



Gödel, Putnam, and Functionalism: A New Reading of Representation and Reality (Bradford Books)

Jeff Buechner

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With mind-brain identity theories no longer dominant in philosophy of mind in the late 1950s, scientific materialists turned to functionalism, the view that the identity of any mental state depends on its function in the cognitive system of which it is a part. The philosopher Hilary Putnam was one of the primary architects of functionalism and was the first to propose computational functionalism, which views the human mind as a computer or an information processor. But, in the early 1970s, Putnam began to have doubts about functionalism, and in his masterwork *Representation and Reality* (MIT Press, 1988), he advanced four powerful arguments against his own doctrine of computational functionalism.

In *Gödel, Putnam, and Functionalism*, Jeff Buechner systematically examines Putnam's arguments against functionalism and contends that they are unsuccessful. Putnam's first argument uses Gödel's incompleteness theorem to refute the view that there is a computational description of human reasoning and rationality; his second, the "triviality argument," demonstrates that any computational description can be attributed to any physical system; his third, the multirealization argument, shows that there are infinitely many computational realizations of an arbitrary intentional state; his fourth argument buttresses this assertion by showing that there cannot be local computational reductions because there is no computable partitioning of the infinity of computational realizations of an arbitrary intentional state into a single package or small set of packages (equivalence classes). Buechner analyzes these arguments and the important inferential connections among them -- for example, the use of both the Gödel and triviality arguments in the argument against local computational reductions -- and argues that none of Putnam's four arguments succeeds in refuting functionalism. *Gödel, Putnam, and Functionalism* will inspire renewed discussion of Putnam's influential book and will confirm *Representation and Reality* as a major work by a major philosopher.

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