

Knowledge Argument

"Mary is a brilliant scientist who is, for whatever reason, forced to investigate the world from a black and white room via a black and white television monitor. She specializes in the neurophysiology of vision and acquires...all the physical information there is to obtain about what goes on when we see ripe tomatoes, or the sky, and use terms like 'red', 'blue', and so on...What will happen when Mary is released from her black and white room or is given a color television monitor?...It seems just obvious that she will learn something about the world and our visual experience of it. But then is it inescapable that her previous knowledge was incomplete. But she had all the physical information. Ergo there is more to have than that, and Physicalism is false."

The Knowledge Argument

Mary knows all the *physical facts* concerning human color vision.

Mary doesn't know *all the facts* concerning human color vision.

So there *are facts* about human color vision *which aren't physical facts*.

It seems like we're again inferring metaphysical conclusions from epistemic premises. Are we doing this in a legitimate way? We can try to resist the argument in the way we did for Descartes' arguments, by claiming that the following is invalid:

The fact that p is something A knows.

The fact that q is something A doesn't know.

The fact that p is not the same fact as the fact that q.

We might try to show this is invalid by claiming (e.g.) that the following argument has a false conclusion.

The fact that Clark Kent is in the room is something Lois knows.

The fact that Superman is in the room is something Lois doesn't know.

The fact that Clark Kent is in the room is not the same fact as the fact that Superman is in the room.

But is it really obvious that the conclusion here is false? It's clear that Clark Kent is Superman. But is it just as clear that the fact that Clark Kent is in the room is the *same fact* as the fact that Superman is in the room?

Also, even if this parity of reasoning argument has some force, there's something suspicious about the resulting physicalist view. The physicalist told us there is nothing in the world but physical things. But if that's right, why isn't knowledge of all the physical things *sufficient* to know everything *in every way*? Why are there more things to learn, or at least more ways of learning them?

Recap

