49.0 Main Argument

Gertler’s main argument is that Tye shifts the explanatory gap onto phenomenal concepts, rather than dispel the gap directly.

in 3 parts:
1st. she recounts Tye’s construal of phenomenal concepts.
2nd. she argues that Tye fails to show that any concepts could play the “demanding” role he casts for phenomenal concepts.
3rd. She ties the 1st & 2nd parts together to complete the argument.

50.0 Phenomenal Concepts

Gertler begins by recounting Tye’s model of phenomenal concepts as non-descriptive perspectival concepts. The explanatory gap then becomes: “what explains the fact that c-fibers realizes pain, and thus that a given token falls under the concept PAIN and the concept C-FIBERS FIRING?”

This question can be construed in 4 ways - As covered, on two of the ways, it is straightforwardly answerable. On the other 2, it is not, but that doesn’t matter.

Gertler focuses on the 2nd construal – on the idea that there needs to be an explanation of the higher-level state Q. Tye’s solution is that the question is empirical in nature, and therefore (as noted by Gertler) on part with the standard account of ‘water is H2O’.

On the standard account, ‘water is H2O’ is true in virtue of “certain conceptual facts... together with certain empirical facts”. Tye denies that there could be conceptual analysis of phenomenal concepts, and Gertler cites Tye as holding that this is because “phenomenal concepts are perspectival; physical concepts are non-perspectival; and no perspectival concept is reducible to a non-perspectival one. ...Given this conceptual irreducibility, the fact that a given non-perspectival property realizes a given perspectival one is explanatory bedrock.” (690)

So, what makes it the case that these phenomenal concepts are perspectival, while physical concepts are not? – and that is where Gertler thinks the gap re-emerges:

My objection to Tye’s treatment of the perspectival quality of phenomenal concepts as a brute fact, requiring no explanation. It is the bruteness of this fact which renders ‘physical state Q realizes phenomenal state S’ unexplainable. And again, this fact seems to need explaining, if not by invoking a special ontological category...... then by some other method.

-- Gertler, p. 691
51.0 Tye’s failure

Tye’s argument for his construal of phenomenal concepts is an abductive inference to the best explanation. The three intuitive points that he thinks his account explains are these: (actually, I have 4 listed, Gertler takes the first as an explanation – she may be right, I may be right, it doesn’t really matter)

(1) We have direct, immediate access to phenomenal states through introspection.
(2) Fully understanding a phenomenal quality requires experiencing it.
(3) the presence of a phenomenal state is not deducible from the presence of a physical state, even if physicalism is the case.

Gertler thinks that “there is reason to doubt that anything could instantiate the collection of features his construal attributes to [phenomenal concepts]”

According to Gertler, (1) implies that physical / descriptive knowledge is not necessary for phenomenal knowledge (and she is correct – people 1000 years ago knew that they were in pain, but did not know about brains).

But, according to Gertler, Tye must explain for the immediate application of a non-descriptive phenomenal concept could suffice for knowledge. But in order to do that, he must show that a direct application of a non-descriptive concept be epistemically relevant – that is, could suffice for phenomenal knowledge.

According to Tye, awareness of a phenomenal state triggers the deployment of the phenomenal concept “without the use of any descriptive, reference-fixing intermediaries.”

And Gertler claims that Tye has not shown how this happens, or in fact, how it is reliable (which is required for it to be knowledge). But that is not enough, as a neuroscientist could know about the triggering, but not know about the phenomenology.

But according to Tye, this only shows that the phenomenal concepts are not indexicals – it does not show that they are not phenomenal concepts. “In true phenomenal state introspection ‘there is some additional concept being exercised that is not operative in the external conception, a general phenomenal concept’... And Gertler claims that ‘the ‘additional concept’ here must ensure that one who applies it knows what it’s like to experience that feeling, and it must do so without descriptively capturing the property.’”

She completes the argument thus: “It is difficult to see how the application of a concept could be both epistemically substantial and free of ‘descriptive, reference fixing intermediaries.’” (693)

52.0 Conclusion

Tye’s argument leaves the explanatory gap in tact, insofar as his phenomenal concepts are unexplained.