

The knowledge argument and the colour of ripe tomatoes

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ABSTRACT

The

Introduction

Biology is, writes Smart (1959: 142) “to physics as radio-engineering is to electromagnetism) except the occurrence of sensations seems to me to be frankly unbelievable.” The effect such a statement have on biologists and biologically inclined philosophers could be easily foreseen. I think it is safe to assume that Smart was wilfully provocative.

Smart’s (op cit.) and others’ works led to a “wave of reductionist euphoria” or that is how Nagel (1974: 435) puts it in his seminal paper *What is it like to be a bat*. Nagel discusses at length that chiropterology (the scientific study of bats) has study how it is liketo see the world using echolocation.

Nagel was joined by Jackson who wrote a series of papers, including *What Mary Didn’t know* (Jackson 1986). The argument furthered by the two is usually refered to as *the knowledge argument* Ravenscroft (2005: 171). Jackson’s and Nagel’s works provoked a response by Pereboom (1994). In this note I study the papers papers by Jackson and Pereboom.

Conclusions

Ravenscroft (2005: 172) reached a similar conclusion; by describing Mary’s lack of knowledge as that she did not understand what other knew about red tomatoes, Ravenscroft evaded the objection to his argument described above.

References

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