



Frank Jackson on
Epiphenomenal Qualia

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- Do you think it's possible to learn everything there is to know about something, without ever experiencing that particular thing?
 - Ex: In Breaking Bad, Jesse goes to drug rehab and accuses the therapist of not understanding his addiction because the therapist was never an addict. Is the therapist qualified to counsel? Is it possible that the therapist knows exactly what Jesse is dealing with internally?



Vocabulary

- Physicalism
- Epiphenomenalism
- Qualia



Physicalism

- The idea that everything is physical
- Only physical properties exist
 - Science/psychology based
 - ❖ Neural firings, etc.



Epiphenomenalism

- One-way dualism
 - Dualism: body = mind
 - Epiphenomenalism: body > mind
- Only body to mind interaction
 - Mind responds to causations from the body, but doesn't elicit a physical response
 - Mind responding to the body makes up our consciousness



Qualia

- Qualitative (physical) state of something
- Perceptual experience associated with a physical sensation
 - Ex: “Tell me everything physical there is to tell about what is going on in a living brain, the kind of states, their functional role...and so on... you won’t have told me about the hurtfulness of pains, the itchiness of itches” (Jackson 127)
- Dimensions of feeling
- Doesn’t affect the physical world, only affects mental states



Jackson's Position

- Denies physicalism
 - Not everything can be described using physical properties
 - Ex: smell
- Knowledge, Modal, and “What Is It Like to Be” arguments to defend his position



Knowledge Argument for Qualia

- Everyone distinguishes colors differently.
 - Suppose Fred has better color vision than everyone else. He can see two shades of red when most people only see one, and labels them as Red-1 and Red-2 with the same confidence that everyone distinguishes between yellow and blue.
 - Consistently separates apples into two piles
 - Possible answers: maybe Fred's cones respond differently to light waves and the color spectrum, maybe he has extra cones, etc.
 - We can know every physical, scientific possibility for this, but will never understand the color perception from his POV
 - Physicalism is inconclusive

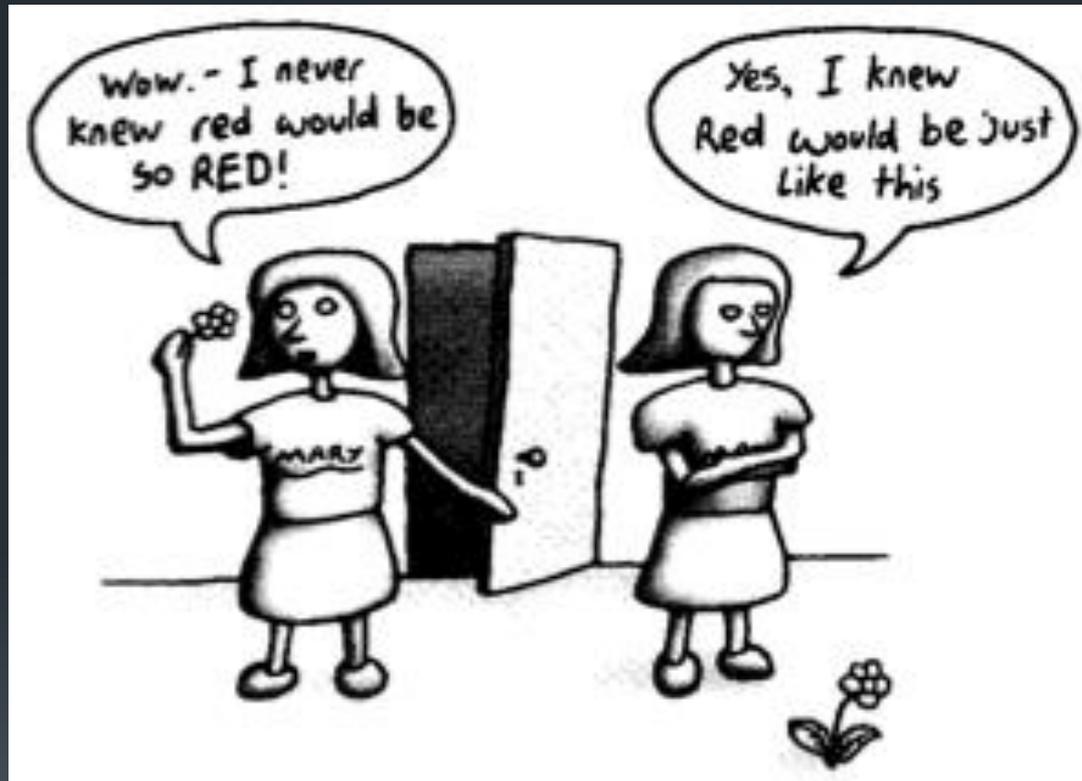


Knowledge Argument cont.

- Question:

- Mary is a scientist in a completely black and white lab, so everything she sees and studies can only be shades of black and white. She studies all that there is to know about color from her lab. (she knows that apples are red, the science behind red, what it's supposed to look like, etc.)

What will her reaction be when she leaves the lab and sees a red flower?



What would Jackson think?



Modal Argument

- “No amount of physical information about another logically entails that he or she is conscious or feels anything at all” (Jackson 130)
- Philosophical zombies
 - There could be another planet with replicas of us without consciousnesses
 - Similarly, there’s no way we can know if someone else is a “zombie” or not
 - Proves physicalism wrong
 - Agree or disagree? Is the modal argument a strong argument against physicalism?

Philosophical Zombies





The “What Is It Like to Be” Argument

- Very closely related to the Knowledge argument
- 2 people can have similar vision, physical characteristics, etc., but they still have extremely different perceptions of the world



Bogey of Epiphenomenalism

- Mental states never affect physical states
 - One-way street from the body to the mind
- If you touch a hot stove and your hand jerks back, is it because of your mental state or your brain state?



Summary

- The mind responds to the body using qualia, or mental sensations resulting from physical experiences
- If physicalism were true:
 - We wouldn't be wondering about Fred because we would already know everything there is to know about him and his abilities



Citations

- <http://consc.net/pics/@ @/dinosaurs.png>
- <http://albertchang17.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/e89ea2e5b995e5bfabe785a7-2011-03-10-12-05-32-pm.png>