

Assignment 2

Philosophy



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Qualia Problem by Frank Jackson At the centre of Frank Jackson's articulation of the Qualia Problem is the claim that "one can have all the physical information without having all the information there is to have". In the case of sensory experience, for example, while all sorts of comprehensive data could be recorded in a said event, there is yet an intangible element to the actual experience itself. Take, say, a person smelling a rose. Using modern technology one could capture all sorts of biochemical, psychological and cognitive processes that the act of smelling a rose invokes. Yet, the actual experience of smelling a rose cannot merely be contained and explained through this comprehensive body of information. This in essence is the Qualia problem.

Jackson illustrates the inadequacy of physicalism through couple of examples. He uses the 'knowledge argument' in describing the case of the exceptionally sighted Fred. Fred actually sees two colors within the conventional red spectrum. In other words, just as a normal human eye can distinguish between yellow and blue clearly and consistently, Fred is able to identify two colors within red - red1 and red2. The nomenclature contains 'red' as a common term, but it does not mean Fred sees two shades of red. To him the two are as distinct as yellow and blue are for a normal human being. This much is a brief account of the physical facts of the phenomenon. But crucially, it is a poor substitute for what it is to experience those two different colors. Even the analogy of yellow and blue give a conceptual understanding but no clue as to what the two reds might look like. This is the major shortcoming of physicalism and hence the introduction of qualia into the discussion.

I totally agree with Jackson's emphasis on qualia and its centrality to

<https://assignbuster.com/assignment-2-essay-samples-4/>

discussing sensory experience. Physicalism, though, has its utility, in that, it helps document and describe sensory phenomena for scholarly analysis. But it is ultimately limited in capturing the real experience as and when it occurs to a human subject.

In my view modern psychology could benefit by incorporating qualia into its therapeutic models. It is widely understood that psychological states like depression and anxiety have their origins in perception. Two different people perceive the same sort of event in two different ways. Their reaction to these events is in turn dictated by their perception. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is aimed toward rectifying the patient's distorted perceptions of self, others, circumstances and the world-at-large. Psychotherapists mostly go by textbook methods of intervention into these problems. This not only makes their practice somewhat mechanical and predictable, but also disregards the individual subjective experience or the qualia of the mental malignancy. This facet to psychological disorders is somewhat overlooked. Instead, there seems to be a one-size-fits-all approach to psychotherapy. I believe that giving greater consideration to qualia within the therapeutic context will lead to better patient outcomes.