

Our Knowledge of the Internal World

II. Epistemic possibilities and the knowledge argument

The form of the knowledge argument (simple version)

Mary knows all the facts of kind K
Mary does not know the fact that P
Therefore, the fact that P is not a fact of kind K

Lewis's hypothesis of phenomenal information

Besides physical information there is an irreducibly different kind of information to be had: phenomenal information. The two are independent. Two possible cases might be exactly alike physically, yet differ phenomenally. When we get physical information we narrow down the physical possibilities, and perhaps we narrow them down all the way to one, but we leave open a range of phenomenal possibilities.

Lewis, "What Experience Teaches"

Strategies for avoiding the hypothesis of phenomenal information

The Fregean strategy

It is not facts, but facts under a mode of presentation that are known

The ability hypothesis

What Mary lacks is not information, but only certain abilities

The self-location analogy

The knowledge Mary lacks is in some way like knowledge of who one is, and what time it is, rather than knowledge of what the world is like in itself.

Let Ψ be Mary's concept (while still in her room) of the physical/functional state type that one is in when having an experience of seeing something red.

Let Φ be the phenomenal concept (for a type of visual experience) that Mary acquires when she emerges from her room and sees something red.

- (a) The Fregean Thought expressed by "Mary is having an experience of type Ψ ".
- (b) The Fregean Thought expressed by "Mary is having an experience of type Φ ".

When someone doesn't know what it's like to have an experience, where are the alternative open possibilities? I cannot present to myself in thought a range of alternative possibilities about what it might be like to taste Vegemite. That is because I cannot imagine either what it is like to taste Vegemite, or any alternative way that it might be like but in fact isn't. . . . I can't even pose the question that phenomenal information is supposed to answer: is it this way or that? It seems that the alternative possibilities must be unthinkable beforehand; and afterwards too, except for the one that turns out to be actualized

Lewis, "What experience teaches"

The prima facie parallel between phenomenal knowledge and self-locating knowledge

There is a kind of knowledge, *phenomenal knowledge* that is irreducible to knowledge of physical fact.

There is a kind of knowledge, *self-locating knowledge*, which is irreducible to knowledge of objective fact.

In the former case, the distinctive kind of knowledge is used to support a metaphysical conclusion about the distinctions there are to be made between the possibilities, but in the latter case, no parallel conclusion seems to be supported.

John Perry's Subject matter assumption

The rational content of a belief is that part of the full truth-conditions of the belief that accounts for the role the belief has in theoretical and practical inferences. The rational content of a belief is the conditions its truth puts on the subject matter of the belief, the objects the notions and concepts in the belief are of.

Perry, *Knowledge, Possibility and Consciousness*