists z)$  Belief\_r(Jerry,now,necessarily,all,x,y,x,z,x) & variable(Jerry,now,x) & symbol(Jerry,now,y,bachelor) & symbol(Jerry,now,z,unmarried)

Any symbol for bachelor and unmarried will do. For members of a linguistic community, the mental symbols are connected to physical symbols shared by the linguistic community. I think they are commonly a image of the sound or look of the shared word. It is a bit like the connection between a person and their grandparent. One knows there must be a parent in between, but you might not know who the parent is, only that certain relations hold between the person and parent, and between parent and grandparent.

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