Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts - Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2023 – Pages 73-90

Mary & Detectivism

By Farhan Lakhany[*]

Frank Jackson's knowledge argument has done much heavy lifting for those who are wary of a physicalist worldview. Since its publication in Epiphenomenal Qualia, it has spawned a plethora of responses and this article is yet another response but, instead of accepting the argument on its own grounds, it pushes back against it at more of a meta-level. This article begins by closely analyzing the argument and providing different ways in which one might avoids its conclusion. Next, it isolates certain presuppositions about the mechanisms by which the data of conscious experience is acquired by examining the role of mental ostension in Jackson's analysis. After articulating a particular model of how the ostension might work, I then provide a late-Wittgensteinian analysis the model and critique its applicability to the knowledge argument. I argue that the philosophical difficulties that the knowledge argument supposedly uncovers come about by a reliance on certain grammatical expectations and those grammatical expectations come about because of our reliance on a particular model. I go on to claim that Jackson is taken in by a certain way of speaking (which comes about by reliance on a certain model) and this leads to many of the puzzling difficulties associated with the knowledge argument. Once this error is noticed, we can make progress towards dissolving some of the philosophical problems associated with qualia by attempting to find a different way to model our epistemic relation to the contents of our mental states.

Introduction

> "…And it would not help either to say that it need not be a sensation; that when he writes "S" he has Something – and that is all that can be said. But "has" and "something" also belong to our common language. -- So in the end, when one is doing philosophy, one gets to the point where one would like just to emit an inarticulate sound. But such a sound is an expression only in a particular language-game, which now has to be described."[1]

This paper can be summed up as another response to Frank Jackson's knowledge argument that has, for many philosophers of mind, presented a lucid articulation of why integrating qualia into our understanding of a physical world has proven to be so difficult. With over thirty years passed since its formulation in Jackson's famous, *Epiphenomenal Qualia*, the landscape of responses appears to be relatively set with individuals roughly finding kinship in one response or

[*]TA and PhD Candidate in Philosophy, University of Iowa, USA.

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 261.

https://doi.org/10.30958/ajha.10-1-4 doi=10.30958/ajha.10-1-4

another.[2] In the face of this division, one might, instead of searching again for a solution, attempt a dissolution by instead further investigating some of the presuppositions that allow for the articulation of the problem in the first place. I will explore this latter approach by laying out the knowledge argument and noting how, on one plausible understanding of it, it seems to rely on a particular method by which we come to understand "qualities" and will closely analyze this method by employing certain insights found in Wittgenstein's later work. I will proceed in the following way: first, I provide an overview of the knowledge argument; second, I discuss the different types of responses that one might give to it; third, I argue that a plausible understanding of how we relate to our conscious states relies on a certain model and provide a Wittgenstein-inspired[3] critique of those methodological presuppositions by analyzing the assumptions made; fourth, I focus more on the differences between objects and qualities; and fifth, end by integrating my response into the larger set of responses I articulate in the first section.

Jackson's Mary

The knowledge argument was constructed to point out the difficulties in reconciling the data of conscious experience with a physicalist world view. Frank Jackson explores one permutation of the physicalist picture which states that there will be nothing left to explain once the sciences have succeeded in providing a comprehensive account of the physical world; minds will, as it were, come along for the ride in the same way that an understanding of chairs come along for the ride. This account plays well with our growing scientific understanding of the world and leaves nothing mysterious.

Aware of the appeal of the physicalist account, Jackson nevertheless thinks that it fails to fully account for what needs explaining. As he says in *Epiphenomenal Qualia:*

---

2. Interestingly, Jackson himself has since abandoned the conclusion that he thought to follow from the argument in favor of a representationalist account (Frank Jackson, "Postscript on Qualia," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 417–442 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 419.

3. I say "Wittgenstein-inspired" to avoid taking a stance on whether my claims are what Wittgenstein *actually* intended as what he actually meant is highly contested and is still an area filled with debate and controversy: see Guy Kahane, Edward Kanterian, and Oskari Kuusela (Eds.), *Wittgenstein and His Interpreters: Essays in Memory of Gordon Baker* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) for discussions on different ways to interpret Wittgenstein. In this paper, I will also say "Wittgensteinian" and it is supposed to be understood as synonymous with "Wittgenstein-inspired".

> "Tell me everything physical there is to tell about what is going on in a living brain, the kind of states, their functional role, their relation to what goes on at other times and in other brains, and so on and so forth, and be I as clever as can be in fitting it all together, you won't have told me about the hurtfulness of pains, the itchiness of itches, pangs of jealousy, or about the characteristic experience of tasting a lemon, smelling a rose, hearing a loud noise or seeing the sky."[4]

As Jackson notes, it seems that, given all the physical information, the most puzzling thing about the mind – its qualitative aspects – are not touched upon. To illustrate this point further, Jackson brings up the example of Mary the color scientist. Imagine an individual Mary, an extremely gifted color scientist, who has been trapped in a black and white room her whole life and learns about the world through a black and white color television. She knows everything that there is to know about the neurophysiology of color discrimination and how all the processes interact with one another. Now, Jackson asks, what should be said about Mary when she is released from her room or sees the world through a colored monitor? He asks and answers, "Will she learn anything or not? It just seems obvious that she will learn something about the world and our visual experience of it."[5] How should this learning be understood? Jackson claims it is the acquisition of a new fact about "…the special quality of…experience."[6]

The upshot of accepting that Mary acquires a new fact is, according to Jackson, an argument for the failure of physicalism. He believes this because he thinks that, if the physicalist metaphysical picture of the world were correct, then our having all the physical information should entail our being able to deduce complete knowledge of the world.[7] For the sake of this discussion, I will assume that Jackson's move from a lack of epistemic access to some fact about our mental states to the falsity of physicalism to be correct; where I will disagree is in the method he employs to establish the acquisition of a new fact. But before I get to that point, I will provide an outline of multiple responses that one can take to Jackson's argument to better home in on where my discussion fits.

Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, Daniel Stoljar organize the responses to the knowledge argument into six different types: (1) questioning whether Mary does indeed learn anything new; (2) questioning whether, if she does learn something new whether it is factual or non-factual and, if it is the latter, what type of non-factual learning is acquired; (3) questioning whether she does come to know in a new way but it isn't some further information; (4) questioning whether, if she does come to learn some new information, whether it is a *new* fact or a different

4. Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 39–50 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 39.

5. Ibid, 42.

6. Ibid, 45.

7. Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia," 2004, 42-43.

way of learning some old fact; (5) questioning whether she, in fact, learned all the physical facts before she was released; or (6) questioning whether the upshot of the knowledge argument is, in fact, the conclusion that physicalism is false.[8] As I previously admitted, for the sake of this discussion, I assume that the upshot of the knowledge argument (assuming it is successful) is the falsity of physicalism, and thus I will not discuss (6). I will proceed and briefly explicate responses (1)-(5).

Responding to the Knowledge Argument

Daniel Dennett and Frank Jackson himself,[9] after changing his mind on knowledge argument, can be seen as advocating the first approach: questioning whether Mary, in fact, learns something new. Dennett, in "*Epiphenomenal" Qualia?*, argues that, in the articulation of the knowledge argument, we are led into believing that Mary learns something new but this conclusion only follows based off an incomplete understanding of the thought experiment. He claims that if we really took the time to imagine what, in *detail*, Mary knows when she has a complete understanding of *all* the physical information related to color vision, we will be much less confident in claiming that Mary learns something new when she leaves the room.[10] Later Jackson is also skeptical that we learn something new; he argues that in coming to learn via experience, we make a mistake in thinking we have come into epistemic contact with some intrinsic, non-physical properties that serve as the basis for some new fact. He argues that what is actually occurring is that we are learning certain functional and relational facts via a sensorial episode that is ultimately *representational* in nature.[11]

A second way of responding to the knowledge argument is by claiming that Mary *does* learn something new but what she learns is not a fact based on some phenomenal information.[12] What Mary learns, when she leaves the room, is not some propositional knowledge (know *that* such-and-such is the case) but knowledge *how* to do certain things. The know-how in question is the ability to

8. Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar (Eds.), *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 16-20.

9. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to this as "Later Jackson".

10. Daniel C. Dennett, "'Epiphenomenal' Qualia?," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 59–73 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 59-62.

11. Jackson, "Postscript on Qualia," 2004, 412.

12. David Lewis, "What Experience Teaches Us," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 77–103 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 100-101.

"…remember, imagine, and recognize" some experience and other, similar experiences.[13] In taking this route, one need not commit themselves to the position that there are some non-physical facts any more than one who claims that the only way to learn how to ride a bike is by experience is committing themselves to some non-physical facts. No amount of propositional information will teach one how to ride a bike: one needs experience attempting to ride but the knowledge they gain is knowledge they gain is not non-physical.[14]

A third approach argues that what Mary gains when she leaves the room is a certain type of knowledge: not know-that or know-how but knowledge by acquaintance.[15] Earl Conee, in *Phenomenal Knowledge*, argues that one way that we can come to know in a new way that does not involve any new *information,* is by coming to know some property directly. The way in which we come to know that property is by experiencing the quality itself[16]. The learning in question is "…unproblematically classified as a relation of a person to a phenomenal quality, just as the acquaintance approach would have it."[17] What Mary is missing when she is in the room is a certain cognitive relation, not some new information.[18]

Where the second and third approaches argued that Mary does not learn any new *information* but does, nevertheless learn something new (in a non-factual way), the fourth approach pushes that Mary *does* learn some new information (that is nevertheless physical). Terence Horgan in *Jackson on Physical Information*

---

13. Ibid, 98-101.

14. See Philip Pettit, "Motion Blindness and the Knowledge Argument," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 105–142 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004) for another take on how Mary learns something new that differs from Lewis's know-how response. See Michael Tye, "Knowing What It Is Like: The Ability Hypothesis and the Knowledge Argument," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 143–160 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004) for an attempt to blend know-how and know-that is supposed to do justice to the physicalist position.

15. See Paul M. Churchland, "Knowing Quaila: A Reply to Jackson (with Postscript: 1997,)" in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 163–178 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004) and John Bigelow and Robert Pargetter, "Acquaintance with Quaila," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 179–196 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004) for responses in a similar vein.

16. Earl Conee, "Phenomenal Knowledge," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 197–215 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 202-203.

17. Ibid, 204.

18. Ibid, 212.

and Qualia argues that the way we should understand Mary's acquisition of new information is as learning about some old physical fact in a *new* way.[19] This move may seem similar to Conee but differs insofar as Conee claims that Mary does *not* acquire any new information though she does come to learn in a new way.

Finally, a fifth way of responding to the knowledge argument is to disagree with one of the presuppositions of the argument: that Mary, before leaving the room, *could* know all the physical facts in question. Robert Van Gulick in *So Many Ways of Saying No to Mary* argues that, *if* one understands the subjective fact (i.e., that red looks like *this*) as a *physical* fact, and the only way for Mary to acquire that subjective fact is by experiencing it, then Mary *could not* in access all the physical facts when she is in the black and white room.[20] As a result, physicalism is not refuted because there are some physical facts that are only accessible from a subjective perspective.[21] With a rough outline of the responses in hand, I will now move onto providing a brief discussion on how conscious states are often modeled and move onto discussing how this model is predicated on a *detectivist* picture. After doing this, I critique the modeling of our understanding of conscious states (and our knowledge of them) on the detectivist view by providing a Wittgensteinian analysis of the differences between knowing our conscious states and coming to learn about the world through reliance on perceptual faculties. After this, I will relate my response within the broader set of responses to the knowledge argument.

Conscious States

At this point, a further and, often ignored question, can be asked: *how* does Mary come to learn something about the world and our visual experience of it? Presumably, she learns about the world because she has an *experience* with a certain content and in having that experience, she can introspectively notice that the content has a specific character and picks out that character via mental ostension. There are multiple, plausible ways one might understand how the specific character is picked out; one way, and it is the way that I will be pushing

19. Terence Horgan, "Jackson on Physical Information and Qualia," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 301–308 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 306.

20. Robert Van Gulick, "So Many Ways of Saying No to Mary," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 365–405 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 390-391.

21. See Daniel Stoljar, "Two Conceptions of the Physical," in *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument* (ed.) Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 309–332 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004) for another take in a similar vein.

back against in this article, is via some process that allows us to find out about it. One natural thing to think is that, in mentally ostending, Mary, as it were, discovers some fact about what her mental life is like; she finds out that red looks like *this.*

To make better sense of this way in which Mary comes to know what it is like to see red, we can turn to work done by David Finkelstein in *Expression and the Inner.* In his book, Finkelstein asks how it is that we seem to be able to speak so easily, accurately and authoritatively about the states of our own minds.[22] In answering, he considers a view that he calls "detectivism"; to be a detectivist is to claim that "…a person's ability to speak about her own states of mind as easily, accurately, and authoritatively as she does may be explained by appeal to a process by which she *finds out* about them."[23] The way in which we find out about them is by a cognitive process which somehow detects the presence of certain thoughts and feelings.[24]

Detectivism comes in two flavors: old detectivism and new detectivism. Old detectivism is the view that individuals come to know about their minds via a perceptual process but, crucially, it is one that is *unlike* our sense of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling or feeling. It is akin to those processes insofar as it is a kind of "inner" ability that allows an agent to sense their mental states, but it is radically different insofar as it provides that agent with a complete, infallible access to what is being sensed: we can call this ability an "inner sense". One of the hallmarks of our normal perceptual systems is that it provides an indirect accessed to what is being sensed and is liable to break down;[25] for the old detectivist, this is not possible for our "inner sense" as it is immune to such error.[26] Finkelstein notes two issues with this view that might lead one doubt it: (1) it seems to make the mind into something of an immaterial organ that appears too supernatural for many and (2) it seems to associate too closely with dualism and leads to skepticism about the external world and other minds.[27] In response to these worries, Finkelstein argues that one might adopt a *new* detectivist position which understands the perception of inner sense as akin to other, normal types of perception. It is a view that embraces the indirectness found in normal perceptual mechanisms in order to naturalize inner sense. This entails that our perceptual mechanism that allow us to find out about our inner states is not infallible and can be error in the same way our perception of taste might be in error.

As mentioned above, a natural reading of the knowledge argument has Mary coming to discover what it's like to see red and this way of thinking about it

22. David H. Finkelstein, *Expression and the Inner* (Harvard University Press, 2008), 9.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ingesting a hallucinogenic substance is an easy way to prove this claim.
26. Finkelstein, *Expression and the Inner*, 2008, 13.
27. Ibid, 13-14.

fits the detectivist model. For this discussion, it will not matter whether it is old detectivism or new detectivism; the points that will be made are applicable to both. I will proceed then with the claim that a plausible reading of the knowledge argument has Mary coming to learn a new fact about a special quality of her own experience and the *way* she does this is accurately modeled on the detectivist view (new or old) with my comments being in response to this reading.

To more clearly understand how detectivism fits with this discussion, it is helpful to think about how many philosophers of mind often pick out their conscious experience. If one were to ask a philosopher what the referent of a conscious experience is, it will often lead to a response in which the individual mentally ostends for a few seconds, as if to fully immerse themselves in the referent, and confidently reporting that it is 'this' while perhaps pointing to their head or where he takes the referent to be located in the external world. If we look confused in response or ask further questions, the individual might attempt to recreate the experience in us by moving the object such that we "see" it in the way that they "see" it. They might attempt to describe it in a way that connects it up with objects that they have seen in the past, "it is sort of like…". If we turn to the individual and say, "I understand, when you refer to your conscious experience, you mean to refer to objects in the external world", they will likely say that the conscious experience is not the object *per se*, it is perhaps a picture of the object; a kind of middleman that works to recreate objects in the external world but recreate it in a way that is analogous to a private show.

After further prodding and pushing, the individual might finally say that what they mean to denote when ostending to their mental states is a "quality". But what has been accomplished by saying this? For this answer to *be* an answer,[28] the notion of a quality and what it is needs to be understood. As Wittgenstein notes early in the *Philosophical Investigations (PI)*, a word acquires its use by having the linguistic ground prepared in a manner that is analogous to how an explanation of a king in chess only serves as an explanation when the surrounding concepts[29] of the other chess pieces are explained.[30] Simply calling it a "quality" appears to leave it undefined and what I want to propose with this article is that, in our language, the notion of a quality often plays a similar grammatical role[31] to the notion of an object because we think that we come to find out about our mental states in the way we find out about parts of the

28. I am assuming a sense of answer that would largely be at play in most philosophical conversations.

29. If not, I could have accomplished the same explanatory success by making up a word and exclaiming, it is a "blan".

30. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2009, 31.

31. By a "grammatical role", I mean to highlight the idea that certain words (and possibly expressions) have certain functions that they play in discourse. They allow for certain questions to be asked of them and play an active role in the attribution of meaning and significance.

physical world. This similarity in the *grammatical* structure between how we speak of an "object" and how we speak of a "quality" leads us into our difficulties[32] as we assume certain further grammatical affordances and when those affordances are not forthcoming, we feel as if we have uncovered certain philosophical problems. The reason this occurs is *because* we are assuming that we can understand qualities in the same way that we understand objects in the physical world and, consequently, that we can come to *know* about them in the same way. To substantiate this point on grammar, I will now discuss how it is that Jackson runs together the ways in which we might come to learn about qualities and how we might come to learn about qualities.

When Jackson speaks about what Mary learns when she leaves the black and white room, he speaks of it in terms of acquisition. Specifically, he talks about the acquisition of a fact, but it is a fact about some quality. For example, he talks about knowing, "…the hurtfulness of pains, the itchiness of itches, pangs of jealousy…"[33] When Jackson speaks about knowing the "hurtfulness of pains", he is picking out a truth-maker for the "hurtfulness" and using it to motivate the statement. But how is *it* the basis for my statement? We can begin by considering what we do what we do when we speak of cars, trees, cats, dogs, etc., and how they serve as the basis for my statements about them. When I say, "that cat is moody", I have an object of which I am predicating: the cat. I can point to the object in the external world, (the cat), speak about how it behaves (in such a manner indicative of moodiness) and in this way, the cat and a description of its actions serves as the basis of my statement. If we consider the "hurtfulness of pains", it appears that we can give a similar analysis. We have an object, the pain, and we can describe the object as "hurtful", and this may seem quite innocuous. Indeed, Jackson seems to reinforce this understanding of qualities as he speaks of qualities as being captured by facts about the qualities in a similar sense to which objects are captured by facts about objects. Specifically, he notes that Mary "…discovers, for example, just which wave-length combinations from the sky stimulate the retina, and exactly how this produces via the central nervous system the contraction of the vocal chords…" and it is only when she leaves the room that "…she will learn something about the world and our visual experience of it."[34] In the previous sentence, Jackson seems to appeal to the idea of learning about aspects of the physical world and learning about a "quality" in such a way that makes them seem analogous.

---

32. I am understanding grammatical structure being the totality of grammatical affordances that the idea allows. By grammatical affordances, I mean the integration that the notion has with other aspects of language and the further moves that can be made with the notion; for example, if I tell you that I have a blanket, the notion a blanket affords you asking, (in this case correctly) "where is the blanket?"

33. Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia," 2004, 39-40.

34. Ibid, 42-43.

This leads to a similarity in the grammatical structure of an object and the grammatical structure of a quality and seems to assimilate the two but to do so would be to overlook an important difference between them. The moment we do overlook this difference, we get an understanding of a quality as being a kind quasi-object that is *hidden away*. Indeed, it very easy to do this and in remark 400 of the *PI*, Wittgenstein makes a similar comment when he notes how our grammar leads us to assume that our visual experience is analogous to a "visual room" that we can explore.[35] It is when we similarly model how we come to learn about objects and how we come to learn about qualities that our problems start to occur as we have formed certain expectations about what grammatical affordances the notion of a quality *should* allow.

When these expectations are broken, things start to appear slightly odd, and we feel as if we have stumbled upon some philosophical problem. As Wittgenstein notes in remark 401, "The visual room seemed like a discovery, as it were; but what its discoverer really found was a new way of speaking, a new comparison, and one could even say, a new experience."[36] But when we think of it as a discovery without realizing the crossing of the language-game of qualities with the language-game of objects that we start falling into philosophical puzzlement and start asking questions like: "How do I come to learn about these conscious states? Are they new facts related to these states? It seems like I can only discover them *by experience*." Before we have said go, the philosophical race has already started, and bewilderments creep up in all different forms. But perhaps, instead of puzzling over these seemingly intractable issues, we might slow down and ask questions about the model we are employing that gave rise to the issues in the first place. In the next section, I will attempt to more explicitly point out the difference between objects and qualities and use this to more vividly highlight where the issues arise. Once I have done this, I will revisit Jackson's knowledge argument.

Grammatical Differences

One response to all I have said is to argue that the detectivist model *is* appropriate; that my claim is correct, but the correctness of the claim does not actually speak against the knowledge argument. For this section, I will discuss why making sense of our pains in the way we might make sense of physical objects is problematic by discussing the difficulties that arise when we try to treat them similarly. In the *PI*, Wittgenstein indicates how we are forced into particularly odd linguistic contortions when we run together the grammar of objects and qualities. More specifically, there are certain grammatical moves that

35. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2009, 400.
36. Ibid, 401.

we can make with objects; we can talk about how we see them, have them, and manipulate them that we might try to apply to qualities. Wittgenstein gives voice to these grammatical moves in remark 398 when he speaks for his interlocutor and says, "But when I imagine something, or actually see objects, surely I have got something which my neighbor has not" and Wittgenstein responds by saying,

> "…I understand you. You want to look about you and say: "At any rate only I have got THIS." — What are these words for? They serve no purpose. — Indeed, can't one add: "There is here no question of a 'seeing' — and therefore none of a 'having' — nor of a subject, nor therefore of the I either"? Couldn't I ask: In what sense have you got what you are talking about and saying that only you have got it? Do you possess it? You do not even see it."[37]

To see the full force of this passage, we have to notice how easily we are led from a superficial similarity to absurdity. Consider how easy it is to say, "I have my book" and "I have my sensations". Both appear like legitimate uses of language, and all seems in order until we start to apply the grammatical model of our understanding of objects, like the book, to understand the grammar of the sensations that we run into issues and ask questions like, "I can locate my book in the world but where are my sensations!?" But to ask this question is to misapply a model and not appreciate the rich differences between objects and sensations. Consider the circumstances in which I talk about having my book.[38] You may ask me, "do you have your book?" To this, I can reply with yes or no. I might search my bag, look around me and say "I'm not sure. I think I have it, but I cannot find it" or "I had my book, but I do not now" or "I'm looking…I have it — I found it at the bottom of my bag". We can now apply this to the notion of a quality: I may ask, "do you have your pain?" Immediately, this type of question strikes us as odd. This almost seems like an ill-formed question and in response, I might understandably say, "Of course I have my pain. It is mine after all". But what does that statement mean to convey?

One possibility that is that I am telling you something analogous to my having my book, but it is not clear that my experience of pain is something that I could misplace or need to find. My pain is, as it were, attached to my psyche; if I am in a pain, then I am in a pain state.[39] I cannot have my pain the *same way* I can

37. Ibid, 398.

38. The structure of this remark is largely in line with Wittgenstein's remark in 411 but instead, I am appealing more to the notion of "having" as opposed to idea of "my".

39. One anonymous reviewer helpfully points out that it *does* seem like I might not have my pain in the same way that I might not have my book. But the claim being made here is not that pain does not come and go, it is rather that when it comes to the book, we can *figure out* whether we have it by investigating our immediate person and environment; pains do not seem to work this way. I do not need to investigate to determine whether I am in pain.

be said to have my book. Another instance in which a superficial grammatical similarity leads us astray is to consider the idea of "inspecting" in "he inspected his feelings" and "he inspected his book". Both sentences seem well formed and in order but again, this overlooks the differences between them. To see this, consider what it means to inspect an object like my book.

When I inspect my book, I turn it over and look it from all different angles, count the pages, note the cover, mull over its contents; this all seems to be in good order. Suppose that I apply the same type of understanding to how I inspect my pains. How would this go? Well, I might focus my attention on my feelings to amplify them but what does it mean to amplify my feelings? One way to think about it is to consider how I might turn up the volume on my music to hear it more clearly. But consider what I am doing when I turn up the music to hear it more clearly; I am attempting to hear more of the details and thereby gather more information about the music (I might be attempting to pick out the cello or hear more clearly how it is that the violin harmonizes with the other instruments). Now, can something similar be said of an inspection of my pains? Well, what is being assumed here if I *am* able to do this? One thing that seems to be assumed is that it would be possible to learn more about my pains if they were amplified in the same way and that I would be able to learn more about the music when the volume is turned up. If this is true, then it is also true to say that, in my everyday experience of having a pain, I have an, at best, partial understanding of my pain.[40] While this sounds a little odd, this may accepted, but consider what else would have to be let in to get this conclusion. To be able to learn more about my pain, I have to be able to understand what it would *mean* to learn more about my pains; otherwise, I might *think* that I am learning about them without actually learning about them.

To see the difficulties associated with this point, consider, for example, if I were to turn up the music and then proceed to hear a slight fuzz or static. One thing I can say here is that "I have learned more about the music by amplifying it, namely I have learned that there has been a slight fuzz or static present the whole time, but I just never heard it!" But, of course, this is false. The slight fuzz or static is a byproduct of the device being unable to maintain a certain level of fidelity at high volumes. In normal circumstances, I understand this and, as it were, cut out the fuzz and attempt to focus on the music. This shows that "learning more about the music" is bounded by criteria and merely *thinking* that I am learning more is not sufficient to be learning more. How does this apply to my pains?

Are there certain criteria here as well that inspecting my pain is bounded by? What exactly are these criteria for learning more about my pain? Could I flaunt

40. Unless of course one wants to say that I somehow inspect my pains, gain a full understanding and now I walk through life with this complete understanding. I take this to not be what an individual would say in this context but if they do, I think that there are responses, but they would be largely tangential to this paper.

these criteria and, in inspecting my pains more closely by amplifying them be *wrong* about my pains? Could I think that I am learning[41] more about my pain without actually learning more about my pain?

In response, it appears likely that one would not so much as answer my questions as they would say that they are fundamentally the *wrong* questions to be asking. Wittgenstein notes as much in remark 288 of the *PI*:

> "…I turn to stone, and my pain goes on. — What if I were mistaken, and it was no longer pain? — But surely I can't be mistaken here; it means nothing to doubt whether I am in pain — that is, if someone said "I don't know if what I have is a pain or something else", we would think, perhaps, that he does not know what the English word "pain" means; and we'd explain it to him…If he now said, for example, "Oh, I know what 'pain' means; what I don't know is whether this, that I have now is pain" — we'd merely shake our heads and have to regard his words as a strange reaction which we can't make anything of…"[42]

The reason an individual would so much as entertain the remarks given to him by Wittgenstein is because he is taken in by a similarity in the grammatical structure of qualities and objects (again, I do often talk about "my pain" without as much of a hiccup in the conversation) and "going on" with the grammatical model of objects when talking about sensations. Again, when individuals do this, they start to form expectations about what grammatical affordances they *should* have when speaking about my qualities and when these are flaunted, philosophical issues arise.

To bring our discussion back to Jackson, what I claim is that Jackson is making a similar error in running together the grammatical structure of "knowing about objects" and "knowing about qualities". Consider the two statements, "I know about my book", and "I know about my qualities". I know what it is to learn facts about the external world and if I say "know" when it comes to my qualities, it seems like there must be some facts about *it* that I need to be aware of in order to *know*. But this overlooks the differences between "knowing" qualities of my experience and "knowing" about objects. For example, to refer back to the music example, it makes perfect sense to talk about how I may *think* I know about the music but be wrong about it, "I thought I knew that the fuzz was part of the song, but I was wrong" but it seems nonsensical to say this of my pains: "I thought I knew about my pains, but I was wrong".

---

41. An anonymous reviewer pushed back here and claimed that we *can* learn about our pains, and this is how we might, for example, compare it with other pains. The effectiveness of this critique depends on what it is meant by "learning"; if the claim being advanced here if one models learning on how we learn about the external world, the critique needs to respond to the larger argument being made which is precisely pushing back on this claim.

42. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2009, 288.

In remark 290 of the *PI*, we get Wittgenstein diagnosing why this might happen[43] when he talks how we might be said to "describe" our mental states:
"It is not, of course, that I identify my sensation by means of criteria; it is, rather, that I use the same expression. But it is not as if the language game ends with this; it begins with it. But doesn't it begin with the sensation – which I describe? – Perhaps the word "describe" tricks us here. I say "I describe my state of mind" and "I describe my room". One needs to call to mind the differences between the language-games."[44]

The point I have been pushing is that the difference between the language games is a difference that comes about *because* of an implicit commitment to the detectivist view. If we noticed the commitment and the issues it leads to, we might be *less* tempted to adopt the detectivist view and thus less tempted to think we are in the presence of some special quality of our experience that is exemplified by some new fact.

Back to Jackson

Given what I have said, we can understand it as a response to the knowledge argument that stands on its own, or we can think of it as adding argumentative weight to one of the earlier responses I articulated. The way it would add to one of the earlier responses is as serving as an independent argument against a specific articulation of the knowledge argument that can hold its own weight if the response fails and if the response is successful, adds further reason to push back against the argument. If one wants to craft a robust response to the knowledge argument, the latter approach appears more advisable. That said, integrating my argument is not going to be compatible with each type of response and to see which it can synergize with, I will go through each response and discuss its compatibility.

---

43. Finkelstein also understands Wittgenstein in this passage as highlighting the differences between the language games. Specifically, he says: "Imagine that, upon entering the kitchen of a house whose purchase you are considering, you say; "This room is a problem to. It does get a lot of light though." Such a description might be characterized as the last move in a little language-game. Before you can describe the room, you need to look it over. Only after you have looked around—observed things—are you entitled to talk about what you have seen. So, the moves in this language-game are (1) observe and (2) describe (or, if you prefer, (1) observe, (2) judge, and (3) describe." The describing comes at the *end* of the game—after observing. Wittgenstein's point in 290 is that we need to distinguish *this* sort of language-game from the sort in which you're engaged when you describe one of your own sensations. You are entitled to say, "I have a sharp pain in my wrist," without ending to do any observing (or judging) first. In the language-game of describing your own sensation, the first thing that you do—the first move you make—Is the describing" (Finkelstein, *Expression and the Inner*, 2008, 133).

44. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2009, 290.

Starting with the first view – questioning whether she indeed learns something new – the argument I have articulated is compatible with this response because we might argue that the only way we might be justified in thinking she learns something new *is* via detectivism and detectivism is incorrect and thus she does not learn something new. The second view – questioning whether, if she does learn something new, whether it is factual or non-factual, and if it is the latter, what type of non-factual learning is acquired – also appears compatible if non-factual learning does not rely on a detectivist model (which it, prima facie, does not appear to). The third view – questioning whether she does come to learn in a new way, but it isn't some further information – gets a bit difficult; the representative for the type of response that I picked is Earl Conee and his view relies on the epistemological relation of acquaintance. Acquaintance can be understood in multiple ways but one of the most famous advocates of the view was Bertrand Russell and Russellian acquaintance view serves, for Finkelstein, as a paradigmatic instance of the detectivist view (both old and new.)[45] *If* Conee is understanding it pace Russell, and the third type of response is typified by Conee's contribution, then the third response to the knowledge argument would not be compatible with the arguments put forward here. Similarly, the fourth response – questioning whether, if Mary does come to learn some new information, whether it is a *new* fact or a different way of learning some old fact – is also difficult; I picked Terence Horgan to represent the view and he seems to also be relying on being acquainted with some property. The same worry raised in relation to Conee would apply here as well. Finally, the fifth view – questioning whether she, in fact, learned all the physical facts before she was released – is also a bit unclear; if Van Gulick's claim that subjective facts are physical facts and physical facts are gathered in a detectivist manner (where we rely on some perceptual process to discover some fact), then this would also be disqualified. That said, Van Gulick need not saddle himself with this claim and if he takes this route, his view *would* be compatible with this type of response.[46]

45. Finkelstein, *Expression and the Inner*, 2008, 11-18.

46. An anonymous commenter seemed to interpret the previous arguments as an argument against experience altogether. My response is that this is not the claim I am putting forward; what is being argued against here is a certain model of how we come to know what are termed "phenomenal qualities". As I read it, "phenomenal qualities" are not synonymous with experience; it is a technical term that picks out a certain conception of what our mental life is like (i.e., if we follow early Jackson, they are epiphenomenal). One might run with the argument put forward here to push back against belief in phenomenal qualities (though they may be justified in ways that are different than what is articulated here) but they would not be arguing against experience simpliciter *unless* they make the further assumption that experience simply *is* phenomenal qualities.

Conclusion

With this article, I have offered a Wittgensteinian critique of one, plausible, way of understanding the knowledge argument. Modeling how to come to learn about our mental states in a way that is similar to how we come to learn about the external world might appear innocuous, but I argue that it is not. The reason why it is not is because when individuals appeal to the detectivist model, they start creating grammatical affordances based on theoretical expectations and flaunting those expectations leads to metaphysical issues. This path should be resisted because modeling of sensations in a similar way to modeling physical objects is *itself* problematic and overlooks the differences between the two. There is a simple way that Jackson (or rather those who champion the argument in his stead after he changed his mind), might respond here: he might claim that there is a way in which we might understand the Mary argument that does *not* presuppose the detectivist position. However, if they take this route, Jackson (or those in his stead) need to offer us a more robust account of the epistemic relation that they hold with their mental states and, until that time, the knowledge argument should be treated with suspicion.

Bibliography

Bigelow, John and Robert Pargetter. "Acquaintance with Quaila." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 179–196. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Churchland, Paul M. "Knowing Quaila: A Reply to Jackson (with Postscript: 1997)." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 163–178. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Conee, Earl. "Phenomenal Knowledge." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 197–215. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Dennett, Daniel C. "'Epiphenomenal' Qualia?" Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 59–73. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Finkelstein, David H. *Expression and the Inner*. Harvard University Press, 2008.

Horgan, Terence. "Jackson on Physical Information and Qualia." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 301–308. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Jackson, Frank. "Epiphenomenal Qualia." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter

Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 39–50. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Jackson, Frank. "Postscript on Qualia." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 417–442. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Kahane, Guy, Edward Kanterian, and Oskari Kuusela (Eds.) *Wittgenstein and His Interpreters: Essays in Memory of Gordon Baker*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Lewis, David. "What Experience Teaches Us." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 77–103. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Ludlow, Peter, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar (Eds.) *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Pettit, Philip. "Motion Blindness and the Knowledge Argument." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 105–142. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Stoljar, Daniel. "Two Conceptions of the Physical." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 309–332. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Tye, Michael. "Knowing What It Is Like: The Ability Hypothesis and the Knowledge Argument." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 143–160. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Van Gulick, Robert. "So Many Ways of Saying No to Mary." Essay. In *There's Something about Mary: Essays on Phenomenal Consciousness and Frank Jackson's Knowledge Argument*, edited by Peter Ludlow, Yujin Nagasawa, and Daniel Stoljar, 365–405. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.