Property Dualism

1. What is it Like to be a Bat?: For a thing to be conscious means that there is something that it's like to BE that thing.

If you were a toaster, for instance, it would not BE like anything at all. You would not FEEL anything. You would not THINK anything. On the other hand, if you were a bat, it WOULD feel a certain way. There IS a "what it's like to be a bat". But, WHAT is it like?

We can imagine flying around, and hanging from the ceiling. Perhaps we can even vaguely imagine emitting noise in order to map our surroundings via **echo-location**. Even so, you'd still be only imagining what it's like for YOU, a HUMAN, to BEHAVE like a bat. That still doesn't tell you **what it's like to BE A BAT**.

Consider a different context. Imagine someone who is blind, or even just color-blind. How would you describe to them what it's like to see color? As Thomas Nagel says, we can tell them that "red is like the sound of a trumpet" and other similes. But, no simile will EVER convey to the blind person what it is actually like TO SEE COLORS. To gain this knowledge, it is just something that you have to experience for yourself.

Nagel's conclusion is that any attempt to describe or explain consciousness in terms of physical processes, functions, inputs and outputs, etc.—in short, any attempt at a REDUCTIVE explanation of consciousness—will inevitably leave out the most important aspect of consciousness: The raw FEEL of consciousness; what it is like TO BE conscious.

2. What It's Like for Fred to See Red_1 and Red_2: Frank Jackson calls the raw feel of consciousness qualia:

> **Qualia:** (plural: qualia; singular: quale) This is the name for the "raw feel" of experience, or in other words the FEELINGS or SENSATIONS that we experience when we perceive things. For instance, imagine the way it feels to bite into a lemon, or smell a rose, or hear a crashing sound. There is a distinct qualitative feel to each of these experiences. When we see something red, the experience of redness FEELS a certain way; it has a certain quality. We might call this sensation "qualitative redness" or merely a "red quale" for short.

He introduces the following story:

> **Fred** Fred's eyesight is peculiar. He has the ability to distinguish between two wavelengths of red that are so close together that everyone else sees these two

shades as exactly the same. When given a basket of ripe tomatoes that look the same to the rest of us, he quickly separates them into two categories, which he calls "Red_1" and "Red_2". But, these labels are mis-leading, he says. Red_1 and Red_2 do not appear to him as two nearly-identical-but-distinct shades of red. To Fred, these two shades are radically different—as different as yellow and blue are to us. Scientists investigate Fred's sight. They discover that the cones in Fred's eyes respond differently to red light, and that the color-discrimination is capable of a wider range of activity, etc. They do, in fact, end up with a COMPLETE physical description of exactly what goes on in Fred when he sees both Red_1 and Red_2. Still, they wonder, what do Red_1 and Red_2 LOOK like to Fred?

In this example, Fred is clearly seeing some color that the rest of us do not see. Physicalism states that the world is entirely physical, and that physical information is the only kind there is. Physical facts are the only kinds of facts there are to know. Jackson argues, however, that even if scientists knew ALL of the physical facts about Fred—indeed, even if they knew all of the physical facts in the entire UNIVERSE—they would still LACK some knowledge; namely, they would not know what it FEELS like when Fred sees Red_1 and Red_2. In other words, they would lack knowledge about Fred's *qualia*.

If scientists somehow discovered how to duplicate Fred's physical state in the eyes and brains of others, the recipient of this procedure would say beforehand, "At last I will know what it is like to see the extra color!" Jackson concludes that there is more information than merely physical information. A complete set of physical information leaves something out. Therefore, Physicalism must be false.

3. What Mary Didn't Know: Consider a second example:

> **Mary** Mary is a neuroscientist who has always been kept in a black-and-white room, and interacts with the world via a black-and-white monitor. In this room, she has studied neuroscience all of her life, and now possesses complete physical knowledge of colors in objects, how the eye perceives color, how the brain processes colors, etc. One day, Mary is allowed to go outside for the first time, into the colorful world.

When Mary goes outside, **does she learn something new?** It seems like she DOES. Even though she knew ALL of the PHYSICAL aspects of the perception of color, she still didn't know one thing: Namely, she didn't know WHAT IT IS LIKE to experience colors.

Again, it seems that there is more information in the world than the physical information. Therefore, Physicalism is false. An argument for this is as follows:

1. If Physicalism were true (i.e., if all facts were physical facts), then a complete set of all the physical facts about redness would include a fact about what it FEELS like to see redness.
2. Mary knows every physical fact about redness.
3. However, Mary does not know what it FEELS like to see redness.
4. Therefore, Physicalism is false.

4. Property Dualism: So, what is the correct view? Answer: **Property Dualism**. This is the view that, while there is only one kind of SUBSTANCE (namely, physical/material), matter can have two distinct kinds of PROPERTIES (namely, physical and mental). (*Excellent video here.*)

As David Chalmers notes, this is not so weird. For instance, in the 17th century, it was thought that things like magnetism and gravity were reducible to the motions of atoms. But, we later realized that this was not a sufficient explanation of these phenomena, and that we had to introduce (electro)magnetic and gravitational "forces" into our physics—and that these were *fundamental*, that is, not reducible to anything else. Property dualism is merely the view that physics is presently STILL incomplete, since a complete physics still leaves something out—namely, the nature of conscious experience.

5. Objection: One might object by positing that there are really TWO distinct classes of physical facts: Theoretical and experiential. For instance, having complete theoretical knowledge of how to play the guitar does not mean having the ability to actually PLAY the guitar. That would require EXPERIENTIAL knowledge, not THEORETICAL knowledge. But, surely the ability to play the guitar can be explained merely in terms of physical facts. But, then, perhaps knowledge of qualia ALSO requires experiential knowledge, not theoretical knowledge. In short, the physicalist might maintain that all facts are physical facts, but that physical facts come in two varieties (theoretical and experiential).

In that case, as described, Mary does NOT have complete knowledge (i.e., P2 is false). So, she DOES learn something new when she sees color for the first time. However, this does not entail that physicalism is false. For, her new knowledge is just a different KIND of physical knowledge—namely, experiential rather than theoretical, or linguistic.

Alternatively, perhaps P3 is false. If Mary really has COMPLETE knowledge of color from her black and white room, she will NOT learn something new when she sees red for the first time. (For instance, perhaps her knowledge enables her to conjure up the sensation of redness in her imagination BEFORE she is ever exposed to a colorful object!)

(*Who is right? What do you think?*)