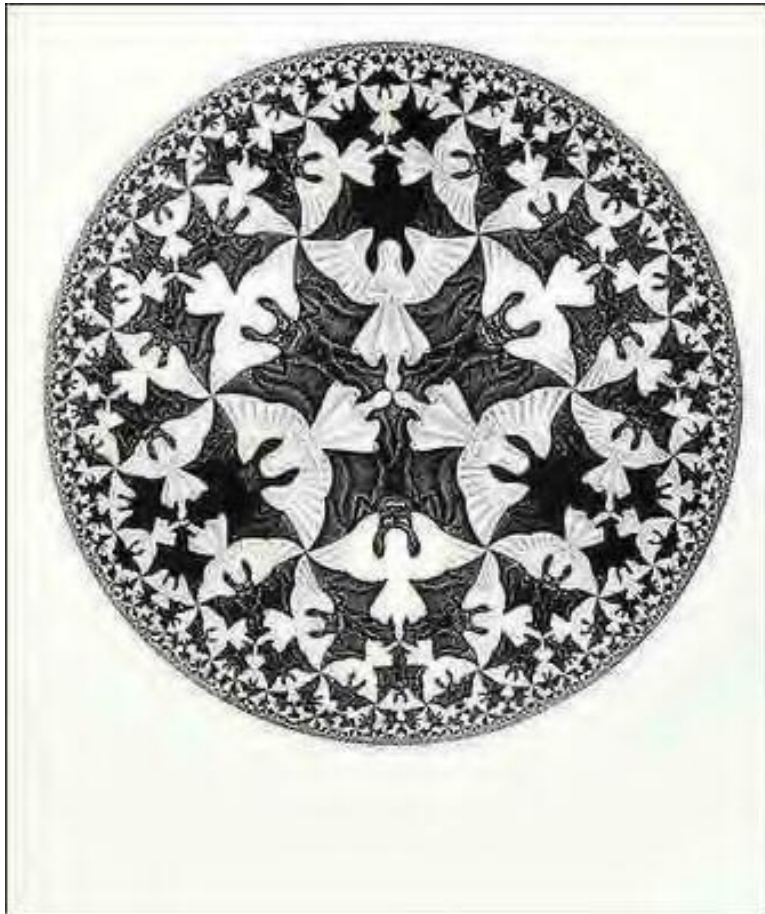


*Qualia I*  
*What Is it Like to Be a Bat?*

*Thomas Nagel*



*Presentation by Rosie Haroutunian*

*September 16, 2008*

# *Rough Overview*



- ❖ Nagel's article begins with statement: "Consciousness is what makes mind-body problem intractable"
- ❖ Subjective Character of Conscious Experience
- ❖ Qualia: the Facts
- ❖ Mysticism of Physicalist Reductions
- ❖ Phenomenology/Epistemology
- ❖ Epistemological Problems with Qualia
- ❖ Possible solutions
- ❖ Conclusion

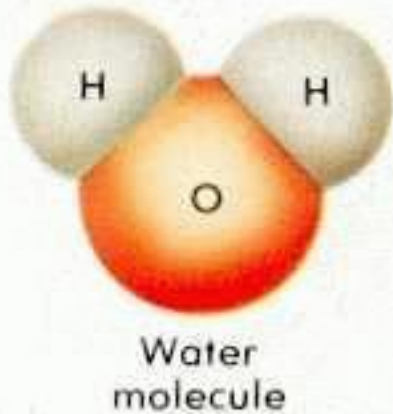
# *Subjective Character of Experience*

- ❖ Organism possesses conscious experience *if there is something it is like to be that organism*
- ❖ Not captured by reductive analyses of mental phenomena



# *The Mysticism of Scientific Reductions*

- ❖ Consciousness makes mind-body problem different from water-H<sub>2</sub>O problem reductions
- ❖ Process of Reduction: move towards greater objectivity can only succeed if species-specific viewpoint is omitted from what is to be reduced



# *Phenomenology vs. Epistemology of Qualia*

Epistemological facts: Clarity of word “is”

Understanding that X is Y requires conception of how convergence of meaning might be true -  
circumstantial

Phenomenological facts:

Objective in the sense that we are able to take on a point of view other than own

Subjective in the sense that even objective ascription of experience is only possible for someone sufficiently similar to object of ascription to be able to adopt his point of view

Distribution Question: can we know what organisms besides humans are conscious?

Phenomenological Question: Can we know what, if anything, the experiences of these animals are like?

# *Epistemological Problem of First-Person Perspective:*

If subjective character of experience can only be understood from one point of view, then any shift to greater objectivity, and subsequently less attachment to a specific viewpoint, takes us further away from real nature of phenomenon

# *Possible Solution: Adopting BATITUDE*

- ❖ Develop phenomenology to describe sonar experiences of bats
  - Bat helmet-electrodes that simulate brain into bat-like experiences
- ❖ Phenomenological, not epistemological: describes quale for human physiology, not what it is like for a bat to be a bat







## *Conclusion*



- ❖ Qualia are intrinsic and therefore ineffable/inaccessible from objective third-person perspective
- ❖ We cannot transcend subjectivity but must conclude that presence of qualia provide evidence for truth of something we cannot objectively understand (Godel's Incompleteness Theorem)