

The knowledge argument

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11 July Assignment Physicalism is a philosophical argument according to which every object within the scope of the universe exists only as much as its physical properties; no more and no less. Thus, there are no other things in the universe other than physical objects. However, the Knowledge Argument goes beyond the idea of physicalism as it has been perceived that there is more knowledge in the world than just having an idea of the physical objects around us. This paper helps to provide an insight regarding how the idea of physicalism has been proven to be a false notion by a number of philosophers and thinkers since the past and how not everything can be perceived by having an idea of the physical objects of existence around us. (Alter, T) To begin with, Frank Jackson's Mary leaves her black and white room for the first time to see a red tomato, a blue sky and other colours around her. Up till the time she remained within her confined black and white world, she was under the impression that she had all the physical knowledge in the world, however, since she enters the Technicolor world; she understands that the complete physical truth is not the whole truth. Thus, the physical world does not necessarily determine the complete truth about the world. The very case of Mary helps to divide the knowledge intuition into three parts ranging from the time Mary thought she had complete knowledge and claim over the truth about the world; her learning claim as she understood that there were things she did not know about; and the non deductibility claim according to which if the above two claims are true then when Mary leaves the room, whatever she gains cannot be comprehended by the complete physical truth. Thus, according to this very case laid down by Jackson, it may be proved that physicalism is false, because not all physical facts can be known without knowing the actual facts of the matter <https://assignbuster.com/the-knowledge-argument/>

and not all are physical. (Knowledge Argument Against Physicalism) If the idea of physicalism were true, then Mary would have all the knowledge and information with regard to colour vision from the human eyes before she left the room. However, till her time there, she was under the impression that the entire world existed only in black or white. When she leaves the room, she intuitively learns about new things in the form of qualia, properties of objects that are in different colours etc, and thus she is able to understand that she did not have access to all the physical truths during the course of her time within the confines of her room. This therefore, helps to prove that physicalism is false by nature. Yet another example has been discussed by Broad as he talks about his mathematical archangel. This creature has been designed in a manner that it possesses all knowledge regarding chemical compounds and thus knows all the physical truths possible about the same. However, the archangel does not know about the phenomenal knowledge of these chemical compounds, for example, the pungent smell of ammonia or the texture of sulphur powder. And thus, with the help of this particular example, the philosopher has argued that physicalism is indeed false because there are more to objects than just their physical existences. (Broad, C. D) Nagel on the other hand, has talked about how a human being cannot imagine what it might be to be a bat. With this very famous example, he has helped man to realise how it is next to impossible to even imagine what it might be like to be someone or something else. A bat has a completely different perception about the physical world around it because of the inherent qualities that it possesses, which are in reality, completely different from the built of a man and the way he carries out his activities in response to the world around him. (Nagel, Thomas) Thus, in conclusion, if <https://assignbuster.com/the-knowledge-argument/>

one was to regard the very idea of physicalism as true, then one would have to deny the fact that it is impossible to possess new knowledge or information, difficult to comprehend touch, sound, feel and hearing capabilities, as well as understand and know what it might be like to be someone or something else. However, philosophers and scientists have helped to prove to man that these are not possible in reality. And thus, the idea of physicalism is false and fails against the argument of knowledge.

Works Cited Alter, T. A Limited Defense of the Knowledge Argument. Vol. 90. Philosophical Studies, 1998. Print. Broad, C. D. 1925. The Mind and its Place in Nature, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Nagel, Thomas. 1974. "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?", Philosophical Review, 83, 435-50. " Knowledge Argument Against Physicalism [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy]." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Web. 12 July 2011. .