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How to Point a Philosophical Armchair

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Thought experiments are characteristically armchair operations. The key thought experiment in Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, the "veil of ignorance", calls on us to imagine having complete knowledge of the social sciences at the same time as lacking all knowledge about the positions we occupy in the society of which we are members. It is harder to imagine having – and using – knowledge we do not have than it is to imagine not having knowledge we do have. Even when we think we can imagine not having knowledge of what is to our advantage, we may nevertheless be partial about our priorities in drawing consequences from the thought experiment.