

Philosophy 101

Knowledge & Objectivity (II)

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Questions

Validity

- ① A valid argument is an argument that
- A. *Has a true conclusion*
 - B. *Has true premises*
 - C. *Has both true premises and a true conclusion*
 - D. *Has a conclusion which must be true if the premises are true*

Soundness

② A sound argument is an argument that

- A. *Has a true conclusion*
- B. *Has true premises*
- C. *Is valid and has true premises*
- D. *Has both true premises and a true conclusion*

Eliminitivism about Color

③ Eliminitivism about color says that

- A. *Colors are real*
- B. *Color is not a property of physical objects*
- C. *We don't know what color is*
- D. *Color is psychological*

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Questions

Williams on
Objectivity

Consciousness
& Physicalism

Williams on Objectivity

Objectivity and Knowledge

Independence Condition on Knowledge: For a subject matter to count as knowable its existence must be independent of the subject who might come to know it

Can we have knowledge of secondary qualities? — are they the kinds of things that are 'there anyway'?

- depends on what is meant by 'independent'

The Absolute Conception

Suppose A and B each claims to have some knowledge of the world. Each has some beliefs, and moreover has experiences of the world, and ways of conceptualizing it, which have given rise to those beliefs and are expressed in them: let us call all of this together his representation of the world (or part of the world). Now with respect to their supposed pieces of knowledge, A's and B's representations may well differ. If what they both have is knowledge, then it seems to follow that there must be some coherent way of understanding why these representations differ, and how they are related to one another (Williams, 49).

The Absolute Conception of Reality

- a conception of reality in which all other 'correct' conceptions of reality cohere
- explains how there can be different but nevertheless correct conceptions of reality

Primary Qualities and the Absolute Conception

- Some ways of apprehending the world depend on peculiarities of the subject (e.g. their belief system, their visual system, etc.)
 - the world 'as it seems'
 - the world as reflected by 'local interests, tastes or sensory peculiarities'
- Some ways of apprehending the world are free of any such peculiarity of the subject
 - the world 'as it really is'
 - explains how the world might seem/appear a certain way

Primary Qualities and the Absolute Conception

- ① The absolute conception of the world is a conception of the world maximally free of the peculiarities of any subject's representation of the world
- ② Primary qualities are qualities of the world that do not depend on the peculiarities of perceiving subjects
- ③ \therefore Primary qualities are part of the absolute conception

Secondary Qualities and the Absolute Conception

- ① The absolute conception of the world is a conception of the world maximally free of the peculiarities of any subject's representation of the world
- ② Secondary qualities are relative to the peculiarities of perceiving subjects
- ③ \therefore Secondary qualities are not part of the absolute conception of the world

Conceptions of Objectivity

- necessary for conceivability (Galileo)
- absolute, not relative to any perceiver (Bayle)
- independent, "there anyway" (Williams)
 - part of the 'absolute conception'
 - not from any particular point of view (Nagel)

Consciousness & Physicalism

Varieties of Consciousness

- ① **Sentience:** being able to discriminate, categorize, and react to environmental stimuli
- ② **Wakefulness:** being awake and capable of attending to something
- ③ **Autonomy:** The deliberate control of one's behavior
- ④ **Introspection:** the internal accessibility of one's mental states
- ⑤ **Communicability:** the reportability of one's mental states
- ⑥ **Phenomenal consciousness:** The first-person experiential aspect of what it is like to be something

What is Consciousness?

- Being conscious in senses (1)-(5) are all compatible with purely physical ways of characterizing the phenomena
- It is less clear that (6) — phenomenal consciousness — can be given a purely physical characterization

What is Consciousness?

Why do we need a physical characterization of consciousness?

- Characterizing consciousness in physical terms makes it less mysterious/spooky
- Required for worldviews that understand reality in fundamentally physical terms

Physicalism

Physicalism: Everything that could exist is either physical or depends on the physical

Why be a Physicalist?

- Explanation
- Causal closure

Why be a Physicalist?

The Argument from Explanation

- ① The physical sciences offer the best explanation of how the world works
- ② The best explanation of how the world works entails physicalism
- ③ \therefore Physicalism is true

Why be a Physicalist?

Causal Closure: Every event that has a cause has *only* a physical cause (or physical causes)

Reductionism

Deducing, explaining, or otherwise showing a dependence relation to exist between one set of properties, facts, or concepts, and another privileged set of properties, facts, or concepts.

Reducing Consciousness

- Reduce features of conscious experience → Matter/energy organized according to physical laws (reduction base)
 - Can we deduce, explain, or otherwise show that conscious experience depends on matter/energy operating under physical laws?
 - If the answer is “yes” then we have “reduced” or “given a reduction” of conscious experience in terms of physics