

## Responding to the Knowledge Argument

### 1. Churchland's Reconstruction of the Knowledge Argument (p.331)

- (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.
- (3) Sensations and their properties are not brain states and their properties

### 2. First Response: The Intentional Fallacy

The first worry that Churchland raises is that the argument might be committing what's called "the intentional fallacy" and so invalid. Consider:

- (4) Lois Lane knows that Superman can fly
- (5) Lois Lane doesn't know that Clark Kent can fly.
- (6) Clark Kent isn't Superman. (4,5)

This fallacious argument is appealing to what's sometimes called like *Leibniz's Law*  
*a* is identical to *b* if and only if *a* and *b* have every property in common.

But it's commonly thought that, because of examples like this, *Leibniz's Law* doesn't hold when the properties in question are properties like "is known to be..." or "is believed to be..."

But we can construct an example more analogous to the knowledge argument?

- (7) Jones knows everything there is to know about Hitler.
- (8) It's not the case that Jones knows everything there is to know about Adolf Shicklgruber.
- (9) Hitler is not Adolf Shicklgruber. (7,8)

You might think though that in any spelled out version of the case (5) will be false. If Jones really does know *everything* about Hitler, then he'll know, for example, that Hitler's name was "Adolf Shicklgruber." So it's not completely clear that there's an analogue to the knowledge argument in which the intentional fallacy is committed.

It's also worth thinking about whether the argument, as Jackson described it, really does rely on *Leibniz's Law*.

### 2. A Second Response: Modes of Knowing

The second worry is also based on the idea that the argument is invalid, this time because of an equivocation (the same word being used in two different ways) on "knows."

Sense 1: Knowledge that involves manipulation of concepts

Sense 2: A prelinguistic apprehension that involves innate dispositions to make certain discriminations.

So the thought is that (1) is true because Mary knows *in sense 1* everything there is to know about brain states and their properties. She doesn't know *in sense 2* everything there is to know about brain states and their properties.

(2) is true because Mary doesn't know *in sense 2* everything there is to know about sensations and their properties, but she does know *in sense 1* everything there is to know about sensations and their properties.

The idea is that there is no single sense of "know" which makes both premises true.

[A related thought: Some people think that Mary has all the "knowledge that" about brain states and sensations while in the black-and-white-room. What she lacks is "knowledge how" – for example, the knowledge of how to sort ripe and unripe tomatoes using vision alone.]

### **3. A Third Response: Reject Premise (2)**

Here's a way to test whether Mary would know what it's like to see red.

The Test: Present her with a first red object when she leaves the black-and-white room and ask her to tell you what color it is on the basis of vision alone.

Churchland claims that she'll be able to answer correctly upon learning the complete neuroscience *is an empirical question* which we won't be able to answer for sure until we know what the complete neuroscience says.

"utopian neuroscience will probably look as much like existing neuroscience as modern physics looks like Aristotelian physics" (332).

Churchland says that Mary might be able to produce red in her imagination if she knows the complete science. She tries to give us a feel for how this could be.

"perhaps she could, by introspective use of her utopian neuroscience, tell that she has, say, a gamma state in her O patterns, which knows from her utopian neuroscience is identical to having a red sensation. Thus she might recognize redness on this basis" (333)

What is "introspective use of neuroscience"?

"All one need imagine is that Mary internalizes the theory in the way an engineer has internalized Newtonian physics, and she routinely makes introspective judgments about her own states using its concepts and principles. Like the engineer who does not have to make an effort but "sees" the world in a Newtonian matter, we may consider that Mary "sees" her internal world via the utopian neuroscience" (333).

Some questions to think about:

- i. Do you think Jackson would accept "The Test" as a way to determine whether she knows what red looks like?
- ii. In general, is whether you can know A on the basis of learning B an empirical question?

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