

**Phil 490: *Consciousness and the Self*
Handout [3]**

Frank Jackson: *What Mary Didn't Know*

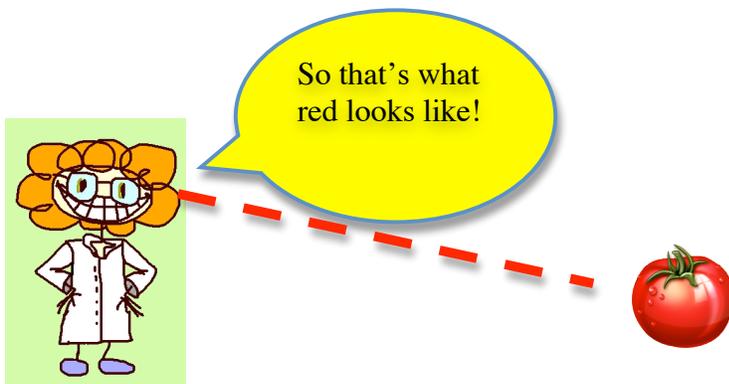
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The Story of Mary:

Mary is confined to a black-and-white room, is educated through black-and-white books and through lectures relayed on black-and-white television. In this way she learns everything there is to know about the physical nature of the world. She knows all the physical facts about us and our environment, in a wide sense of 'physical' which includes everything in *complete* physics, chemistry, and neurophysiology, and all there is to know about the causal and relational facts consequent upon all this, including of course functional roles.

[The Knowledge Argument]:

1. If physicalism is true, Mary knows all there is to know. For to suppose otherwise is to suppose that there is more to know than every physical fact, and that is just what physicalism denies.
2. But it seems that Mary does not know all there is to know. For when she is let out of the black-and-white room or given a color television, she will learn what it is like to see something red, say.
3. This new experience of red is rightly described as *learning* — she will gain new knowledge of the world.
4. Hence, physicalism is false.



[qualia] = (plural form of *quale*) the qualities of experience, such as what it is like to see red, what it is like to feel pain, what it is like to taste a Pinot Noir, ...

§ Jackson's Knowledge Argument (reformulated):

- ___ 1. Physicalism is the challenging thesis that the actual world is entirely physical.
- ___ 2. Thus under physicalism, complete physical knowledge is the complete knowledge of the actual world.
- ___ 3. However, a physicist Mary could know all there is to know about the physical nature of the world, while not knowing the *qualia* of others' experiences.
- ___ 4. Hence, physicalism is false.

*** On Physicalism:**

___ **The claim is that if physicalism is true, then if you know everything expressed or expressible in explicitly physical language, you know everything.**

[Question]:

___ Can we claim that every object and every event is a physical object and a physical event while at the same time deny that a complete physical language can explain everything? Is that still a consistent position?

*** On Mary's Knowledge:**

Jackson's Claim:

- ___ Mary does not know all there is to know.
- ___ The trouble for physicalism is that, after Mary sees her first ripe tomato, she will realize how impoverished her conception of the mental life of *others* has been *all along*. She will realize that there was, all the time she was carrying out her laborious investigations into the neurophysiologies of others and into the functional roles of their internal states, something about these people she was quite unaware of.

[Question]: Do you agree that Mary, before her release, lacked a certain knowledge about facts of the world? What sort of knowledge did she lack?

§ Three Clarifications

[A] The knowledge argument does not rest on the dubious claim that logically you cannot *imagine* what sensing red is like unless you have sensed red. (It is that, as a matter of fact, she *would not know*.)

[B] The intensionality of knowledge is not to the point. The argument does not rest on assuming falsely that, if S knows that *a* is *F* and if *a* = *b*, then S knows that *b* is *F*.

___ Endowing her with great logical acumen and persistence is not in itself enough to fill in the gaps in her knowledge.

[C] The knowledge Mary lacked is *knowledge about the experiences of others*, not about her own. It is a physical fact about *others*; hence, there is a gap in her knowledge of all physical facts (prior to her release).

§ Objections and Jackson's Reply

(i) Churchland's reformulation of the knowledge argument (he thinks that this argument is faulty as clearly shown below):

- (1) Mary knows everything there is to know about brain states and their properties.
 - (2) It is not the case that Mary knows everything there is to know about sensations and their properties.
- Therefore, by Leibniz's law:
- (3) Sensations and their properties \neq brain states and their properties.

*** Jackson's Reply:**

___ This is not the right formulation of the Knowledge Argument. The whole thrust of the knowledge argument is that Mary does not know everything there is to know about brain states and their properties, because she does not know about certain qualia associated with them. What is complete, according to the argument, is her knowledge of matters physical. **The argument should be reformulated this way:**

- (1) Mary (before her release) knows everything physical there is to know about other people
- (2) Mary (before her release) does not know everything there is to know about other people (because she learns something about them on her release).
- (3) Therefore, there are truths about other people (and herself) which escape the physical story.

(ii) David Lewis' Objection:

___ What Mary acquires when she is released is a certain representational or imaginative ability; it is *knowledge how* rather than *knowledge that*.... She knew all that there was to know about the experiences of others beforehand, but lacked an *ability* until after her release.

*** Jackson's Reply:**

- ___ (i) Her representational abilities were a known constant throughout.
- ___ (ii) What Mary acquires on her release is *factual* knowledge about the experiences of others.

§ DISCUSSION QUESTION:

___ **Why does he take the approach emphasizing on a "knowledge gap" if he is against the ontology of physicalism?**

___ **Does Mary really lack certain knowledge of physical facts? Has Jackson's knowledge argument really prove that physicalism is false?**