CAN WE EXPLAIN QUALIA WITHOUT IMMATERIAL PROPERTIES?

Ahmet Kadir USLU*

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, zihin felsefesinde "Qualia problemi" olarak adlandırılan sorunu Frank Jackson'ın bilgi argümanına odaklanarak tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bilgi argümanının bilincin fizikalist açıklamalarına karşı ciddi bir tehdit oluşturmadığı tezi çalışmanın nihai hedefidir. Bu tezi savunurken, Daniel Dennett'in "RoboMary Neyi Biliyor" adlı çalışması, ve karşıt görüş olarak ise Torin Alter'ın "Deneyimsiz Fenomenal Bilgi" adlı çalışması referans alınacaktır. Daha sonra, her bir görüş tek tek ele alınacak ve eleştirel bir değerlendirmeye sunulacaktır. Alter, makalesinde Dennett'in yanı sıra Pete Mandik'in konuyla ilgili argümanına da atıfta bulunsa da, bu çalışma Dennett'in argümanıyla sınırlı kalacaktır. Sonuç olarak, bilgi argümanının bizi fizikalizmin yanlış olduğu sonucuna götürmeye yetmediği savunulacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Qualia, Fenomenal Deneyim, Frank Jackson, Bilgi Argümanı, Daniel Dennett, Torin Alter, Fizikalizm.*

QUALIA'YI TİNSEL NİTELİKLER OLMADAN AÇIKLAYABİLİR MİYİZ?

ABSTRACT

This paper intends to research the problem of Qualia in the philosophy of mind by focusing on Frank Jackson's knowledge argument. In this context, we will try to show why the knowledge argument is not sufficient to threaten physicalist accounts of consciousness. To support our thesis, we will examine Daniel Dennett's paper "What RoboMary Knows"; and as an opponent view, we will review Torin Alter's paper "Phenomenal Knowledge Without Experience". Then, each argument will be taken separately and we will address them step by step. Although Alter mentions Pete Mandik's argument along with Dennett's argument in his paper, we will restrict ourselves with only Dennett's RoboMary argument and Alter's counter-arguments to this. In conclusion, we will defend the argument that the knowledge argument is not cogent and it is also not sufficient to claim that physicalism is false.

Keywords: *Qualia, Phenomenal Experience, Frank Jackson, The Knowledge Argument, Daniel Dennett, Torin Alter, Physicalism.*

---

* Araştırma Görevlisi, Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Felsefe Bölümü. ahmetkadiruslu@karatekin.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-9134-0059

FLSF (Felsefe ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi) *FLSF (Journal of Philosophy and Social Sciences)*
2021 Bahar, sayı: 31, ss. 37-50 *Spring 2021, issue: 31, pp.: 37-50*
Makalenin geliş tarihi: 11.02.2021 *Submission Date: 11 February 2021*
Makalenin kabul tarihi: 09.04.2021 *Approval Date: 9 April 2021*
Web: https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/flsf ***ISSN 2618-5784***

Qualia and The Knowledge Argument

It is widely accepted that "Qualia" are one of the most challenging issues in philosophy of mind. The importance of qualia derives largely from the fact that it is thought a fundamental problem for materialist explanations (physicalism, functionalism and so forth…) of the mind-body problem. Proponents of qualia claim that no physical theory of mind can explain the qualitative character of subjective experience because qualia are irreducible and non-physical properties of the mind. On the other hand, the opponents of qualia, for example the identity theorists, posit that mental states are brain states and brain states are physical states; and they have found no reason for concluding that qualia lie beyond the scope of physicalist theory of mind.

In this paper, we intend to research the qualia problem by focusing on Jackson's knowledge argument and we will try to show why it is not a threat against to materialist accounts of mind. In this sense, we will first examine Daniel Dennett's paper "What RoboMary Knows"; and as an opponent view, we will review Torin Alter's paper "Phenomenal Knowledge Without Experience". Then, we will compare their arguments and we will discuss them in detail. Although Alter talks about Mandik's argument along with Dennett's argument in his paper, we will restrict ourselves with only Dennett's RoboMary argument and Alter's counter-arguments to this. Then, we will make a general conclusion that the knowledge argument is not cogent and it is also not sufficient to claim that physicalism is false.

Initially, let us summarize Jackson's Mary argument. Jackson tells us Mary is a clever scientist who has grown up in a black and white room and been forced to learn everything there is to know about the physical nature of the world through a black and white television monitor. That is to say, she has no color experiences although she learns all the physical facts about seeing in color. The term 'physical' includes "everything in *completed* physics, chemistry, and neurophysiology, and all there is to know about the causal and relational facts consequent upon all this, including of course functional roles"[1]. Then, her captors release Mary from her black and white room or give her a color television. What will happen after Mary is released and sees a red rose for example? Will she learn anything new or not? According to Jackson, it seems obvious that she will learn what it is like to see red. It means that her previous knowledge was incomplete though she had all the physical information. Therefore, "there is more to have than that, and physicalism is false"[2]. This is a brief summary of Jackson's knowledge argument. He uses this example to

[1] Frank Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know." *The Journal of Philosophy.* 83:5, 1986, p. 291.
[2] Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia." *The Philosophical Quarterly.* 32: 127, Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 130.

establish the main epistemic premise of the knowledge argument, '*the non-deducibility claim'* which states that*:* "there are phenomenal truths that cannot be a priori deduced from the complete physical truth"[3]. As we will see, this is also central to Alter's arguments.

Although Jackson's argument seems *prima facie* impressive, I see no reason to assume that it is a sound argument against materialist explanations of qualia. We can create numerous stories similar to this and none of them seems to threaten physicalism. For example, imagine another Mary who is a world-famous gourmet and we will call her GourMary. She is professional and she has tasted everything edible in the world except one thing. She has never eaten any octopus. However, she knows everything about octopuses because during her all life, she has made scientific researches regarding octopuses. She knows their softness, size, shape etc. and she has listened professional gourmets who ate octopus before, so they have told GourMary how it tastes. Then, one day, she finds a chance to eat octopus. What will happen after she tastes it? Will she learn anything new or not? Normally, she will learn what it is like to taste octopus. But she will not be surprised, because she can imagine its taste through her great physical information about octopuses. Thus, it does not seem possible to claim that her new experience involves something more than physical. Like everything else in the world, her new phenomenal experience will also be physical. As Laurence Nemirow (1980, 1990)[4] and David Lewis (1983, 1990)[5] pointed out, GourMary's discovery would be a discovery of new abilities rather than new facts. In other words, although GourMary makes a genuine discovery when she first experiences eating octopus, it does not threaten physicalism. However, Jackson of course, rejects the Lewis/Nemirow claim.[6]

[3] Torin Alter, "Phenomenal Knowledge Without Experience" *The Case for Qualia.* Ed. Edmond L. Wright. Mit Press, 2008, p. 4.

[4] Laurence Nemirow, "Review of Thomas Nagel's Mortal Questions." *Philosophical Review 89,* 1980, 473-477.

Laurence Nemirow, "Physicalism and the Cognitive Role of Acquaintance." *Mind and Cognition*, In William G. Lycan (ed.), Blackwell, 1990, 490-499.

[5] David Lewis, "Postscript to 'Mad Pain and Martian Pain.'" *In Philosophical Papers.* Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 1983.

David Lewis, "What Experience Teaches." *Mind and Cognition*. In William G. Lycan (ed.), Blackwell, 1990, 29-57.

[6] ''According to the *Ability Hypothesis* (most prominently defended in Lewis 1983, 1988 and in Nemirow 1980, 1990, 2007), Mary does not acquire any new propositional knowledge after release (no knowledge about something that is the case, no factual knowledge), but only a bundle of abilities (like the ability to imagine, remember and recognize colors or color experiences)''. For more information seehttps://plato.stanford.edu/entries/qualia-knowledge/.

The Non-deducibility Claim and The Experience Requirement

Now, let us turn our main discussion and look at Dennett's argument which state that the non-deducibility claim, namely, the knowledge argument, depends on the experience requirement. In other words, someone could not know what it is like to see in color if she never seen in color. As Alter points out, Dennett thinks that this is the basis of the knowledge argument's main epistemic premise: the premise that any physical knowledge is not enough for phenomenal knowledge of color experiences. Alter summarizes the reason that why Dennett believes the knowledge argument depends on the experience requirement as follows:

> ''The no-experience-necessary response. The claim that Mary makes epistemic progress upon release would make perfect sense if having color experiences were required for knowing what it's like to have them. But if the experience requirement fails—if it is possible to know what it's like to see in color without having color experiences—then why couldn't Mary put herself in a state that allows her to figure out what it's like to see in color? If there is no logical bar to obtaining this phenomenal knowledge without seeing colors, then there is no reason why Mary could not obtain that knowledge by exploiting her comprehensive physical knowledge''[7].

This explanation seems quite plausible. If it is possible to obtain any phenomenal knowledge without having experience, there will be no logical obstacle for Mary to know what it is like to see red without seeing red. Because *the experience requirement* seems to me as an important problem for the knowledge argument against physicalism. If we take it away like Dennett did, we play into physicalism's hands. And I will try to show how Dennett undermines the knowledge argument by removing the experience requirement. He thinks that it is not necessary to have an experience with X in order to know what it is like to have an experience with phenomenal character X. As an example, he gives Hume's missing shade of blue. According to this example, one can extrapolate the missing shade of blue by experiencing other shades which are phenomenally similar. Namely, we do not experience the missing shade directly, we experience the surrounding shades which are fairly similar to the missing one. On the other hand, the opponents of no-experience necessary claim utter that it is not possible to have phenomenal character X without having experience with X. I can give a similar example to the missing shade of blue to understand no experience necessary claim better:

---

[7] Torin Alter, "Phenomenal Knowledge Without Experience" *The Case for Qualia.* Ed. Edmond L. Wright. Mit Press, 2008, pp. 5-6.

Imagine someone who is going to be a pilot soon, and let's call her PilotMary. Like every pilot candidate, PilotMary is firstly trained by a flight simulator and she takes flight lessons with a virtual flight. In this case, can we say that PilotMary will be able to aviate a real one after taking virtual flight lessons? It seems plausible that she will. In this case, Jackson's non-deducibility claim does not seem to entail the experience requirement. Dennett and Alter entitles this as *the no-experience necessary claim*. However, unlike them, I want to call it as *the no direct-experience necessary claim.* Because these examples include experiences even if they are not direct. Conversely, according to the no-experience necessary claim, there should be no experience including indirect ones. That is why I changed the term to the no direct-experience necessary claim.

RoboMary Argument

Now, let's look at Dennett's RoboMary argument. Dennett intended to undermine the belief that Mary gains knowledge when she leaves the room through this argument. According to Dennett's argument, RoboMary is a standard Mark 19 robot but she has one important difference that she was brought on line with black and white video cameras unlike standard Mark 19 robots. So, she does not have color vision. However, everything else in her hardware is arranged for color vision, which is same with in the standard Mark 19. Like human Mary, RoboMary is also able to learn all physical facts through her black and white camera eyes. And she learns everything concerning the color vision of Mark 19s while she was waiting for her new pair of color cameras to change. Eventually, she becomes omnipotent about the color-coding system of all Mark 19s. Through using her comprehensive knowledge, RoboMary puts herself in standard Mark 19s' situation and writes some code which enables her to colorize the input from her black and white cameras in light of data she collected. During her research and development stage, RoboMary makes comparisons between herself and other Mark 19s about how different they react while looking at the same objects, then she records all the information she gathers. Finally, her black and white camera eyes are replaced with a pair of color cameras. And then she opens her eyes and see a ripe tomato for example. But she learns nothing new because she already knew what it would be like for her to see a ripe tomato through the information she gathered from other Mark 19s. Dennett gives a better explanation of this situation in his locked RoboMary case:

> ''She obtains a ripe tomato and plunks it down in front of her black and white cameras, obtaining some middling gray scale values,

> which lead her into a variety of sequel states… She consults an encyclopedia about the normal color range of tomatoes, and she knows that these gray-scales in these lightning conditions are consistent with redness, but of course nothing comes to her directly about color, since she has black and white cameras, and moreover, she can't use her book-learning to adjust these values, since her color system is locked. So, as advertised, she can't put herself directly into the *red-tomato-experiencing* state. She looks at the (gray-appearing) tomato and reacts however she does, resulting in, say, thousands of temporary settings of her cognitive machinery. Call that voluminous state of her total response to the locked gray-tomato-viewing state A… Then she compares state A with the state that her model of herself goes into… (namely) state B, the state she would have gone into if her color system hadn't been locked. RoboMary notes all the differences between state A…and state B…and… makes all the necessary adjustments and puts herself into state B. State B is, by definition, not an illicit state of color experience; it is the state that such an illicit state of color experience normally causes (in a being just exactly like her). But now she can know just what it is like for her to see a red tomato, because she has managed to put herself into such a dispositional state…''[8].

The Objection of A priori Deduction

According to Alter, Dennett's argument does not threaten the non-deducibility claim because Locked RoboMary does not a priori deduce the phenomenology of seeing red from the physical truth. She just puts herself in a dispositional state that a standard Mark 19 would have. So, she uses her physical knowledge to conceive the required effect, but the way she uses is not a priori deduction. Then, Alter posits that the only way to threaten the non-deducibility claim with RoboMary argument is a priori deduction. On the other side, Dennett gives a response to this claim and he says that: "I just do not see that this is what matters. So far as I can see, this objection presupposes an improbable and extravagant distinction between (pure?) deduction and other varieties of knowledgeable self-enlightenment"[9]. Next, he says that "I didn't describe RoboMary as "self-programming" herself; I said she "notes all the

[8] Daniel Dennett, "What RoboMary Knows." *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge: New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism.* Eds. Torin Alter and Sven Walter. Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 11.
[9] Ibid, p. 12.

differences between state A, the state she was thrown into by her locked color system, and state B; the state she would have been thrown into had her color system not been locked, and-being such a clever, indefatigable and nearly omniscient being-makes all the necessary adjustments and *puts herself into state B*"[10]. In a word, Dennett points out that this kind of distinction is rather inaccurate, and it is not related with physicalism. But Alter does not agree with Dennett and he tries to illustrate his idea with an example. He makes a comparison between two cases to know that the sum of a trapezoid's angles is 360 degrees:

> ''Case 1: You figure out the sum by constructing a proof from Euclid's axioms.
>
> Case 2: A future neuroscientist time travels back to the present and describes a brain state characteristic of someone who knows the sum. She also gives you a device that can be used to put you in that state and explains that the device works only if you contemplate Euclid's axioms for a few seconds. You contemplate the axioms and use the device. It works''[11].

According to Alter, in case 1 the geometrical information is a priori deduced from Euclid's axioms. On the other hand, in case 2 you do not a priori deduce the information although you use the same knowledge.

In order to show how we apply the same distinction to phenomenal knowledge, Alter gives once again the example of Hume's missing shade of blue. He says that although there are several ways to get the phenomenal knowledge of the missing shade through phenomenal knowledge of the surrounding shades, only one fulfills a priori deduction: "deducing the missing-shade phenomenology by combining phenomenal information about the surrounding shades, without relying on other phenomenal information"[12]. For Alter, this kind of a priori deduction is feasible. However, he claims that it is not possible for Mary to deduce what it is like to see red by combining the information she obtains before leaving the room. This is also valid for RoboMary case. Her reasoning includes more than a priori deduction even if she understands what it is like to see red. Namely, RoboMary's reasoning is similar with the case 2 than case 1 which are mentioned above.

When I consider both Dennett's and Alter's arguments, Dennett's claim seems more persuasive to me. Like Dennett says, I do not believe that Alter's

[10] Ibid, p. 12.
[11] Torin Alter, "Phenomenal Knowledge Without Experience" *The Case for Qualia.* Ed. Edmond L. Wright. Mit Press, 2008, p. 9.
[12] Ibid, p. 10.

distinction between a priori deducibility and other sorts of infer-ability poses a danger to physicalism. In other words, it cannot help to undermine Dennett's RoboMary argument, and I have several reasons for that.

First, let's turn to case 1 that Alter introduces. According to Alter, we a priori deduce geometrical information from Euclid's axioms in that case. However, I am not sure that this is true. Because it is conceivable that the same neuroscientist who is in case 2 can put Euclid's axioms in my brain without my awareness. For example, one day when I am sleeping, that neuroscientist put the information in my brain. And I am supposing that I earned that knowledge by myself although I am not. In this case, there would be no difference between case 1 and case 2. Since I would not a priori deduce the sum of a trapezoid's angles even I think that I would.

Second, it is not obvious what Alter means by saying that RoboMary's reasoning involves more than a priori deduction from physical information. If he intends to say that her reasoning includes something more than physical, then Alter needs to show that what it is. On the other hand, if Alter offers that RoboMary uses some extra information which is also physical, then I see no problem in that case. Because if all the information RoboMary uses is physical, there would be no reason to threaten physicalism. The only way to undermine Dennett's argument is to show that RoboMary's reasoning involves more than physical things. In other words, the method which RoboMary uses while she tries to understand what it is like to see red is not related with whether physicalism stands or falls. The important thing is whether RoboMary's case involves something non-physical or not. And I believe that there is no non-physical factor in Dennett's RoboMary argument. Therefore, Alter's claim does not threaten physicalism.

Furthermore, Dennett presents another argument to defend himself about a priori deducibility:

> ''Consider Rosemary, another of Mary's daughters, who is entirely normal and free to move around the colored world, and is otherwise her mother's equal in physical knowledge of color. Rosemary has a hard time imagining her mother's epistemic predicament. What must it be like, she wonders, not yet to know what it is like to see red? She is burdened, it seems, with *too much* knowledge…This is, presumably, a psychological impediment to her imagination, but not an epistemological lack''[13].

[13] Daniel Dennett, "What RoboMary Knows." *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge: New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism.* Eds. Torin Alter and Sven Walter. Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 12.

Dennett claims that it is a psychological impediment because Rosemary does not have any epistemological lack. It is hard for her to imagine her mother's epistemic predicament since she has already seen in color and this is what impedes her to imagine not yet to know what it is like to see red. Similarly, if you have already eaten hamburger, it would be hard for you to imagine not yet to know how it tastes.

According to Alter, Dennett's idea is plausible if he means that Rosemary's knowledge 'may' prevent her to know her mother's epistemic state. But it does not show that the distinction between a priori deducibility and other kinds of infer-ability is problematic or not related with materialism. For Alter, Dennett's idea is briefly this:

> ''While RoboMary's inability to imagine in color prevents her from using one comparatively direct way of figuring out what it is like to see red, her inability need not place any limitation on her capacity for using reason to arrive at that knowledge; at best, any such limitation would be a contingent psychological impediment''[14].

However, Alter mentions again that Robomary's inability to imagine in color is not the problem. The real problem is the method by which she gains her phenomenal knowledge contains more than a priori deduction from physical information. But as I mentioned before, what does Alter mean by saying "more than"? Does he mean something non-physical? If he does, he needs to explain why it is not physical. Now, let's look at his argument which is related with this problem:

> ''Why does putting herself in state B enable Robomary to know what it's like to see red? B is a dispositional and (let us assume) non-phenomenal state; there is nothing it is like to be in B. Nevertheless, B involves color phenomenology in that it contains the relevant phenomenal information. Therein lies the problem for Dennett's argument. By putting herself in a state that involves color phenomenology, RoboMary cheats. Pre-release Mary should be no less puzzled about B than she is about seeing red. If she lacks phenomenal information about seeing red, then she lacks the phenomenal information that B contains. If there are open epistemic possibilities about the nature of phenomenal redness that she cannot eliminate, then there are open epistemic possibilities about the content of B that she cannot eliminate. RoboMary comes by her phenomenal knowledge of color experience not by a priori

[14] Torin Alter, "Phenomenal Knowledge Without Experience" *The Case for Qualia.* Ed. Edmond L. Wright. Mit Press, 2008, p. 12.

> deduction from physical information but rather by putting herself in a non-phenomenal dispositional state that contains the relevant phenomenal information''[15].

I do not agree with Alter's argument that RoboMary cheats by putting herself in a state that involves color phenomenology. So, I believe that Dennett plays fair in his RoboMary argument and let me explain why I think that way with an example:

Suppose that you are a college student, and you are one of the most successful students in your class, thus you have some rivals in the class who are jealous of you. Then, you learn that you will take an important exam next week. And your lecturer announces that the exam will be open-book and you are allowed to look at all your stuffs which are relevant to the exam as long as they are physical. Then, it is time to the exam and you bring all your physical stuffs with you to take advantage of them during the exam. Finally, the test is over and you get the highest score. Later, one of your rivals complains to the lecturer that you cheated in the exam. But actually you did not. Because you were allowed before to look at physical stuffs and therefore what you did was legal.

Similarly, what RoboMary does to get her phenomenal knowledge of color experience is fair. Although Alter claims that RoboMary cheats, she actually does not cheat. All information she uses is physical because it is not possible for a robot to experience a state which involves any non-physical properties. Because we know that robots are made of completely physical stuff. Even if RoboMary puts herself in a state that involves color phenomenology as Alter said, it does not mean that she cheats since I believe that there is a logical bar for her to cheat. In other words, Alter does not explain in detail why it is cheating if RoboMary puts herself in a dispositional state that contains the phenomenal information about redness. He just says that:

> ''If the states Mary, RoboMary, or another Mary counterpart puts herself in –states that enable her to deduce what it is like to see red- involve color phenomenology, then she cheats: she does not a priori deduce the phenomenology from physical information. In that case, her achievement fails to threaten the non-deducibility claim. If, however, the states she puts herself in do not involve color phenomenology, then it is hard to see how they would enable her to deduce the phenomenology''[16].

As far as I understand, Alter claims that RoboMary cheats because if the states she puts herself would not involve any phenomenal information

[15] Ibid, pp. 12-13.
[16] Ibid, p. 13.

about redness, it would be impossible for her to imagine what it is like to see red. So, in order to threaten the knowledge argument, she needs to deduce without having similar phenomenal information. But I need to say that this explanation does not convince me like Dennett in order to believe that RoboMary cheats. That is to say, it does not matter how to acquire a phenomenal knowledge. The important thing is whether a phenomenal experience involves something more than physical truths or not. And I do not see anything non-physical in RoboMary case.

Now, let's turn again to Dennett's claim that the knowledge argument depends on experience requirement, and Alter's counter argument to this. Against Dennett's premise, Alter makes a distinction between earned and unearned phenomenal knowledge. He says:

> ''Phenomenal knowledge is *earned* if the experience requirement is satisfied. For example, since I have seen ripe tomatoes, my knowledge of what it is like to see red is earned, whereas RoboMary's phenomenal knowledge is not. To *access* phenomenal knowledge is to exercise closely related abilities, such as the ability to imagine, recognize, or remember relevant experiences. I access my knowledge when I visualize a ripe tomato, stop at a traffic light, or have an episodic memory of seeing oxygenated blood. Phenomenal knowledge that is unearned, inaccessible, or both is *deviant*''[17].

Dennett's *Swamp Mary* argument is an example of deviant phenomenal knowledge. According to this argument, Swamp Mary is about to be released from prison that is similar to standard Mary. So, she is also virginal about colors. Then, a bolt of lightning rearranges her brain and puts it through Cosmic Coincidence into completely the brain state she was just about to go into after first seeing a red rose. However, Dennett mentions that the lightning bolt does not give her a hallucinatory experience but rather it "puts Swamp Mary's brain into the dispositional state, the competence state, that an experience of a red rose would have put her brain into had such an experience (hallucinatory or not) occurred"[18]. As Alter mentions, she has the same state with RoboMary's state B. In that respect, Swamp Mary's epistemic state is quite similar to the state I am in while I neither see nor imagine red. "I know what it is like to see red. Therefore, it seems reasonable to say the same of her. She has the same phenomenal knowledge that I have; the only difference is that hers, like

[17] Ibid, p. 16.
[18] Daniel Dennett, "What RoboMary Knows." *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge: New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism.* Eds. Torin Alter and Sven Walter. Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 16-17.

RoboMary's, is unearned"[19]. It can be given further examples of unearned phenomenal knowledge but I think one is enough to understand the main idea. In a word, unearned phenomenal knowledge is a knowledge that is gained without experience. Whereas, earned phenomenal knowledge requires experience.

Alter accepts the possibility of phenomenal knowledge without experience; however, he continues and asserts that it does not threaten the non-deducibility claim like Dennett mentions. Since, as we discussed before, Alter points out that the knower should access her deviant (or not) phenomenal knowledge by a priori deduction in order to threaten the non-deducibility claim. But, he says that Swamp Mary or other knowers "acquire their deviant phenomenal knowledge by means other than a priori deduction. Therefore, these cases do not directly threaten the non-deducibility claim"[20].

Conclusion

Consequently, Alter seems to accept that RoboMary, Swamp Mary, or other deviants may know what it is like to see red; that is to say, they can have same phenomenal knowledge with them. However, there is an important difference for Alter that their knowledge is unearned while ours is earned. Besides, RoboMary and the others do not acquire their phenomenal knowledge by a priori deduction. Thus, Alter posits that they are not danger for the non-deducibility claim.

However, I do not agree with Alter's conclusion. I believe that the most important thing is Alter's acceptance that RoboMary can know what it is like to see red. If it is conceivable for a robot to have a phenomenal knowledge, then the knowledge argument must be failed. Because there is nothing non-physical in a robot. In order to see this more clearly, let's put RoboMary for a moment in real Mary's situation in Jackson's argument. We can summarize Jackson's Mary argument as follows:

1) Mary has all the physical information about human color vision before she is released.
2) But there is some information regarding human color vision that she does not have before she is released.
   Therefore,

[19] Torin Alter, "Phenomenal Knowledge Without Experience" *The Case for Qualia.* Ed. Edmond L. Wright. Mit Press, 2008, p. 17.
[20] Ibid, p. 22. Nevertheless, Alter emphasizes that they may seem to create an indirect threat, but we will not discuss the indirect argument in this paper.

3) There is more than physical information.

Now, let's put RoboMary to this argument.

1) RoboMary has all the physical information about color vision before she is released.
2) But there is some information regarding color vision that she does not have before she is released.
   Therefore,
3) There is more than physical information.

In this case, if we accept that first premise is true, then second premise must be false. Because if RoboMary has all the physical information about color vision, it is not possible for her to lack any information about color vision. Since there is nothing non-physical for a robot. Therefore, premise 2 is false. If premise 2 is false, then the conclusion is also false.

I gave this example just to see the difference between humans and robots. Although it is argumentative whether there is something more than physical in human Mary case, it is not possible to claim that there is more than physical for RoboMary.

To sum up, if RoboMary is able to obtain a phenomenal knowledge (a priori or not), that Alter seems to accept it in his paper; it is not important the method by which she acquires her phenomenal knowledge. If RoboMary (completely made of physical stuff) can achieve to understand what it is like to see red, then we may suggest that phenomenal properties, or qualia can be reduced to physical or functional properties. Therefore, the knowledge argument, or correspondingly Alter's argument fails against Dennett's RoboMary argument.

REFERENCES

Alter, Torin, "Phenomenal Knowledge Without Experience" *The Case for Qualia.* Ed. Edmond L. Wright. Mit Press, 2008.

Dennett, Daniel, "What RoboMary Knows." *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge: New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism.* Eds. Torin Alter and Sven Walter. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Jackson, Frank, "Epiphenomenal Qualia." *The Philosophical Quarterly.* 32: 127, Oxford University Press, 1982, 127-136.

Jackson, Frank, "What Mary Didn't Know." *The Journal of Philosophy.* 83:5, 1986, 291-295.

Lewis, David, "Postscript to 'Mad Pain and Martian Pain.'" *In Philosophical Papers.* Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 1983.

Lewis, David, "What Experience Teaches." *Mind and Cognition*. In William G. Lycan (ed.), Blackwell, 1990, 29-57.

Nemirow, Laurence, "Review of Thomas Nagel's Mortal Questions." *Philosophical Review 89,* 1980, 473-477.

Nemirow, Laurence, "Physicalism and the Cognitive Role of Acquaintance." *Mind and Cognition*, In William G. Lycan (ed.), Blackwell, 1990, 490-499.

Internet References

Nida-Rümelin, Martine and Donnchadh O Conaill, ''Qualia: The Knowledge Argument'', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2019 Edition),* Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/qualia-knowledge/>. Accessed 2-Apr-2021.