

# Thoughts on What Is It Like to Be a Bat?

Owen Lockwood

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I know I said I would avoid the exceedingly famous or classic papers in a field (mostly because many have already read them), however, I had never actually read the famous *What is it like to be a bat?* and this was as good an excuse as any. Due to the fame of this paper, it has been discussed a great deal (I believe it sits at about 10,000 citations). I could certainly contribute one more essay of thoughts on it to the pile (and I certainly thought about doing that), but I have found that in regards to Nagel's statements there is very little new to say. In this work Nagel presents several problems with his contemporary materialist peers answers to the mind-body problem, especially relating to the concept of experience and the subjective vs objective nature of it. I do not think I could do it justice in a brief summary, so I encourage all to read it. My one comment will be that the ideas it presents touch on what I think are some of the most concerning problems in physics today, not the understandability of consciousness, rather the limits of human comprehension. The basic assumption of many scientific ventures is fundamentally that the universe is understandable to humans. I.e. that human are capable of grasping the essence of reality. But I (and many others) have oft worried if this is not the case. What if, fundamentally, we cannot comprehend the universe? Not because I (or anyone) is not smart enough, but because it is beyond the realm of human understanding. I like to imagine a Klein bottle. It exists in 4 dimensions, and we can know certain properties about it and its topology in these 4 dimensions, but we cannot understand 4 dimensions. We can write the math on some paper, but we cannot perceive the essence of a 4 dimensional reality. Although Nagel presents it as an option, I don't know how much practical or philosophical use a theory (even if proven to be true) would be if it merely suggested that the universe is out of our realm of understanding. It seems to make the whole human endeavor that much more meaningless.