Against the Reduction of Qualia to Indexicality

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1.1 Introduction of Qualia

The first philosophical notion that caught and held my full interest was that of qualia. I became enthralled by the subject from my first exposure to it in Thomas Nagel’s “What is it Like to be a Bat?” This article by Nagel argues against many physicalist reductions which attempt to explain away conscious experience. This conscious experience, or qualia, is the “what is it like” of experience.

“[F]undamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is to be that organism—something it is like for the organism. We may call this the subjective character of experience” (436). I will spend much more time on Nagel’s work later in this paper, but for now it would do to discuss qualia in terms which are more easily understood.

As humans we have a level of consciousness unlike any organism we know of. We are not only self aware, but we have the capacity to reflect on our experiences. “What is it Like to be a Bat” focuses heavily on this idea. “To the extent that I could look and behave like a wasp or a bat without changing my fundamental structure, my experiences would not be anything like the experiences of those animals. On the other hand, it is doubtful that any meaning can be attached to the supposition that I should possess the internal neurophysiological constitution of a bat. Even if I could by gradual degrees be transformed into a bat, nothing in my present constitution enables me to imagine what the experiences of such a future stage of myself thus metamorphosed would be like” (439). This is a dense and complicated quote that I will unpack in plainer terms.
An early inclination is to think that imagining what it’s like to be a bat isn’t that difficult. One must only imagine such traits as navigation by SONAR rather than by sight, sleeping upside down rather than lying flat, and the like.

Of course, on further reflection, there is no doubt that bats do not consider any of the above. While a bat is navigating using a system similar to SONAR, it has no conception of anything like that. It navigates naturally and fluidly, but never once thinks of it as anything like SONAR. SONAR is a strictly human thought, and while it is the closest approximation we have of how bats navigate, it certainly does not help us know what navigation is like for the bat. Likewise, a bat sleeps upside down, but even the phrase upside down is used relative to how we sleep, or our natural waking state. A bat does not sleep upside down, as that is simply how bats sleep. A bat who sleeps with its head above its feet would be the one sleeping upside down!

When we describe the life of a bat, or rather when we describe what it must be like to be a bat, we are instead describing what it would be like for us to be a bat. This is easy enough to imagine, but does not get at the heart of the discussion whatsoever. It is all well and good to imagine what it is like for you to be a bat but the question of “what is it like to be a bat?” remains unanswered. The point, it seems, is that any attempt to understand what it is like for the bat to be a bat fails, as we are constricted by our own points of view. We can never step away from our terminology and our experiences, and these frame our conception of the experiences of other entities.

One thing I took away from this article on my first reading is that one does not need to go as far as addressing the experiences of other species. The point also
remains when one analyzes the experience of other humans. I know what it’s like to be a human; this is not in question. The troubling question is what is it like for another person to be himself?

At some point, most people have wondered whether other humans experience color differently than they do. If a person processed red wavelengths in such a way that they experienced a shade of blue, and if they were consistent their entire lives, nobody would ever know his experience of red was so vastly different from ours. Even without going this far, the point remains. If I saw every color as a slightly deeper hue than others do, I would certainly be experiencing them differently, but they would never know, nor would I know that their experience differed from mine. This phenomenon will be my primary focus in this paper.

1.2.1 Sense and Reference

Before going much further, I think it is necessary to give some terminology that I will be using throughout this paper. For the purposes of ease, I will be sticking primarily with the terminology initiated by Gottlob Frege\(^1\) in perhaps his most important work, “On Sense and Reference.” I will outline these terms and what they mean now so as to avoid confusion later.

“Expression,” for Frege, is a catchall term that can mean almost anything. Words, grunts, sentences, names, and almost everything else that relays meaningful content are expressions. Then there are complete and incomplete expressions, the latter of which is not terribly important for my purposes. Incomplete expressions

\(^1\) Except for cases where other terms are called for, such as John Perry’s use of the word “way.” This will be made clear later in the paper.
include predicates and functions, which will not be discussed within this paper.

Complete expressions, however, are more important here.

Both proper names and complete sentences are complete expressions. Proper names and complete sentences have a sense and a reference. The sense of a complete sentence and a proper name is, more or less, what the speaker means when he says it. The reference of a proper name is an object, either physical or otherwise. I will return to this shortly. The reference of a complete sentence is a *truth value*. Thus, the sentence is made true or false depending on whether it refers to true or false.

There are some interesting issues that arise when we examine what this means. The most famous example of the proper name issue is that of Hesperus and Phosphorus. We know now that both Hesperus and Phosphorus are different names for the planet Venus, but Hesperus and Phosphorus were thought to be stars long ago, specifically the evening star (Hesperus) and the morning star (Phosphorus), named for when they could be seen. Thus, the sense of “Hesperus” is the evening star, and the sense of “Phosphorus” is the morning star. However, the reference for *both* is Venus. In this example, the sense and reference are not the same, nor do they have to be.

What is of primary importance to me is that the reference of a proper name can be an idea, as in the case of the proper name “redness,” or even, “my idea of redness.” In cases like these, it’s conceivable that a proper name can refer to a private idea, such as qualia.

Sentences can be more complicated. I have already said that the reference of a sentence is a truth value. A sentence is true or false depending on its reference. There
are, however, difficult cases. Take the sentence, “Santa Claus wears a red coat,” for example. We can grasp the sense of this sentence because we know what it’s expressing. The reference, though, is less clear. There is no Santa Claus; there is no referent to which to refer! Thus, the sentence is meaningless, and it is neither true nor false. This, of course, violates the law of noncontradiction, something that Frege did not account for.²

1.2.2 Thought

Finally, and most importantly for my purposes, Frege describes “thought” as that which the sense of a complete sentence expresses. All thoughts are expressed in senses, but not all senses which are expressed are thoughts. A sentence is true or false depending on whether its sense leads to a reference that is true or false. Truth, however, is not a part of the thought. Only by asserting the thought via the sense of an expression can one be said to have a “true thought.” Some senses, though, do not express thoughts. Imperative sentences, it seems, are among these. Frege uses the word “idea,” as well, in a specific and important manner. An idea is a part of an inner world, “a world of sense-impressions, of creations of [one’s] imagination, of sensations, of feelings and moods, a world of inclinations, [and] wishes” (Frege 1956, 299). All ideas, according to Frege, have one and only one bearer. Perhaps Frege sums up my primary argument best when he writes, “When the word ‘red’ does not state a property of things but is supposed to characterize sense-impressions belonging to my

² It is important to note that Frege was aware of the problem of sense without reference, but it does not affect his (or my) use of the terms sense, reference, or thought, thus it is not particularly important to discuss further.
consciousness, it is only applicable within the sphere of my consciousness” (Frege 1956, 299). This is an example of when the reference of a proper name (in this case, “red”) is an idea that is only presented to the speaker. Ideas are (or can be) private, inaccessible things, and qualia must be counted among them. I will return at length to this notion later in the paper.

1.2.3 McGinn on Frege

The most famous sentence in Frege’s “The Thought: A Logical Inquiry” has raised several important questions about thought, sense, and reference. Colin McGinn highlights this phrase in his book *The Subjective View* and discusses the problems it raises. Frege writes, “Now everyone is presented to himself in a special and primitive way, in which he is presented to no-one else” (Frege 1956, 298). This comes amid the discussion of a Doctor Lauben who finds he is in pain. Anybody can express this with indexical statements such as, “He is in pain,” or the like. However, Doctor Lauben has explained his pain via the essential indexical (the “I” in the sentence, “I am in pain”), and thus, according to Frege, “...[O]nly Dr. Lauben himself can grasp thoughts determined in this way” (Frege 1956, 298). It seems, then, that Frege is requiring that certain thoughts be private, namely I-statements, or the essential indexical, so called because, as John Perry explains, it is essential to the explanation of the speaker’s behavior.

This is crucial. Many of these I-statements are our only ways of expressing and understanding qualia. When I say, “There is red present,” it is a very different
statement from, “I see red.” The former allows for error whereas I believe the latter does not. I will discuss this in much greater detail later.

1.2.4 McGinn’s AE and EA Theses

McGinn disambiguates Frege’s sentence into two very different meanings. Either each individual has her own special way in which she is presented to herself, or there is one special way which all people share and are presented to themselves. McGinn refers to these two theses as the EA thesis and the AE thesis, respectively. This is due to how they appear when symbolized in formal logic. The symbol for the universal quantifier is ($\forall$), which means, “all such objects in the scope of reference.” $\forall$(red), for example, means all red objects are to be considered in the following proposition. The existential quantifier, however, is notated as ($\exists$). $\exists$(red) means there is at least one red object, and the following proposition shall apply to it. This of course does not mean that there is only one. Rather, it means that there is at least one in existence.

With this in mind, it is important to understand the difference between $\exists\forall$ and $\forall\exists$. Perhaps the easiest way to discuss the differences is through an example. $\exists(x)\forall(y)$ $L$ $xy$ is read, “There is some such person (x) such that (x) loves every (y).” In other words, there is one somebody who loves everybody. The opposite, $\forall(x)\exists(y)$ $L$ $xy$ is read, “For all people (x), (x) loves at least one (y)” Or, more clearly, everybody loves somebody. With this distinction in mind, I turn now to McGinn’s $\forall\exists$ and $\exists\forall$ theses.

Let (m) stand for the mode in which we are presented to ourselves, and let (x) stand for a person. $\exists(m)\forall(x)$ is read, “There exists some mode of presentation (m)
such that all (x)s are presented to (x) in (m), and it is not possible that any (y) is
presented with (x) in (m) if (x) and (y) are not identical.” This is the ∃∀ thesis, which
states that there is one single mode of presentation by which all people are presented
to themselves. The ∀∃ thesis, by contrast, is written ∀(x)∃(m), and means, “For all (x)
s, there is some (m) such that all (x) is presented to (x) in some (m) and it is not
possible that any (y) is presented with (x) in (m) if (x) and (y) are not identical. More
or less the opposite of the first claim, this one allows for more than one mode of
presentation by which people are presented to themselves. (McGinn 59)

These are clearly expressing two very different ideas. The first intuition is to
think that the EA thesis means that since there is only one mode of presentation, we
are all presented to each other in the same way we are presented with ourselves. Thus,
one may think that we are presented to others as we are presented to ourselves, so
there is no privacy of thought. McGinn quickly denies this, claiming that even if there
were one common mode of presentation, “[others] are indeed presented with
themselves as you are presented with yourself, but this does not of course imply that
they can be presented with you in that way” (59). This is the reason for the second half
of the ∀∃ and ∃∀ theses; (x) can be presented with (y) in any (m), but only if (x) and
(y) are the same person. (x) and (y) can be presented to themselves in the same (m),
but they cannot be presented with each other in that way. Thus, incommunicability is
not a major issue with the EA thesis, as others are not presented to you in the same
way you are presented to yourself. They are presented to themselves, but not to you, in
the same way.
The AE thesis, on the other hand, is more attractive at first glance. After all, when different people say, “I,” it denotes a different person each time. I side with the AE theorists on this subject, for reasons that will become more apparent later. I will return to this point as it pertains to my thought experiments on the subject.

2.1. Introduction of Ismael and Physicalism

I intend to heavily focus my argumentation on Jenann Ismael’s article, “Science and the Phenomenal.” Ismael supports physicalism, the view that the entire world is made up of nothing but physical things. There are no thoughts, no souls, etc. For a physicalist, everything is physical or relies (or supercedes) on the physical for its existence. Physicalism is an attractive view for many current hypotheses of science, as one primary motivation for accepting physicalism is the notion that something immaterial cannot causally affect something material. Thus, it seems the mind cannot have a causal effect on, say, bodily motion. In other words, many sciences require only physical explanations.

It should be stated here as well that a physicalist wouldn’t deny that many aspects of the world seem physical. After all, we certainly have thoughts and beliefs, and those do not seem to us to be physical. However, physicalists argue that those are necessitated by the physical. What is commonly referred to as the mind, then, is simply chemical reactions in the brain that give us our thoughts, beliefs, desires, etc. Given this, the intuitive reasons for denying physicalism, e.g. the existence of thoughts, do not seem so intuitive. In other words, it is by no means irrational to accept physicalism once the view is properly explained.
This and many other scientific and sociological beliefs may lead one to accept a physicalist view. By accepting physicalism, one avoids many deep philosophical issues, such as the mind/body problem; without a “mind,” there can be no mind/body problem. However, accepting physicalism also leads to its own set of philosophical problems.\textsuperscript{3}

Given her acceptance of physicalism, Ismael must explain qualia, or to use her words, “phenomenal qualities,” in purely physical terms. She does this via indexicality and an appeal to the physical causes of our qualia. Thus, how I conceive of qualia, as an immaterial, reflective thought about experience, will not fit into Ismael’s view. I will outline her primary arguments for her position and then attack them using a series of original thought experiments in an attempt to point out inconsistencies in the theory.

These arguments will make up the majority of my paper, as her view is in direct opposition to my own views. I find that her arguments aimed at reducing qualia to indexicality attempt to do away with a difficult problem (for physicalists) without giving qualia enough credit for being an interesting and important issue which cannot be swept under the rug so easily. I argue that qualia is an immaterial, private thing, and not something easily reduced to physicalist terms.

\textbf{2.1.2 Introduction of Perry and Indexicality}

I will also be critiquing John Perry’s “The Problem of the Essential Indexical.” Indexicality will play a critical role throughout my thesis, as it will be the vehicle which Ismael uses to explain qualia in physicalist terms. An indexical is perhaps best

\textsuperscript{3} Which is not to say that dualistic views do not have their own problems, including the mind/body problem mentioned above.
described as a context-sensitive expression. Indexicality is in itself a fascinating topic, particularly the *essential indexical*, as Perry calls it. Essential indexicals are used when a person refers to himself with “I” in order to explain the behavior of the speaker, thus why it is called essential. I will return to this shortly.

The interesting problem arises when we use the essential indexical: sentences such as, “I am in pain.” Perry is primarily interested in how indexicality can be used to explain behavior. “When we replace [I] with other designations of me, we no longer have an explanation of my behaviour and so, it seems, no longer an attribution of the same belief” (Perry 167). At first this doesn’t seem to be true. When I say, “I am in pain,” the first intuition is to claim that I could just as easily have said, “Patrick Stealey is in pain,” which would explain my behavior of reaching for the painkillers. However, this would not explain any part of my behavior unless I also believed myself to be Patrick Stealey. The only way to explain my actions while substituting “I” for “Patrick Stealey,” is to instead say, “Patrick Stealey is in pain, and I believe that I am Patrick Stealey.” Without this additional phrase, there would be no reason for me to reach for the painkillers.

This is Perry’s point. When I say, “He is in pain,” it does not explain my behavior. When I say, “Patrick Stealey is in pain,” it likewise does not explain my behavior. Despite that I am referred to by “Patrick Stealey,” and depending on the context, “he” or “you,” my behavior cannot be explained without the further belief that, “I believe I am ‘Patrick Stealey’ or ‘he’” or the like. One cannot eliminate the essential indexical entirely and still preserve the explanation of behavior; the belief
that a designation refers to the same thing as, “I” is necessary to preserve the explanation of my behavior. So, it seems any attempt to swap designations to eliminate the essential indexical fails.

2.1.3 Defense of the AE Thesis

This is one way I would defend the AE thesis, as described by McGinn above. When McGinn defends his acceptance of the EA thesis, he uses other indexicals to do so. We have the same idea of words such as “here, there, now, tomorrow,” and others, so why are “I, you, he,” etc. different? That is to say there is nothing barring speakers of the language from expressing the same thought as others with sentences like, “Today is Tuesday,” and, “Yesterday was Tuesday.” These are not examples of the essential indexical; it seems that we can all understand “here” and “now” in the same way. Sentences involving “I” are trickier, as they depend heavily on the attitude of the speaker, whereas the others do not. I can’t get past the notion that we all have access to indexicals involving time or location, provided we are familiar with the language and the meaning of words such as “yesterday.” I know what “I” means, but I do not know precisely the states another person is in when he says it in a sentence. In due time, I will discuss this intuition in length. Now I would like to focus on the foundation of my arguments.

2.2. Ismael’s Views on Qualia

Ismael argues that phenomenal properties are nothing more than the subject’s having the “conscious-of” relation to a psychological property. Phenomenal properties are, in essence, qualia, where a psychological property is what leads to the behavior
caused by a certain stimulus. The psychological property involved with putting one’s hand on a stove is pain; this pain explains the reaction of removing the hand from the stove. The phenomenal property, however, is the *experience of that pain*. It is the “what is it like” of pain. Ismael argues that when we experience phenomenal properties, it is no more than becoming conscious of the accompanying psychological properties. She writes, “Experiencing a salty taste is the very same thing as having a high level of activation in the salty receptor of my tongue and being in pain is the very same thing as having firing c-fibers” (351). It is not a point of controversy that part of this is true; a bearer of a “qualitative feel,” to use Ismael’s terms, must be conscious of them. I cannot reflect on my experience of pain unless I know that I am in pain. This requires some short explanation. The relation between the bearer and the qualia is consciousness. According to Ismael, to be in pain *is* to be conscious that one’s c-fibers are firing. There is nothing else involved; we have no mysterious, immaterial thing such as qualia that imparts this experience. Nothing but the conscious-of relation between us and the stimuli in the physical world accounts for these phenomenal qualities. I intend to argue that this is not the entire story.

It is important to remember that Ismael’s physicalism is at stake here. If she cannot find a way to explain qualia in a way consistent with physicalism, she must abandon it altogether. After all, a physicalist must be able to say that *everything* in the world is, or supercedes on, the physical. This is perhaps the crucial point of my thesis. I intend to argue that qualia *cannot* be explained in purely physicalist terms. While it is
not my intention to refute physicalism in this paper, that is an unintended side effect; physicalism is entirely incompatible with the conclusions reached within my thesis.

2.2.2 Ismael’s Map Analogy and Discussion of Indexicality

The primary analogy used is that of being “here” on a map versus being at coordinate (c, b). For Ismael, being “here” is the same as being “at (c, b)” in the same way that being in pain is the same thing as having firing c-fibers (providing, of course, that, “here” corresponds to the coordinate (c, b)). The “hereness” for the speaker is analogous to the phenomenal qualities one experiences, and the coordinate (c, b) or whatever it may be is analogous to the physical cause of that experience. When I experience redness from looking at a ripe apple, I am becoming conscious-of red wavelengths being perceived by my retina. This is the same principle as when I find that being, “here,” is precisely the same thing as being at 16 South Congress Street.

After several readings of Ismael, I first wish to try to clarify “here.” When Ismael states that a person finds he is “here,” is he pointing at a spot on the map, or is he referring to his immediate surroundings, as I am when I say I am here in my living room? In other words, is, “here” a reference to an ostended area on a map, for example, or is it used indexically? It may seem an unimportant distinction, but the first argument I would like to put forth hinges on this point. Ismael addresses this point by stating, “this corner table is here for me; the ground under your feet is here for you; his seat on Mount Olympus is here for Zeus” (363). Thus it appears that Ismael is using “here” indexically. “Here,” then, simply means the area of one’s immediate surroundings. In other words, the context of an indexical statement, (the utterer, the
time and location of the utterance, etc) determines its meaning. I will explain why this is important shortly.

### 2.3.1 Argument from Indexical Usage of “Here.”

Late in the paper, Ismael makes the point that, “[k]nowing that I am in pain does not settle the question of whether my c-fibers are firing, and knowing that my c-fibers are firing does not settle the question of whether I am in pain” (362). The previously mentioned analogy is then carried through to this claim, and is stated as, “[k]nowing that I am here does not settle the question of whether I am at (c, b), and knowing that I am at (c, b) does not settle whether I am here” (363).

This is why the way we define “here” is important: if we were to state that “here” refers to a point on a map that the speaker points out, then Ismael’s claim seems to be correct, and perhaps uncontroversial. For example, if I were to be told that, “here” for me is 16 South Congress Street, Athens, Ohio, I would believe that that particular address were the coordinates which I currently occupy. This would not settle the question of whether I know that those coordinates represent my immediate surroundings. I could, in fact, be at 22 South Congress, believing it to be 16. In this way, Ismael is right. “Hereness” with this meaning does not immediately settle the spatial location one occupies, in the same way that being in pain does not settle the question of whether my c-fibers are firing.

However if we use, “here” in the indexical sense, it seems to me that the problem becomes muddled. The indexical usage of the word “here” would be dependent on the location of the speaker. When I say, “I am here,” I am using “here”
indexically to refer to my immediate surroundings, and not in reference to a coordinate on a map. Using the word in this sense, saying, “I am here” certainly does not give me any information about whether I am at \((c, b)\).

2.3.2 First Argument Against Ismael’s Connection Between Location and Qualia

In the same way, when I say, “I am in pain,” I have no idea whether my c-fibers are firing. While pain is caused by c-fibers firing, pain can certainly occur without the firing of these c-fibers, like the case of phantom limb pain. Simply knowing that there is pain and that I am experiencing it gives no information regarding the firing of my c-fibers. The same is true for the opposite case; simply because my c-fibers are firing does not mean I am experiencing pain, like the case of anesthesia, for example. However, if I say, “I am at \((c, b)\),” there is no question as to whether or not I am here. I could be at any point on the map whatsoever and still know I am here, because indexically, “here” simply means, “the area that I occupy.” Given the indexical version of the word “here,” I could never not be here.\(^4\) This, I feel, is the main issue with this particular argument made by Ismael. Comparing the experience and physiological causes of pain with “here-ness” and coordinates on a map does not seem plausible in this case. When I say, “my c-fibers are firing”, I am not necessarily in pain. When I say “I am at \((c, b)\),” I am necessarily here, as I could never not be. Regardless of where I am, I am always here. As stated before, the context of indexical

\(^4\) Technically this is not true. There are thought experiments put forward by thinkers who argue that it is possible to say, “I am not here,” truthfully. However, these are not aimed at arguments such as mine, and so they are not terribly important to discuss further.
statements determines their meaning. Thus, when one says, “here,” they mean precisely the location of the utterance.

Perhaps I am confusing the issue, and it may be helpful to imagine a scenario involving a person in a state park looking at a map planted in the ground. There is a star on the map and a caption reading, “You are here.” Granted, this case is a bit different as the meaning of “here” is dependent on the location of the recipient of the utterance rather than the location of the utterer, but the point remains, at least in this analogy. When viewing the map, the man can easily discover what coordinate his current location corresponds to; he can connect “here” with a particular point, thanks to the star on the map that informs him of his location. However, imagine it had rained two days before and the glass protecting the map became wet, thereby making the sticker slide four inches down. Now the reader is getting false information about being “here.” He is incorrectly connecting his present location with the wrong coordinates. He now believes that, “here,” or his immediate surroundings, match up with a coordinate that they do not in fact correspond to. It can now be said that he is incorrectly locating himself. This is not controversial. I bring up this point to argue against Ismael’s analogy.

Can somebody incorrectly experience phenomenal qualities? When a person is in pain, can it ever be said that that person is wrong? I’m reminded of an anecdote told to me by a professor who went to the dentist because of a toothache. He and the dentist came to find out that the professor had already undergone a root canal on that tooth; there was no nerve in the tooth anymore. Thus, the dentist explained, “You are
not in pain.” The professor was confused; he very clearly was! C-fiber firings were not occurring, yet the professor claimed he was in pain. The question is, was he wrong? Are phantom limb sufferers wrong when they tell their physician they are in pain? Certainly, there are no c-fiber firings occurring, yet there is pain.

2.3.3 Second Argument Against Ismael’s Connection Between Location and Qualia

A more accessible way to argue for this may be the use of perception of color. Differences are certain to exist from one person to the next, but is it right to say that a person with mild colorblindness is incorrectly experiencing wavelengths? This is a point that is extremely important to my argumentation, but quite difficult to clearly articulate.

One interesting case is a person with colorblindness who experiences colors as different shades of grey. She is able to differentiate between all colors but does not see them (at least not like we see them). Instead, she is presented with shades of grey that, for her, correspond to colors. If this person and another person with fully functioning eyesight were both shown red, they would both know it was red, yet we would have no temptation to say their experiences of red are the same. They are both being shown the same red object, and they would both claim they were experiencing redness.

Here is why this case is particularly interesting and difficult: We know that one of these people has fully functioning vision, while the other is only able to differentiate between colors by the shade of grey she sees. So again, while they both would say, “The object is red,” only one would actually be experiencing redness. The
other would be experiencing what I will refer to as “redness.” The quotation marks used here are extremely important. I use the term “redness” in quotes because that particular shade of grey is red for the colorblind person, even though it is not red. However, this is clearly not the case for the person with perfect vision: red is red for that person! If we think about this through the lens of Ismael’s map analogy, both people would be located at the same coordinates, and while they would both think “here” is the same place, it seems unlikely that it would be. Their experiences are not similar.

2.3.5 Conclusions Drawn from Arguments Connecting Qualia and Location

In the case of the map in the state park with the misplaced, “You are here” sticker, we may say that a person is incorrectly interpreting his location given his coordinates. When attempting to carry this analogy through, we are left with two options, both of which seem improbable. Either we are to say that the colorblind person is incorrectly experiencing red, even though that particular shade of grey is, and has always been red for her. She has experienced that shade as red all her life. She sees it on a stoplight at night and knows to stop. She gives true reports as to her experiences, and they align with all instances she encounters red. It is hard to say she is incorrect, but clearly she also is not having the same experience as the other person. Thus she would locate herself in a different spot from a person with fully functioning eyesight.

To discuss this with Ismael’s map analogy, we would have two people at the same coordinates who locate themselves at different spots. My roommate and I both
know we are at (c, b). But he is convinced that (c, b) corresponds to the store down on the corner, while I am (correctly) convinced that (c, b) corresponds to my living room. This is the first apparent reason that this analogy is somewhat confused. We can easily conceive of a person incorrectly locating himself. It is obvious that this can happen, and in fact, it often does. The less intuitive notion is that a person can incorrectly experience a stimulus. One side of the analogy makes perfect sense. It’s intuitively true that my roommate could locate himself incorrectly. It’s not intuitive in the least that he could experience qualia incorrectly. Even without examining any examples, the fact that one is obvious while the other is not may itself be a problem for the analogy. I will return to this point at length later in the paper.

The other option is that we must instead claim that, since they are both experiencing red, they would locate themselves at the same spot, even though their experiences are vastly different. It’s hard for me to imagine an example of this. Two people are alongside each other in a forest and they arrive at a lake. One person sees the lake as being a beautiful deep blue pool ringed by trees. The other person sees it as a murky brown hue, with dead fish floating on top, surrounded by dying vegetation on all sides. They wonder whether they are at Lake X, and they both recall that Lake X is described as a beautiful blue color surrounded by trees on all sides. However, they both agree that this must be Lake X, even though one person does not experience it in the way it is described. While slightly confusing, this is the closest example I can imagine to the above problem; two people have vastly different experiences of their surroundings, yet locate themselves at the same spot, which simply does not seem
right. If Ismael’s analogy is correct, there should be no reason to think that one person in this example is wrong, although there is no temptation to say they are both correct, unlike the case of two people experiencing red differently.

### 2.4 Differences Between Location and Qualia

This example highlights a crucial difference between thought experiments regarding location and thought experiments regarding the experience of qualia. While writing the example of the two men hiking in the woods, it occurred to me that at any point one of them could simply say, “You’re wrong. Lake X is deep blue and surrounded by trees on all sides.” The descriptions of physical space are communicable and their features are observable to anyone present. This is not the case with redness, or pain, or the like. Any attempt to describe pain usually begins and ends with, “it hurts.” Of course, we have descriptions of pain that help explain how it feels, but all of these rely on the listener already being familiar with what pain feels like. Saying, “I have a burning pain in my stomach,” to a person who has never felt pain is useless. The same goes for descriptions of colors. If we imagine that the colorblind person had spent her whole life believing that the shade of grey she sees when she encounters something that is actually red is red, and nobody ever told her that she was colorblind, she would believe that she had fully functioning vision. She would believe that everyone sees that shade of grey when a firetruck passes by or when the traffic light changes. Thus, if she were shown a red object in the same room as me, for example, we would both say, “That object is red,” and we would both be giving a true report of our experience. We are giving true reports that link our
experiences to reality. I would be seeing what a typical adult sees when shown something red (i.e., redness) and she would be seeing grey; however, she would also think I were experiencing precisely what she was experiencing, and I would think the same of her. We would never know, as our experiences of red are not communicable. When asked what red looks like, all one can say is, “it is red.” Again, we have different shades, or we could describe it as a deep red, or a rich red, but to someone without the experience of seeing red, these descriptions are entirely unhelpful. Unlike this example, if I were at Lake X alongside somebody who believed Lake X to be brown and odorous, I could say, “You are wrong. Lake X is blue and fresh-smelling.” One cannot do this with qualia, and so there is some disconnect in Ismael’s analogy. There is a way to cross-reference the experience of the descriptions of locations, but not the experience of qualia.

2.5 The Map Analogy and Synesthesia

The case of synesthesia provides a more challenging case for this analogy. A synesthetically inclined person’s senses are “crossed” to the extent that many of them hear color or taste music, for example. Obviously, the vast majority of people are not synesthetic, as if they were, the literature on qualia would be very different. However it is still a phenomenon that is difficult to explain, particularly in terms of an analogy such as Ismael’s. I cannot taste color, or see sounds, or anything like that. My perceptual capacities function “normally,” that is to say, like most other people’s. The very notion of tasting a color is entirely alien to me; no amount of pondering or imagining brings
me any closer to understanding what it would be like to do so. However, a class of
people can.

With this information, would we have to say there are certain locations that are
inaccessible to all but an exceptionally small minority? This shows another disconnect
in the analogy; the majority of people will never have a synesthetic experience. Thus,
there must be analogous spacial locations in which the majority of people can never be
located. How can this be? There are no such limitations on where humanity can and
can’t go. In principle, any place that one person can be located, all people can be
located. This is not the case with perception and qualia, at least certainly not with
synesthetics. One cannot “learn” to become synesthetic, but there is no analogous case
regarding physical location. We can, in theory, arrive anywhere on the planet given
enough time and effort. No amount of either will allow a non-synesthetic person to
have the experiences that the synesthetic person has. Again, we have no way to
properly discuss this example using the analogy of location, yet clearly, synesthesia is
a phenomenon that produces a very special kind of qualia. It cannot be ignored, nor
can it be explained by Ismael. Clearly, something is missing.

2.6.1 Against The Possibility of Incorrectly Experiencing Qualia

A person can locate himself incorrectly. There are countless examples, and no
need to go into them here. The core question is can a person similarly incorrectly
experience a sensation? Even if someone is shown a blue piece of paper through a lens
that fragments the wavelength in such a way as to make it appear red, he is still
experiencing redness. If he were to say, “That piece of paper is red,” he would be
wrong. However, if he instead said, “I am experiencing redness,” he would be correct. I think even misinterpreting sense data as such does not mean one is experiencing something “incorrectly.” A man in a desert who hallucinates an oasis is experiencing the sight of an oasis, even though there is not one there. He is sure that he sees it, even though he may know it to be a mirage. I think there is only experiencing something and not experiencing something, with nothing in between. This does not leave room for the possibility of locating oneself at the wrong spot, or analogously experiencing something “incorrectly.”

2.6.1.2 Russell on Incorrectly Experiencing Qualia

Russell writes about this notion in “Problems of Philosophy” in his discussions regarding the differences between what we know and what we are acquainted with. We are acquainted with the sense-data we are presented with, but we do not know it. Russell writes, “[W]e may draw wrong inferences from our acquaintance, but the acquaintance itself cannot be deceptive. Thus there is no dualism as regards acquaintance” (1959, 86). I think it is important to note Russell agrees with me that one can misinterpret sense-data (such as the man in the desert), but cannot be incorrect in his experience of it.

2.6.2 Possible Objections to the Incorrectly Experiencing Argument

A possible objection to my arguments above may consist of the notion that a person incorrectly experiences something when he links it to the wrong cause. We link pain with the firing of c-fibers. To incorrectly experience something would be to link pain to another physical stimulus, for example. It could also be said that a person who
incorrectly locates himself is actually saying, “It seems to me that ‘here’ is (c, b). This
statement, it seems, cannot be false, as this is precisely what it is to be lost: believing
that one’s location matches up with a coordinate that it indeed does not correspond to.
Another way of thinking about this is with the aforementioned man lost in the desert.
“There is an oasis” is false, but, “It seems to [him] that there is an oasis” is true,
assuming he is giving a true report of an oasis.

2.6.3 Refutation of Objection to the Incorrectly Experiencing Argument

This objection may account for people who think “here” is (c, b) when it is not.
If I think my pain is caused by fluid sacs expanding in my skin, as in the case of
Lewis’ martian from “Mad Pain and Martian Pain,” then one may claim I am
experiencing pain incorrectly. However, there is a fundamental problem with this
objection; my pain could never be caused by that. Barring the above cases of phantom
limb pain and other anomalies, my pain must always be caused by the firing of c-
fibers. I bring this point up because this does not translate over through Ismael’s
analogy. “Here,” for me right now is not my home address, but it could be, if I drove
d there. The main difference is that in the above case of pain, no set of circumstances
could be achieved where the experience and the cause (the expansion of fluid sacs)
match up. In the example of location, I can make it so “here” and the coordinate are
the same place.

I am not convinced the objection even approaches the question regarding the
colorblind person. Clearly she is not experiencing the same phenomenal qualities as
the person with perfect vision, even if they are both experiencing redness (or what
redness is for those particular people). I think we still have the issue of two people being given the same stimulus but experiencing different phenomenal qualities. While they may locate themselves side by side, it doesn’t seem right that they would do so. The colorblind woman is not confusing what is causing her experience of red with the wrong stimulus; in fact, she is entirely correct. Only things that are red give her the experience of that particular shade of grey, so she is experiencing her “version” of redness correctly.

As for the “it seems to me” problem, I think it is complicating the issue unnecessarily, or at least adding information where it doesn’t deserve to be added to salvage the analogy. While it can certainly be said that, “it seems to me that I am experiencing red,” it is not necessary to make the same point that, “it seems to me that, ‘here’ is (c, b)” makes. Adding “it seems to me” to statements about spacial location makes it so a person can justifiably believe that he is correct when he attempts to locate himself. However it does not address the problem stated. He may believe he is correct when he locates himself, but he isn’t. In the other case, when a person says “it seems to me I am experiencing pain,” I think it is precisely the same statement as “I am experiencing pain.” One cannot be experiencing pain without it seeming to him that he is in pain. If I am conscious of my pain, then it seems to me that I am experiencing it. If I am not conscious of it, I am not experiencing pain. Note that this does not mean my c-fibers aren’t firing, rather that I am not having the psychological sensation associated with pain. However, “Here is (c, b),” and, “It seems to me that, ‘here,’ is (c, b)” may not be expressing the same information. Again, I argue that it is
not possible to incorrectly experience pain in the way that one can (clearly) incorrectly locate himself.

3.1 The Dispositional Thesis

Another interesting problem arises when we look at this issue with a Lockean perspective and it may be beneficial to do so here. Locke argued for an object having primary and secondary properties. The secondary properties of an object are those that impart sensory experience on the perceiver and are things like taste, color, and smell. McGinn discusses these qualities at length in *The Subjective View*, and perhaps a good way to easily distinguish primary from secondary qualities are that secondary qualities are indeed subjective while primary qualities (such as shape, weight, and the like) are objective or even measurable. An object’s roundness is not dependent on the perceiver while an object’s redness is. There is no objective standard for redness while there is, for example, an objective way to measure the roundness of an object.

Now, this subjectivity poses many problems for Ismael’s analogy. Because of the objectivity of primary properties in Locke’s view (hereby referred to as the dispositional thesis, to stick with terminology used by McGinn), a person cannot be mistaken about an object’s shape, weight, size, etc, as there are standards by which we measure these things. In other words, the weight of an object, for example, is not dependent on any perceiver. Secondary properties differ from primary properties in this way. There is no objective standard by which we can measure secondary properties, yet we still can truthfully say something is red. This is, in short, the dispositional thesis. “The essential point is that, according to the dispositional thesis,
the ultimate criterion for whether an object has a certain colour or taste (etc.) is how it looks and tastes to perceivers; whereas this is not how we think of qualities like shape and size” (McGinn 8).

Nagel would claim that these properties are purely subjective because our perceptions of them are forever linked to our previous experiences, i.e. our previous perceptions of that particular secondary property. This is why the question of what it’s like to be a bat is such an interesting one. We cannot remove our own experiences from our perception of the world. McGinn says of this Nagel-esque subjectivity that, “Secondary qualities are thus subjective in the way sensations are, even though they are ascribable to external things” (9).

We experience the world through our perceptions, not as science describes it. “The scientific image is not an *image* at all” (McGinn 111). We lack the capacities to see the world completely objectively, and instead we perceive it in a subjective manner. It is impossible to see the world as science describes it (i.e. only in primary qualities). Elementary particles, for example, are colorless, yet we still see the world in color.\(^5\) Because of the nature of our physiology, we rely on a subjective perception of the world and it alters our experience of it. Much like what it’s like to be a bat, this subjectivity implies that there is a “what it is like” for every human. Each of us has an experience of colors, for example, that is unique to ourselves as it is framed by our experience. “...perception is *necessarily* relative in its representational

\(^5\) This is a point McGinn is very careful about stating. Elementary particles are too small to absorb and reflect light. Technically, they are invisible. Of course this does not mean that the objects they make up should be in any way invisible. It is simply that we cannot perceive them, not that we *could not ever* perceive them. Their colorlessness is contingent, not necessary.
content” (McGinn 112). Perhaps this is so intriguing because, scientifically, objects do not have color. Color is purely a secondary property that only exists when being observed by a perceiver. This disconnect between the scientific world and how we perceive the world is problematic. What we perceive is at odds with what science tells us is the actual state of affairs; but this returns to my previous point. We are certainly seeing something red, whether it is “actually” red or not. Knowing that, according to science, it (or anything, for that matter) is not red does not change the fact that what we are perceiving is red. We are having an experience that we feel whenever we see red, and that is undoubtedly true. This makes the previous discussion about the possibility of experiencing something incorrectly a bit more interesting; what if nothing we experience is as it actually is? Should we claim that we never experience anything “correctly?” This shows the importance of designating a normalized stance, as scientifically, no object is red. There is absolutely no objective standard for red, yet we know what it looks like.

3.1.2 Russell and Secondary Properties

Russell contends that most sense-data originates from physical matter, and I do agree with him on this point. However, he is also careful to point out that different perceivers will experience objects differently, which is not accounted for by the wave-motion of light. Likewise, a claim is also made about blindness and qualia. The argument is made that our experience of light is something which we all know if we are not blind, though we cannot describe it so as to convey our knowledge to a man who is blind. A wave-motion, on the contrary, could quite well be described to a blind man, since he can acquire a knowledge of space by the sense of touch; and he can experience a wave motion by a sea voyage almost as well as we can. But this, which a
blind man can understand, is not what we mean by light: we mean by light just that which a blind man can never understand, and which we can never describe to him. (Russell 1959, 18)

This is, more or less, my central thesis. Experience of light and color qualia is not communicable to those without access to them. It is interesting to note that this notion lead to the central thesis of Nagel’s “What is it Like to be a Bat?”

3.1.3 Relativity of Secondary Properties

The problem for the analogy arises when we discuss the relativity of these secondary properties. Because they are dependent on the experience of the perceiver, two people could look at an object and ascribe a different color to it. McGinn uses the example of a martian who sees (what we see as) red as being green, and this example will do here. The secondary quality of redness held by this object is ascribed to it by one perceiver but not the other. If this view is to be accepted, both the martian and the human are correct; the object is both green and red. The pairing of these contrary properties in a single object seems absurd, but there are countless examples where even contradictory properties are ascribed to the same thing by different people, such as the case of a certain kind of wine. One critic may say, “This is good wine,” while another critic may say, “This is not good wine.” Neither of these critics are wrong, so why must the man or the martian be incorrect?

If this can be the case, then the same stimulus can cause different qualia from person to person, and thus the analogy fails again. The two wine critics are drinking the same wine but reacting very differently to it, and thus, it seems, would locate themselves at different places. Using the dispositional thesis to analyze the problem is
interesting in that there is no argument that somebody can experience red incorrectly, as there is absolutely no objective standard of red. “Colours, for example, are not to be identified with wavelengths of the spectrum. This is simply because the dispositional thesis defines colours in terms of sensory appearances, and so we cannot envisage a case in which the identity of a given colour comes apart from its appearance” (McGinn 13). In essence, an object is red if its perceivers both know what red looks like, and the object appears red to them. If they perceive an object as being a particular color, it is that color in an even more absolute sense than I’ve been arguing for. Note that this inconsistency is only possible in secondary qualities. An object can seem to two different observers to possess contrary primary qualities, but it can never be said that they are both correct. If one person sees an object as square and one sees it as round, one of them must be incorrect, for if they were both correct there would be a logical contradiction. A thing’s being both red and green entails no such contradiction, especially if, as the dispositional thesis requires, we ascribe these properties through experience. Furthermore, if two people have differing ideas about the primary qualities of an object, the dispute could easily be settled by a measurement; we have methods by which we can prove if an object is square or not. There are no such methods to determine an object’s color.

3.1.4 Possible Objections to the Dispositional Thesis

An objection to the dispositional thesis may consist of arguing that certain secondary qualities are indeed measurable just as primary qualities are. Wavelengths help us determine what color an object is, and in fact, I use wavelengths to discuss
color in this paper. However, even with talk of wavelengths, there is no method by which we can determine what color a specific wavelength is other than by looking at it. Since the majority of humans have observed certain wavelengths to correspond with certain colors, it has become the standard. The “normal” human sees wavelength x as red.

### 3.1.4.2 Answer to this Objection to the Dispositional Thesis

This is not, however, any closer to objectivity than we were before the introduction of wavelengths into the discussion. Now there is a scale, but the scale depends on the “normal” perceiver’s perception. Had our eyes evolved differently, it’s conceivable that the wavelength spectrum would be inverted. It just so happens that it is not. Certain wavelengths correspond with certain colors, but this is still dependent on the viewer of the stimulus. On a separate point, consider that there are no yellow pixels on a computer screen; there are no yellow wavelengths being shown to me when I see a picture of a lemon on my screen. Yet it is still yellow despite the absence of any yellow wavelengths, so clearly they need not be counted as a possibility for an entirely objective standard for color. In certain cases such as the yellow being produced on a screen, there are no corresponding wavelengths being shown.

Regardless of whether we accept the dispositional thesis and all of the baggage that comes with it (such as the pure objectivity of primary qualities and the pure subjectivity of secondary qualities, along with the existence of primary and secondary qualities to begin with), it is clear that something like the thesis holds. There are certainly properties of objects that are subjective, such as taste, or at least, the
preference of certain tastes over another. The weight of an object is measurable and objective. It makes no sense for us to imagine that a person who thinks a brick weighs five pounds and a person who thinks the same brick weighs eight pounds are both correct. We can measure precisely how much the brick weighs, but we can not measure precisely how red the brick is, for example. There are properties that can only be discussed through the lens of the experience of the perceivers, and because of this, they are subjective. The “what is it like” of qualia is a powerful example of this, and it seems to follow that the qualia associated with certain experiences is likewise subjective.

3.2 The Dispositional Thesis and the Map Analogy

This subjectivity is an integral part of my argument. The major issue with the analogy of locating oneself versus experiencing qualia is that in the former case, there is a matter of fact. When one says, “Here is (c, b)” he is right or wrong. Either his location matches the coordinates or it does not, and that is certain. He is either x number of miles away from city Y or he is not. Much like the primary qualities in my previous discussion, there are systems of measurement we use to discern location, and these systems are objective. When the same person says, “I am experiencing red,” he can certainly be right, but whether he can be wrong is in question.6 I think that the mere fact that I am spending time here discussing whether he can be wrong is a blow to Ismael’s analogy. One can clearly be wrong about his location, and while it is, I

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6 Again, I even argue that he is always right. If I am correct, the disconnect between location and qualia is vast.
suppose, conceivable that a person can be wrong about his experience of certain qualia, it is certainly not obvious that this is the case.

3.3 Argument for Subjectivity of Qualia and Against a Single Mode of Presentation

Perhaps this may be an appropriate time to reexamine some of McGinn’s arguments within *The Subjective View*. McGinn favors the EA thesis, or the claim that there is one mode of presentation by which we are all presented to ourselves. I think that cases such as colorblindness show that there is not simply one way in which we are all presented to ourselves. If this were the case, there should not be any major difference between one person’s perception of color and another’s, though these differences clearly exist. This may be a result of different physical faculties between humans. Perhaps it is unfair to use an example where two people do not have equal physical capacity to perceive the world.

All things being equal, however, it is conceivable that two people experience pain differently. We do not need such a radical difference such as colorblindness to argue that there are countless modes of presentation. For example, there’s nothing physiologically different about a person whose c-fibers fire, yet still reacts differently to painful stimuli. If whenever he stubbed his toe he had a tickling sensation rather than a more typical sensation of pain, and this sensation was caused by the firing of his c-fibers, we would not be tempted to say that *his* pain is like ours, nor would we be tempted to say that we can *understand* his pain, assuming we know his experiences to
be different. This is certainly not the way we are presented to ourselves, so doesn’t that require that many modes of presentation exist?

Imagine we could be presented to this person in the way he is presented to himself. Pain, for him, is and always has been a sensation closer to our sensation when we are tickled. This sentence alone is enough to show that he is presented with himself in a different manner than we are with ourselves! He feels pain, but his pain is truly nothing like ours. This is certainly an extreme case, but it illustrates the point well. It is conceivable that people’s experience of pain varies dramatically. If there were only one mode of presentation, shouldn’t we all experience qualia in roughly the same way? Or at the very least, shouldn’t pain be painful to everybody? Yet it’s possible that this isn’t true. What accounts for differences in tastes, if this is the case? Wouldn’t there be a purely objective measure for, say, how good wine tastes? I hold that there is not simply one mode of presentation, rather that there is one for each person.

### 3.4 Problems with the Reduction of Qualia to Indexicality

Returning to Ismael, in certain cases, the analogy of here versus at (c, b) does not seem to hold, but this is not enough to discredit her entire argument. The upshot of the argument is that these phenomenal qualities reduce to indexicality. In other words, being at (c, b) is the very same thing as being here, assuming “here” is (c, b) for the speaker. Analogously, being in pain is the very same thing as being conscious of the fact that my c-fibers are firing. Perry, on the other hand, argues in “The Problem of the Essential Indexical” that indexical statements are not private. I will return to this point
later. When taken together, these two arguments claim that experiences of qualia are indexicals, and indexicals are not private; thus qualia is not private.

### 3.4.2 Lack of Access to Qualia and its Consequences

There are a few examples that may raise problems for this view, though. For instance, blind and deaf humans do not have access to certain qualia that I have access to, such as seeing color or hearing discordance. I think this point is obviously true, and does not require much argumentation. To combat these cases, Ismael would say I have the “at-relation” to the phenomenal qualities mentioned, whereas the blind or deaf person does not. Remember that this “at-relation” is akin to the knowledge that “here” corresponds to (c, b). It is exactly what it sounds like; it is the realization that a person is at a coordinate. Analogously, qualia is simply being conscious of the stimulus that causes it, or one’s mental state being “at” the firing of c-fibers, for example. This is not the troubling aspect of this argument. Rather, when we look at this issue using the connection between coordinates on a map and being “here” is where the problem arises.

If all qualia reduces to indexicals and thus is explainable with the comparison to a person “locating” himself on a map, (i.e. realizing the “at-relation”) then in cases such as this, we must account for the blind and deaf in terms of this analogy. There must be a way to completely explain issues involving those people with such impairments through the analogy. How can this be accomplished? We must claim that there are certain classes of people who are incapable of locating themselves on a map, but in all and only certain circumstances. Obviously, sight is the only source of qualia
that the blind do not have access to, so it is not right to say that they could *never* locate themselves on a map, only that they would never be able to do so when they were at certain coordinates, regardless of how many times they found themselves there. The blind have access to qualia involving pain, for example. Thus, not all phenomenal qualities are inaccessible and likewise, not all coordinates can be alien to them. I see this as a major issue for the analogy. How can we discuss this? I don’t see a way to sensibly form this case using Ismael’s analogy.

### 3.4.3 Learning to Locate Oneself or the Repeated Exposure Argument

Another argument that could be levied against Ismael surfaces with this issue. If a person were unable to locate himself properly, it is conceivable that he could at least learn to do so through repeated exposure to the same area. If I am blindfolded in a car and am dropped off at a location in Athens County with a map, it makes sense that I would not know where I was, even with reasonable knowledge of what the map says, as I may not have knowledge of what landmarks I could use. If I were to keep studying the map and comparing it with my surroundings, however, I could feasibly figure out my location. Knowing, for example, that there are two lakes within two miles of each other, one could work out with which one he was presented by examining the exact shape of the lake on the map and comparing it with the shape of the lake in front of him. That is to say, it is possible. The problem, again, arises when the analogous case is examined.

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7 To preserve the analogy, one should be aware that there are maps specifically for the blind and visually impaired which function more or less like braille.
3.4.3.2 Argument Against Ismael Using the Repeated Exposure Argument

I have already stated that the case of blindness presents problems for the map analogy, as it would present a case where a person would be unable to locate himself, but only in certain circumstances. However, the notion that somebody can learn to locate himself through time doesn’t seem to carry over to qualia. The blind person certainly cannot learn to see. One may argue that with ocular implants a person can regain sight, but this is giving the subject of the thought experiment unnatural help in one case and not the other. I imagine the equivalent would be a sherpa of sorts who gives the person information about his surroundings, particularly information that he could not have gathered by himself. In this way, the person attempting to locate himself could do so, but not without information that he could not have gained without the help of another. The blind person, likewise, cannot experience redness without the help of certain medical or scientific procedures, which, I admit, is possible, but does not weaken the objection significantly. On one side of the analogy, somebody can learn a set of facts through repeated exposure. On the other side, the person can never learn the fact (or experience) in question, regardless of the amount of time he is exposed to it.

3.4.3.3 Possible Objections to the Repeated Exposure Argument

There does not even seem to be a clear way to express this via Ismael’s analogy. The only argument against this claim that I can imagine is that the person attempting to locate himself simply does not know he is “here” when he is at (c, b). This tentative solution accounts for the problem that arises when a person exposed to a
stimulus does not have an experience of that stimulus, much like a person at a
cordinate does not recognize it corresponds to his location. However, I think this is a
mistake. It makes sense to phrase it this way when talking about the person attempting
to locate himself, but not the case of the blind. It is not that the blind person does not
know he is experiencing redness or brightness or the like; he simply is not
experiencing it. To use the analogy, a person attempting to locate himself may claim,
“I do not know whether “here” is the same as (c, b).” The blind person may not make
the similar claim; there is no “here” for that person, as there is no qualia being
experienced. I suppose somebody could know that “here” is not a particular set of
coordinates, but this doesn’t seem to do much for the analogy as a whole. If I am in a
forest, I know that I am not at the Taj Mahal. This does not give me any relevant
information to my situation or my location.

After presenting some possibilities, I think the only real way it would seem to
explain this case using the analogy is a person who can never locate himself, no matter
how much information he is given about his surroundings or how to use the map.
There is no amount of information that he can be given to locate himself, just as there
is no (natural) way the blind man could be given the experience of colors, for example.

3.4.3.4 Answer to Objections on the Repeated Exposure Argument

This makes perfect sense for the blind person; every time he is shown an apple
he will not experience red, he will experience nothing. At the very least, he would
experience no visual qualia. This does not make much sense for the man attempting to
locate himself. It seems likely that, given enough information, he could figure out just
where he is. In fact, to further the point, I don’t think it is necessary for him to locate himself to an exact, pinpointed area. Even a general idea would be more than enough to show that the two cases have a serious disconnect. The blind person can have no experience of colors; a person in a crowded city may be able to figure out at least which section of the city he is in, even if he cannot figure out the particular street.

**4.1 The Problem with the Reduction of Qualia to Indexicality**

This is the first issue that arises in cases such as this. The second is aimed at Perry’s argument. Perry claims that indexicals are never inaccessible, only that their accessibility is limited. As he explains, “Anyone at any time can have access to any proposition. But not in any way” (183). In short, indexicals are accessible to others because of words like he, they, yesterday, there, and their equivalent words when spoken by others. However, if we are to say that qualia reduces to indexicals as Ismael claims, then we have a similar problem to the one above. There clearly are classes of people who do not have access to certain types of qualia, such as the blind and the deaf. If Ismael is correct and qualia reduces to indexicals, then there must also be a class of people who do not have access to all and only certain classes of indexicals, just as the blind do not have access to all and only qualia involving sight. If, as Perry claims, no indexicals are inaccessible, then already we have arrived at a serious problem.

To reiterate, only qualia involving sight eludes the blind, so it would not do to say that blind people cannot use or understand *all* indexicals. The matter of fact is that the explanation is far less sensible. There must be a certain class of indexicals that are
inaccessible, but only to a certain class of people. Or it could just be that a class of people do not understand certain indexical statements, even with knowledge of the language. Could it be that they cannot understand this class of indexicals while still being able to use them? Again, attempts to explain this problem simply don’t make sense. It seems the only way to reconcile this is to argue that either Ismael or Perry is mistaken. Either qualia does not reduce to indexicality, or some indexicals are private.

4.1.2 What the Reduction Means for Synesthesia

There exists a class of people who can taste color or see music, for example. This condition is called synesthesia. What are we to say about them? They are receiving information not normally conveyed in the stimulus. Would they then receive information not conveyed by the indexical statement? Would “here,” mean both “here and now?” This possibility again is troubling because of the matter-of-factness of indexical statements. “Here” means one thing and one thing only; the area that the speaker occupies. If the analogous case were a person receiving more information than conveyed by the indexical statement, he would be wrong. But he is certainly not wrong in his synesthetic experiences; tasting a color is not perceiving it “incorrectly.” For the synesthetic person, their experience is precisely how that color is for them. There is no fact of the matter as there is with indexicals. This returns to the issue of the subjectivity of secondary properties and the problems that arise with Ismael’s and Perry’s views because of them.
4.2 The Importance of the “Way” we Experience Indexicals

Another difficult point when discussing the limited accessibility of indexicals refers to the above quote, “Anyone at any time can have access to any proposition. But not in any way” (Perry 183). It doesn’t seem controversial that everyone has access to all indexical statements at any time, assuming that they are competent language speakers. When I say, “I am in pain,” everyone who speaks the language has access to the statement, even days later, with phrases like, “He is in pain,” or, “He was in pain yesterday.” The relevant sense-granting information is available to anybody who can use the language in which the indexical statement is presented. The sense of the sentence, “I am in pain” is accessible to anyone, assuming they know what the word “I” means, to whom it refers, as well as knowing what “pain” is.

Given this, we must ask how important it is that everybody has access to indexicals uttered by me. It certainly seems to be the case that my statements are accessible to anyone, but doesn’t “the way,” as Perry puts it, appear to be where the crucial information lies? Knowing that somebody is in pain or is experiencing redness is not as informative or important as the experience itself. The thought is what the speaker is feeling and experiencing; his pain is what is of importance to him and it is what is driving his behavior and speech at the time. Furthermore, when one says, “I am in pain,” it may be a different experience than anyone else’s pain, such as the case of the man whose pain is akin to being tickled. If this is the case, and his experience of pain is nothing like ours, then understanding the statement in a different “way” than
the utterer intended is, in part, a miscommunication. In this manner the “way” is, again, the most crucial part of the indexical statement.

What good is a statement if the utterer intends it to mean a very particular thing but the listener understands it as having another meaning entirely? This may be a powerful example of when qualia does not reduce to indexicals as cleanly and easily as Ismael would like; to get the full story of qualia, one must have access to the sense of the sentence and the “way” in which it is presented. Without the former, no information can be conveyed whatsoever, and without the latter, the information conveyed is incomplete at best, and a total miscommunication at worst.

4.2.2 David Lewis and Further Differences Between Indexicality and Qualia

To illustrate this point more effectively I wish to focus on the possibility that two people’s qualia could be vastly different. Ismael states that, “Here is not a special private place that only I can be, distinct from, but momentarily tied to, (, ). Nor is here-ness an intrinsic property of any spot, for different locations are here for different people” (363). This is certainly true, but if we carry this through the analogy, is it likewise true for our experience of qualia? I have David Lewis’s “Mad Pain and Martian Pain” in mind here. Clearly, more than one person can be “here.” In a game of musical chairs, for example, the same spot is “here” for dozens of different people at different times, so their experience of “here” is the same for that particular spot. If each person said, “I am here,” when they stepped into that particular bit of space, they would be expressing precisely the same sentence with the same sense and reference. “Here” is exactly the same space for every person when they occupy it.
4.2.3 A Thought Experiment Using “Mad Pain and Martian Pain”

Imagine a game of musical chairs between myself and five other players. When we walk around the ring of chairs, the same spot becomes “here” for us all, and we all have the same experience of being in that spot. Now imagine I crack my shin against a chair at the same time as another player. We both take our seats and grimace in pain. We would both truthfully say, “I am in pain,” but as Lewis argues, our experiences of pain could be quite different. Even the first line of “Mad Pain and Martian Pain” explains this point: “There might be a strange man who sometimes feels pain, just as we do, but whose pain differs greatly from ours in its causes and effects... Our pain is generally distracting; his turns his mind to mathematics... [I]ntense pain has no tendency whatsoever to cause him to groan or writhe, but does cause him to cross his legs and snap his fingers” (216). While it seems true that the “here-ness” is shared among all the players (and verifiably so), the pain that I feel is totally inaccessible to the other person in pain. If I am the mad-man, as Lewis calls it, my pain may be absolutely nothing like the other participants’ pains. Yet, much like the colorblind man who sees red as a particular shade of grey, we must say that my “pain” is, in fact, pain. Thus, it seems no amount of talk of access to indexical propositions can account for the incommunicable aspects of pain. A cleaner way to formulate this is to claim that while the sense of statements about qualia are accessible to anyone, the thought

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8 Again, the quotation marks are crucial to understanding my meaning here. The mad-man’s strange, different experience of pain has been consistent throughout his life. That has always been how he has experienced pain. Thus I refer to it as “pain,” as it is his particular conception of pain, not what we think of when we encounter the word pain.
certainly is not. We can use indexicality to inform others of what we are experiencing but the qualia itself is ours and ours alone.

Another way that Lewis’s article may applicable here is the case of the martian’s pain. Lewis asks us to imagine a martian whose physiological causes of pain are nothing like ours whatsoever, but his psychological experience of pain is identical to ours. Lewis writes, “When you pinch his skin you cause no firing of C-fibers-- he has none-- but, rather, you cause the inflation of many smallish cavities in his feet. When these cavities are inflated, he is in pain” (216). The martian and the typical human being have roughly the same experience of pain with vastly different physiological causes. What would this mean for the map analogy? If, as Ismael writes, the firing of c-fibers is the coordinates of the map and the pain response is the “here-ness,” would this mean that the martian would locate himself in the same spot as a human experiencing pain, even though the two would not share the same coordinates? After all, their phenomenal qualities are alike in every relevant way, but they gain the conscious-of relationship to entirely different causes.

4.2.4 Possible Solution to the Martian’s Pain

To avoid this problem, one could argue that the martian is not really in pain, as his c-fibers are not firing (because he has none). In this case, we are putting the emphasis on the “qualitative feel,” as Ismael puts it, and dismissing the importance of the physiological causes of the experience. In this way, while the martian and the human are both experiencing roughly the same thing, only one of them is in pain. In other words, this is stating that what the martian is experiencing isn’t pain, but is
instead something else, say, pain₁. If we instead want to call it pain₁ the definitional issue is solved. It could very well be that any stimulus other than the firing of c-fibers does not cause pain as we call it, and instead causes pain₁ or pain₂, etc. This could also account for cases such as the phantom limb pain that amputees feel.

This does not, however, solve the problem that I am addressing here. It may very well be that c-fibers are a necessary condition for pain. Still, this is beside the point. The question I am asking arises when we consider the strong possibility that two people could experience the same type of phenomenal quality, despite the stimuli being different. According to Ismael’s analogy, the martian and the man, for example, would both locate themselves at the same spot, although they are not at the same coordinates. To counter using a similar objection to the one above, it could be said that the martian is simply wrong; he is not experiencing pain, he is experiencing pain₁, which is a different experience and is not to be counted as pain. This may be the only way to avoid this issue. If the firing of c-fibers is a necessary condition for pain, then any experience that does not involve c-fiber firings, such as the martian’s pain, is not pain proper.

4.2.5 Answer to Objection Regarding the Martian’s Pain

I do not think that this is an adequate answer to the question raised. The point of the analogy is to explain the phenomenal qualities we experience. Say the martian and the man’s experiences of their respective versions of pain are identical and only the stimulus is different. We are avoiding the main reason for the entire analogy if we claim that the phenomenal qualities experienced do not matter! Furthermore, I would
not agree to the claim that the martian is experiencing pain. He is experiencing pain!
In much the same way that the man in the desert sees the mirage of an oasis, that is his experience. He could truthfully say, “I am experiencing the sight of an oasis.” Furthermore, it would be wrong of him to say, “I am experiencing a mirage of an oasis,” assuming of course he actually believes an oasis to be there. The stimulus, then, might not be as important as the above objection claims it must be. If we have the case of two people on opposite ends of town who can justifiably claim “here-ness” in connection with one coordinate, something within the analogy or the underlying theory has failed. Furthermore, many sufferers of phantom limb pain presumably have felt pain in that limb before it was lost, when c-fibers in the limb fired. They can verify that their phantom limb pain is the same class of phenomenal quality as “normal,” c-fiber induced pain. It does not do to make c-fiber firings a necessary condition for pain, and to say that without them the phenomenal qualities are a different thing altogether.

4.3 On the Madman’s Pain

The other case illustrated in Lewis’s article and the one invoked by my musical chairs example is precisely the opposite from the one above involving the martian. A “madman” has the same physiological causes but an entirely different psychological experience of pain. We have two options to choose from when discussing this issue. Either two people could be at the same coordinates only to locate themselves at different spots as “here,” as their experiences of pain are different, or “pain” is simply used as a blanket term for whatever one person finds painful, regardless of it is what we consider to be pain. If we want to deny the second option, then we would have to
imagine the madman and the “normal” human to locate themselves at different spots, even though they would be at the same coordinate (as both are experiencing c-fiber firings).

### 4.3.2 The Importance of the Experience of Qualia and the Map Analogy

My previous argument ended with the claim that qualia cannot be ignored when discussing sensory experience. Now we turn to the question of exactly how important qualia is. If we are to say that two people’s extremely varying conceptions of pain are unimportant and that the relevant bit of information is *that* they are in pain, not what that pain is like, then we would be allowing for two people to locate themselves at the same spot even though the phenomenal qualities that they are experiencing are nothing alike, which seems counterintuitive when trying to explain phenomenal properties and our relationship to them. Why should we give a theory that explains qualia that is this inconsistent? When two people are given the same stimulus, having to eliminate the differences between their phenomenal qualities in order to make sense of the theory is unproductive.

If we want to explain these properties by Ismael’s analogy of locating oneself based on the phenomenal qualities experienced, it would be strange to say that two people with vastly different experiences would locate themselves in the same area. After all, why should we use an analogy, the sole purpose of which is to explain our relationship to phenomenal qualities, that lumps one class of phenomenal qualities with another class when the two are very dissimilar? However from a common sense standpoint, it also seems strange that two people at the same coordinate on a map
would not be located in the same bit of space, as must be the case if we are going to
group recipients of the same stimulus by the qualia they experience and not by the
stimulus itself. Both of the options we are faced with are hard to defend. Again, this
provides more evidence that the analogy is faulty.

4.3.3 Conclusion of Argument Concerning Pain vs. Pain

It isn’t right to claim that two people could be at one coordinate only to
disagree on whether they are “here.” This again relies on the possibility that a person
is mistaken about whether he is in pain, and I have argued against this at length
already. This leaves one option. All conceptions and experiences of pain must be
lumped into one overarching category. The martian’s pain is pain, the madman’s pain
is pain, and our pain is pain. I think this is the only view that Ismael can accept, as if
we separated similar (or even identical) phenomenal qualities according to the
stimulus, the map analogy falls apart entirely. I believe that stimuli and qualia is not
akin to the relationship of “here-ness” to coordinates, as there are several cases that
lead to absurd conclusions, and even more cases that are unnecessarily complicated

4.4 Nagel and Qualia

It may also be interesting to look at this issue with Nagel’s “What is it Like to
be a Bat?” in mind. It is a similar point to ones made above, namely that our only
method of understanding the experience of bats (and even other humans) is through
our own experiences and our own terms. Nagel explains that we can imagine having
webbed arms that enable us to fly, and even that we can imagine using a SONAR-type
system to navigate. However, “In so far as I can imagine this (which is not very far), it
tells me only what it would be like for me to behave as a bat behaves” (439). Bats do not think of their navigation as SONAR. No experience we can imagine is even remotely bat-like.

4.4.2 “What is it Like to be a Bat?” and Indexicality

Whereas indexical statements seem to be universally accessible provided one is experienced with the language, the “way” it is presented, even if made communicable, would still be dependent on the speaker’s terminology and experiences, much like our conception of what it’s like to be a bat depends entirely on human concepts. Certainly the differences among two humans experiencing something are far less great than the differences between human experience and bat experience, but the point remains, I believe. Much like the cases I described above with Lewis’ martian and madman, another person’s pain may be different from mine; it may even be a feeling that I have never experienced before. I am able to understand sentences about it, though, because I have knowledge of the word “pain” and I have a conception (or a memory) of what pain is like for me. Nobody can have knowledge of what it’s like for someone else to be in pain or to see red. This does not mean their statements are inaccessible. Even if someone else’s pain was more like my feeling of being tickled, I can still understand his proposition, but certainly not the way in which he expresses it, or in other words, the thought he intends to express. He would not say, “I am in pain, and my pain is much like your feeling of being tickled,” as that is precisely what pain is to him. He would not know that our experiences were different.

4.5 McGinn, Perry, and Incorrigible Statements
McGinn writes that subjective experiences such as pain are incorrigible, or essentially always true, as they, “are detectable ‘from the inside’ and so their detection does not allow for error” (45). I have touched on this briefly, stating that ascribing a location to oneself is not incorrigible as feeling pain or seeing a color is. However, are indexicals similarly incorrigible in the way that experiences of pain are? Certainly, classes of indexicals are incorrigible, e.g. “I am in pain now” could never be false, provided the speaker isn’t lying. “The intuitive difference between indexical and non-indexical identification is that the former does not attempt to venture beyond what is subjectively given, whereas the latter undertakes to locate the subject within objective coordinates” (McGinn 46). Non-indexical identification is not incorrigible, as it depends on identification of a set of circumstances outside of the speaker, and thus the speaker can simply be wrong.

Perry, however, hints at a case where a person could use a sentence involving an essential indexical and be incorrect. The man in the grocery store who has a ripped bag of sugar at first thinks somebody is making a mess but does not recognize that somebody to be him. Imagine, though, that it is indeed not he who has the torn bag of sugar, but he believes it to be him. If he were to say, “I am making a mess,” he is wrong, though he believes it to be himself. It is possible to misidentify oneself in certain indexical sentences but not in others, which can be called incorrigible. The error in the case of the man in the grocery store occurs because he misattributes himself as the man making the mess. In other words, it could be rephrased as, “Somebody is making a mess, and I believe I am that somebody.” Sentences like, “I
am in pain,” provide an example of incorrigible indexical statements. If a person is aware of the experience of pain, it must be his. One cannot be conscious of another person’s pain in the same manner in which the person feeling the pain is conscious of it. That is to say one can be aware that another person is in pain, but that is where it ends. Unlike the previous case, it seems to be impossible to misattribute oneself as the person feeling pain. If I am experiencing pain, it’s doubtful and maybe impossible that I would come to find out it was another person’s pain that I were feeling. If there is pain that I am experiencing, it must be mine.

4.6 The Incorrigibility of Secondary Qualities

I have argued, with the help of McGinn, that experiences of qualia are incorrigible. Indexicals regarding secondary qualities or qualia, then, must be similarly incorrigible. Ismael’s map analogy implies that one can be wrong when experiencing qualia or secondary qualities, and so her attempt at a reduction from qualia to indexicality must then reflect that some indexicals involving qualia are not incorrigible. Perhaps a way around this apparent problem lies with equating experiences of qualia with essential indexicality. But I have shown, with Perry’s help, that there exist sentences involving the essential indexical that are not incorrigible, such as the man in the grocery store. All experiences of qualia, it appears, are incorrigible, so all corresponding indexical expressions should be as well. “I am experiencing red,” “I am in pain,” “I am myself,” and sentences akin to these are necessarily true, though under the reduction they should not be.
4.6.2 The Importance of the Thought

I think the attempt to reduce qualia to indexicality is in part an attempt to do away with the need for the thought which the speaker of the proposition has in mind. This semi-mysterious part of an indexical proposition doesn’t have much room in Ismael’s view, but if I am correct in my above arguments, the thought is a necessary component when attempting to understand phenomenal qualities. In this way I don’t truly understand the attempt to reduce qualia to indexicality. To me, qualia is an extremely intimate personal reaction to a stimulus. The thought (or more accurately the idea), what it feels like, is the prime point of discussion. The notion that it is not necessary in discussions of qualia just seems outright false even without argumentation. Ismael tries to complete this reduction while eliminating the thought. It may well be unavoidably private, which is problematic for her views on qualia. Unfortunately, I don’t think the discussion is complete without analyzing whether the thought of an expression is presented.

When a person says, “I am in pain,” he can only elaborate so much further. When I utter a sentence using “I,” only I may refer to myself that way. There is no other being in existence who can correctly refer to me by saying “I.” The phrase, “It is painful” may be as close as one can get to explaining pain further, and this gives no information. I think that ideas may be essentially private, or at least in the case of the essential indexical; if so, and if it is necessary for the entire story of the indexical expression, then Ismael’s attempts to reduce qualia to indexicality fail in this way. The temptation may be to accept this limited accessibility and claim that qualia reduces to
indexicals that are not entirely communicable, like the essential indexical. But why, then, are we discussing this reduction with an analogy that requires communicability? If we have incommunicable ideas, which I believe and have argued that we do, how is the analogy of location an adequate description? A person can be incorrect when ascribing location to himself, whereas a person cannot incorrectly experience or ascribe experience to himself. Our phenomenal qualities are our own and we cannot share them among others, while we can share our location (both indexically and by the measure of coordinates). If the analogy were functional, shouldn’t there be fewer discrepancies?

5.1 The Zombie Problem

To move on, I turn to the problem of zombies. Zombies, in short, are beings who are physically just like us but “whose states there is nothing it is like for anyone to be in them” (Ismael 362). So their c-fibers fire when they experience painful stimuli, and indeed they may be in pain, but they are not conscious of this state, or anything else for that matter. This can be a confusing topic when first encountered. A zombie in this sense is not a member of the walking dead; it is a being that acts and looks exactly like a normal human. Zombies can walk, talk, laugh, have transactions at the same bank as you and I. In short, they are exactly like us in every way except they lack consciousness. Thus, they cannot and do not experience qualia. They feel pain, they react to pain, but they are not conscious of their pain.

At first glance, this type of scenario does seem to raise a problem for physicalists, as it is conceivable that there is a possible world where each of us exist,
but as zombies instead of humans. Thus, there is no such thing as the conscious-of
relation to anything. By definition, a zombie is physiologically just like we are. Thus,
if physicalism is true, a zombie should be like us in all other ways, assuming
everything is determined by physical facts. Again, though, zombies are not like us in
other ways; they are not conscious. If any difference exists between zombies and us,
then something immaterial governs some part of us.

5.1.2 Ismael’s Explanation of Zombies

Ismael explains zombies away by claiming that a being’s not being conscious
of any mental states is the same as unoccupied space, or “space that is not here for
anyone” (362). There is a coordinate and there is a space it corresponds to. It just so
happens that nobody occupies that space. This is not to say that nobody could occupy
the space, just that nobody currently does. To rephrase it in terms similar to Ismael’s, it
is a space where there is nothing it is like for anybody to be in it. In this way, Ismael
avoids the problem of zombies. The “zombie world” described above would be
analogous to one where all space was unoccupied, or at the very least all known
coordinates correspond with empty space; nowhere is “here” for anybody. Just as no
stimuli cause qualia for a zombie, no coordinate marks “here” for anyone. According
to her analogy, unoccupied space and absence of qualia despite the presence of stimuli
are the same thing.
5.2 Propositional Knowledge and an Objection to Ismael’s Explanation of Zombies

I think there is something that must be addressed here, however. This analogy makes a big leap that might pose an issue for Ismael’s explanation of zombies. When going from being “conscious-of” to being “here,” I feel something crucial has shifted. Imagine a person who is propositionally omniscient. She knows everything, down to how many grains of sand exist on earth at all given times. She knows who is where at all times; in short, she knows every physical fact about the world. This propositionally omniscient being would not be able to know if a zombie were a zombie. She would have no knowledge of the “conscious-of” states of anybody except herself, something that bolsters my thinking that qualia is private. At the very least, she would not know what it is like for another person to experience something. Who is conscious of what is not a physical fact, it is what I will call experiential knowledge, versus the bits of propositional knowledge that I mentioned above. When Ismael’s analogy is fully carried through, a problem arises.

This propositionally omniscient being would know the location of everyone. Physical location is propositional knowledge; who occupies what space is a physical fact about the world. Either a person is at (c, b) or he is not. This is true for every person at every coordinate. Thus, this omniscient being would know of all occupied and unoccupied space, and she would know of every area that is “here” for someone. She not only would know if any particular bit of space were occupied, she would also know what coordinate it corresponds to on any given interpretation of any map. If the
analogies were perfect, than the same being should know whether a person has consciousness and even what that person is experiencing at any given time. However, she would know nothing about who was conscious-of what, as this is not propositional knowledge! The problem with Ismael’s attempt to explain away zombies is primarily that it changes the relevant information from something that is not propositional to something that is. Given this, zombies, or beings who are not conscious of any mental states, may still pose a big problem for Ismael’s views on qualia and I think for physicalism as a whole. There may be something strange, mysterious, and nonphysical about qualia that the analogy cannot explain, or at the very least, zombies may show that there is something immaterial, namely consciousness, which is contrary to physicalism. If these beings are not conscious despite being like us in every other capacity, then consciousness is not explainable in purely physical terms.

5.2.2 In Defense of Ismael’s Zombie Explanation

The propositionally omniscient being having knowledge of all possible “heres” does not damage the argument, as she may not have the experience of being “here” at every location. She does not know what it is like to be at every location. Without this experience, she is just as much in the dark as any other person.

5.2.2.2 Answer to the Defense of Ismael’s Zombie Explanation

One need not have experience of being “here” for every location to know whether a person occupies any given location. Thus, if the coordinates are analogous to the stimuli and the “here-ness” is analogous to the experience, this being only needs to know whether a person is at any location to know that they are “here.” In other
words, this propositionally omniscient being does not have to be conscious of every possible location to know whether anyone is “here” at any given point, as merely being “here” is the same thing as having an experience. Ismael mentions nothing about having to be conscious of “here” and the coordinates that correspond to that location. In the case of the propositionally omniscient being, she would have to know whether a person was conscious of a particular experience.

In the case of zombies, it is clear to see that knowing whether a person is conscious of an experience is different from a person having full knowledge of all physical space, and thereby knowing whether a person is “here” for any given spot. It is not necessary to be conscious of the “here-ness” of a location, or any other person being conscious of a location for Ismael’s analogy to work. It would be necessary to be aware of whether a person were conscious of phenomenal qualities for her to have the same omniscience in both sides of the analogy. This is the primary difference; awareness of the conscious-of relation in other people is not necessary in one case but is necessary in the other.

5.2.3 Zombies and Physicalism

Zombies alone give a strong argument against physicalism. Even if Zombies are logically possible, which they very much seem to be, physicalism is false. If it could be the case that a being can be physically just like us but metaphysically different, then it must be the case that physicality does not determine all facts about us, and thus about the world as a whole. The fact that zombies are conceivable alone makes a strong case for their possibility. Zombies do not argue directly for the
existence of immaterial qualia, but rather simply an immaterial something. This is enough to call physicalism into very serious doubt by itself, but it does little to bolster my view of private, immaterial qualia. The next case I will discuss deals more explicitly with qualia and will help my case rather than simply hurting Ismael’s.

5.3 Ismael and Jackson’s Mary Argument

On reflection, the same problem (or something similar to it) arises in Ismael’s discussions of Jackson’s Mary argument. The Mary argument is analyzed in Jackson’s What Mary Didn’t Know. The argument is aimed at physicalism, so Ismael must address it as well. Jackson writes of physicalism that it is, “the challenging thesis that [the world] is entirely physical” (291). A being who knows every physical fact about the world must, therefore, know everything if physicalism is true. If this being is in fact omniscient of all physical facts, and if there is anything the being does not know, then there must be something immaterial. Jackson writes that Mary, a young girl who is confined to a black and white room for many years, is one such propositionally omniscient being. She is taught everything physical fact about the world. She is omniscient in all the sciences, and nothing about how the world works eludes her, provided that the world works through entirely physical mechanisms. “It seems, however, that Mary does not know all there is to know. For when she is let out of the black-and-white room or given a color television, she will learn what it is like to see something red, say. This is rightly described as learning-she will not say ‘ho, hum’”(Jackson 291).
5.3.2 Ismael’s Response to the Mary Argument

The problem here, of course, is that Mary has learned something by seeing color, even though she was omniscient about all physical facts. She still learned *what it is like for her* to see red. Ismael actually agrees with Jackson that Mary did indeed learn something, but what she learned, according to Ismael, is the “at-relation.” She learned that a stimulus that she was aware of (certain wavelengths of light) causes a certain reaction. This relation is the only knowledge gained. “What Mary learns when she learns that *this* is what it is like to see red is an external relation between the world and her representation of it” (Ismael 361). This, too, Jackson argues against.

The knowledge Mary lacked which is of particular point for the knowledge argument against physicalism is *knowledge about the experience of others*, not about her own. When she is let out, she has new experiences, color experiences she has never had before. It is not, therefore, an objection to physicalism that she learns *something* on being let out. Before she was let out, she could not have known facts about her experience of red, for there were no such facts to know. (292)

Mary, then, learned something new, which it seems the physicalist cannot accept.

5.3.3 Problems with Mary Learning

The physicalist cannot say with a straight face that Mary learns nothing upon exiting the room, only defend either that it is something she could have known before (i.e. one that she already had access to), or that what she learned is in fact physical in some way, i.e. a physical relation between an experience and a reaction to it, particularly one that was not available to her. Perhaps it could be described as a “new fact.” As for the first possibility, Jackson claims that there is no way for her to have known what red is like before she sees it. He makes the point that Mary could imagine color, and this much is true. After all, imagining a color is not a logical impossibility,
even though the average person could not do so had they never seen the color before
(try to imagine a “new” color, for example). As Jackson puts it, the argument is not
that Mary “could not imagine what it is like to sense red; it is that, as a matter of fact,
she would not know. But if physicalism is true, she would know; and no great powers
of imagination would be called for. Imagination is a faculty that those who lack
knowledge need to fall back on” (292). Even if she correctly did imagine, through a
guess, what it is like to see red, the mere fact that she must attempt to imagine red
means she does not have knowledge of it, otherwise it could be said that she
remembered what it is like to sense red, not that she imagined it. Thus she could not
have known beforehand what experiencing red is like, be it a physical fact or not, as
there simply were no facts for her to know without having the experience.

5.3.4 Mary and the Map Analogy

This does away with the first conjunct, but the possibility remains that what
Mary learned was a physical or indexical fact after all that she simply did not have
access to before. I turn now to this idea. Again, Ismael uses the map analogy to explain
that all Mary learned was that a certain coordinate designated “here” for her, and she
learned to locate herself there. But do we run into the same issues as before? If Mary
were to be given all propositional knowledge, she would be at least aware of every
location that could be “here” for her at one time or another. She would know which
point on a map represents which spatial location. In other words, even though she
wouldn’t have the “at-relation” to every spacial point at all times, she should know
every coordinate and every location. She knows what every coordinate corresponds to.
If the analogy were to hold perfectly, she should then have knowledge of all the possible phenomenal qualities associated with all possible stimuli. If \((x, y)\) is analogous to the stimulus of red wavelengths, we can say she knows what \((x, y)\) designates, and she \textit{should} know what red looks like without ever seeing it. Clearly she does not.

5.3.5 Further Examination of the Mary Problem and her Omniscience

There is another question about Mary’s knowledge that might be worth examining. Even if Mary is given every physical fact, there is something she does not and perhaps cannot know, and that is what it is like to \textit{not} be her. Each person has one piece of knowledge that nobody else can ever have access to, and that is what it’s like to have that particular identity. I know something that Mary does not, and this is confusing when we’re talking about a person who is supposedly omniscient. Under physicalism, all facts must be physical, and thus a physically omniscient being must be entirely omniscient. However, I know something that Mary does not know, as does every other conscious mind on the planet. Mary does not know what it is like to be me, to be a bat, or to be anything other than herself. Does this damage the idea of Mary’s omniscience or omniscience in general? Perhaps the only way around this problem is to argue that what it’s like to be me, rather than something else, is not knowledge but rather something else. Perhaps it is a part of a person’s identity, much like having memories, and thus is not to be counted as knowledge. However knowing what it is like to be me certainly feels like it is an important piece of information, though perhaps it is not. If this thought is not to be counted as knowledge, then it cannot be
used against Mary’s omniscience, although I certainly count it as knowledge; if it were not an important point in the conversation, we would not have articles such as Nagel’s “What is it Like to be a Bat?”

6.1 Conclusion

If we can conceive of a being who has full knowledge of all relevant facts in one scenario but is missing any relevant facts when the analogy is carried through, I think a problem has arisen. Ismael makes a leap between propositional and non-propositional knowledge, attempting to explain away two of the hard problems, and this is a mistake. Thus, I believe, the analogy may be flawed and may require some reworking. If I am correct, I think this speaks against the physicalism that Ismael tries to defend. One of the primary purposes of “Science and the Phenomenal” is to explain these phenomenal qualities in a non-dualistic way, in an attempt to show that they are not mysterious and difficult. If, though, it is necessary to make the leap from non-propositional to propositional facts to make the analogy work, I believe it shows that phenomenal qualities are not explainable purely in indexical terms. As stated before, the thought, or the “way,” in which the phenomenal quality is experienced or presented seems to be crucial to understanding it fully. Two people stating the same indexical statement clearly may be experiencing these phenomenal qualities in vastly different ways which seems like it causes many problems when trying to explain them in materialist terms.

If this is the case, then the reduction from qualia to indexical statements may not be a smooth transition. “I do not see how we can avoid the conclusion that it is no
less a part of our conception of physical properties that they are constitutive of the phenomenal than it is part of our conception of other locations... that they are spatially related to here (i.e. that they lie some distance from this spot)” (Ismael 364). I think we are talking about different things here. By their nature these phenomenal properties are limited in their accessibility, whereas “here” is an entirely open concept to anyone. The second half of this comparison is true; all spatial locations are related to “here” in that they all lie a certain distance from “here.” Intuitively this feels correct. However, a physical stimulus and the resulting qualia are certainly not intuitively linked in the way that “here” and “there” are, for instance. To make this jump changes the fact of the matter so much as to damage the argument, as the entire analogy is based on this leap.

The primary point of this paper is to analyze the writings of Ismael and Perry and argue against their claims. The two papers together argue that qualia reduces to indexical statements and that these statements are not private. I believe that the case of the blind person (or one who is similarly barred from certain phenomenal qualities) poses many problems. This, when taken with discussions of my pain versus a martian’s or a madman’s may show that either phenomenal qualities do not reduce to indexical statements or that indexicals are private. Now obviously, Perry’s talk of the limited accessibility of indexical statements does not mean that they are private, as others do have access to my indexical propositions, but again, not in the same way. I argue that the way in which I present my indexical statements does the most important
explanatory work. In other words, without the way, the proposition that is accessed by another is not the same one that I uttered.

Ismael’s analogy faces several major objections, many of which based on those who experience qualia differently from a “normal” human. Synesthetics, the colorblind, and even those with differing conceptions of pain lead to absurd conclusions when using Ismael’s analogy. Cases such as these are almost impossible to explain using Ismael’s analogy of spatial location and map coordinates. I ask, then, why use the analogy if it can only explain “normal” qualia and experience? Most if not all of my readers have a “normal” experience of qualia, so it need not be explained in a way that only explains that normality. While it is interesting to explain this phenomenon that we all have in some way, I think the important question is the one that addresses how to explain how qualia differs between person to person.

An analogy that only works for the “normal” person’s qualia and not, for example, Lewis’ madman and martian, avoids the truly interesting and confounding aspects of the qualia debate. By showing the confused results of these more unconventional cases when viewed through Ismael’s analogy, I hope that I have shown at least that Ismael’s analogy is seriously flawed, if not outright wrong. Qualia are, I believe, private, immaterial experiences that cannot be explained solely in physicalist terms. It is my hope that this thesis has established this.
Works Cited


