

Review of: "Knowledge Arguments for Time"

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The article seeks to draw an interesting analogy between Jackson's (1982) Knowledge Argument about Experience and a similar argument (presented in various forms) about the time domain. It is not clear to me, however, that such an analogy is valid. There is a fundamental dissimilarity between the scenarios underlying Jackson's argument and those presented in the article, which must, at the very least, be addressed.

Jackson's knowledge argument, pertaining to mental qualia and subjective experience, is nomologically possible and, therefore, metaphysically plausible. This, I think, is a property of any useful thought experiment, either in science or metaphysics. Philosophical speculations that ignore this constraint may be useful (at most) for exploring logical dependencies but would be idle as a vehicle for deliberations about reality (in any sense of the last word).

I am unsure whether the same can be said concerning the Knowledge Arguments about Time presented in the article. Debates between A- and B-theorists, presentists and eternalists, etc., are about the metaphysics of our universe and the ontology of the time domain (Ingram and Tallant 2018, Emery et al. 2020). While we may conceive of someone living and growing up confined to a monochromatic room within a polychromatic world, the same cannot be said about an A-inclusion within a B-World or vice versa. At least, the in-principle conceivability of such setups is not self-evident and should, I think, be argued for.

One way to substantiate Knowledge Arguments about Time (of the form discussed in the article) might be to present them as purely semantic/cognitive scenarios, such as:

David grew up in a tribe whose temporal vocabulary and mental representations include only B-terms. Migrating to a tribe where A- vocabulary is common and having assimilated himself into their culture, will he learn something new?

Sara grew up in a tribe whose temporal vocabulary and mental representations include only A-terms. Migrating to a tribe where B- vocabulary is common and having assimilated herself into their culture, is she likely to forget something?

Such scenarios are theoretically possible (similar situations concerning spatial relationships have been reported. E.g., Wassmann and Dasen 1998; Calderón et al. 2019). However, they are conducive to arguments about cognition and language. They pertain, therefore, (just like Jackson's original Knowledge Argument) to the philosophy of mind and not to that of time.

I hope this might be useful.

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