In *God and Phenomenal Consciousness*, Yujin Nagasawa bridges debates in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of religion. He proposes novel objections to Thomas Nagel's and Frank Jackson’s well-known ‘knowledge arguments’ against the physicalist approach to phenomenal consciousness by utilising his own objections to arguments against the existence of God. From the failure of these arguments, Nagasawa derives a unique metaphysical thesis, ‘nontheoretical physicalism’, according to which although this world is entirely physical, there are physical facts that cannot be captured even by complete theories of the physical sciences.

This book received a John Templeton Award for Theological Promise in 2007.

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God and Phenomenal Consciousness

A Novel Approach to Knowledge Arguments

YUJIN NAGASAWA

University of Birmingham
This book is dedicated with love

to Asja Pörtsch, my wife and my friend.
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When I first became interested in philosophy, I was fascinated by two metaphysical issues in particular. The first was the existence of God in the philosophy of religion. How could we prove the existence or non-existence of the greatest possible being that is worthy of religious worship? I was impressed by philosophers’ efforts to answer the question over thousands of years. The second was the mystery of phenomenal consciousness in the philosophy of mind. How could the phenomenal aspect of perceptual experience be realised in the brain, which is nothing but an aggregation of billions of neurons? I was amazed by philosophers’ elaborate attempts to analyse and solve this deep metaphysical problem. The goal of this work is to bridge these problems in two distinct areas of philosophy by considering ‘knowledge arguments’.

This work is divided into four parts. In Part I, I consider the conceptual background of knowledge arguments. I explain what knowledge arguments are and maintain the following: not only Thomas Nagel’s bat argument and Frank Jackson’s Mary argument in the philosophy of mind, which purport to refute the physicalist approach to phenomenal consciousness, but also Patrick Grim’s argument from knowledge de se and the argument from concept possession in the philosophy of religion, which purport to refute the existence of God, are rightly regarded as knowledge arguments. In Part II, I focus on these knowledge arguments in the philosophy of religion. I try to undermine existing objections to the arguments and provide my own new objections. To evaluate the knowledge arguments in the philosophy of religion is an important task in itself. However, in Part III I argue that my analyses of these arguments are also applicable to the knowledge arguments in the philosophy of mind. I demonstrate that the bat argument is structurally parallel to the argument from knowledge de se and that the Mary argument is structurally parallel to the argument from concept possession. I put forward novel objections to the bat argument and the Mary argument by contrasting them with their counterparts in the philosophy of religion. Finally, in Part IV, I discuss what I call ‘non-theoretical physicalism’, which is derived from the failures of the knowledge
arguments, and consider its implications for relevant issues in the philosophy of religion and the philosophy of mind.


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