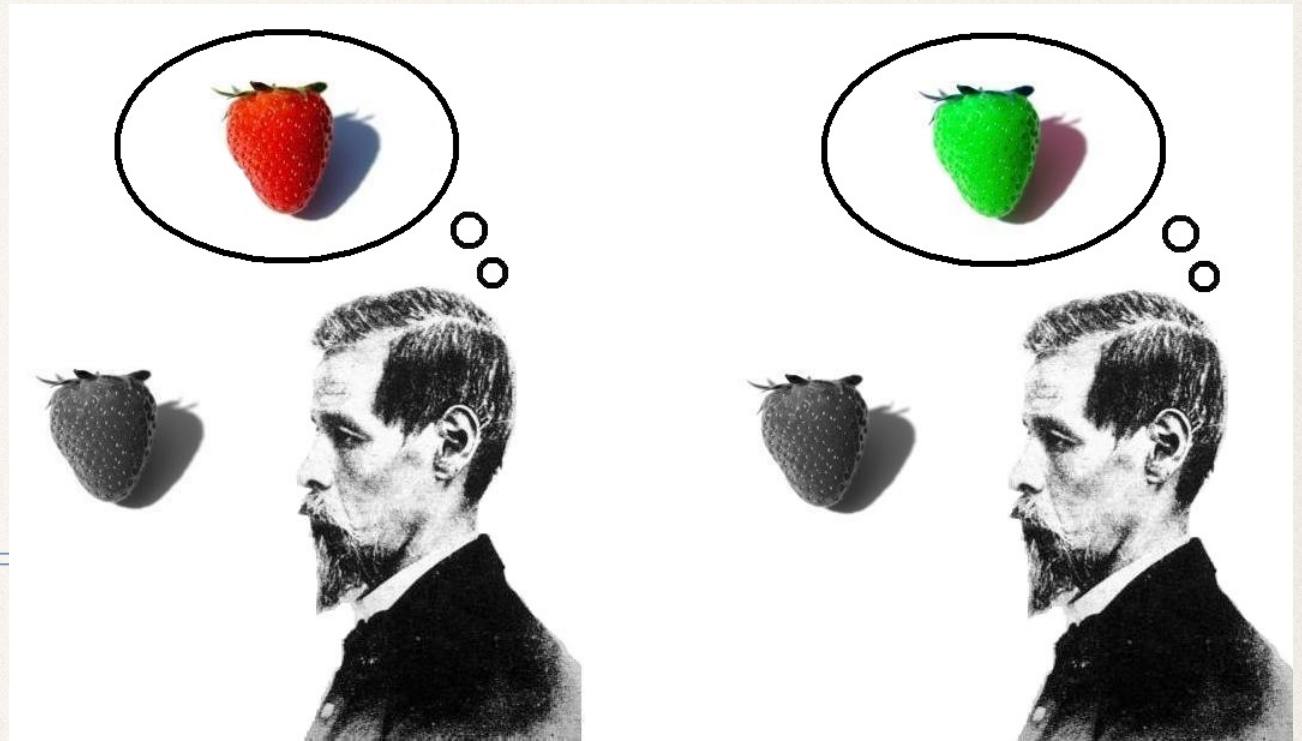


*Do You See
Colors the
Same Way
as I do?*



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*Are Stones
Conscious?*

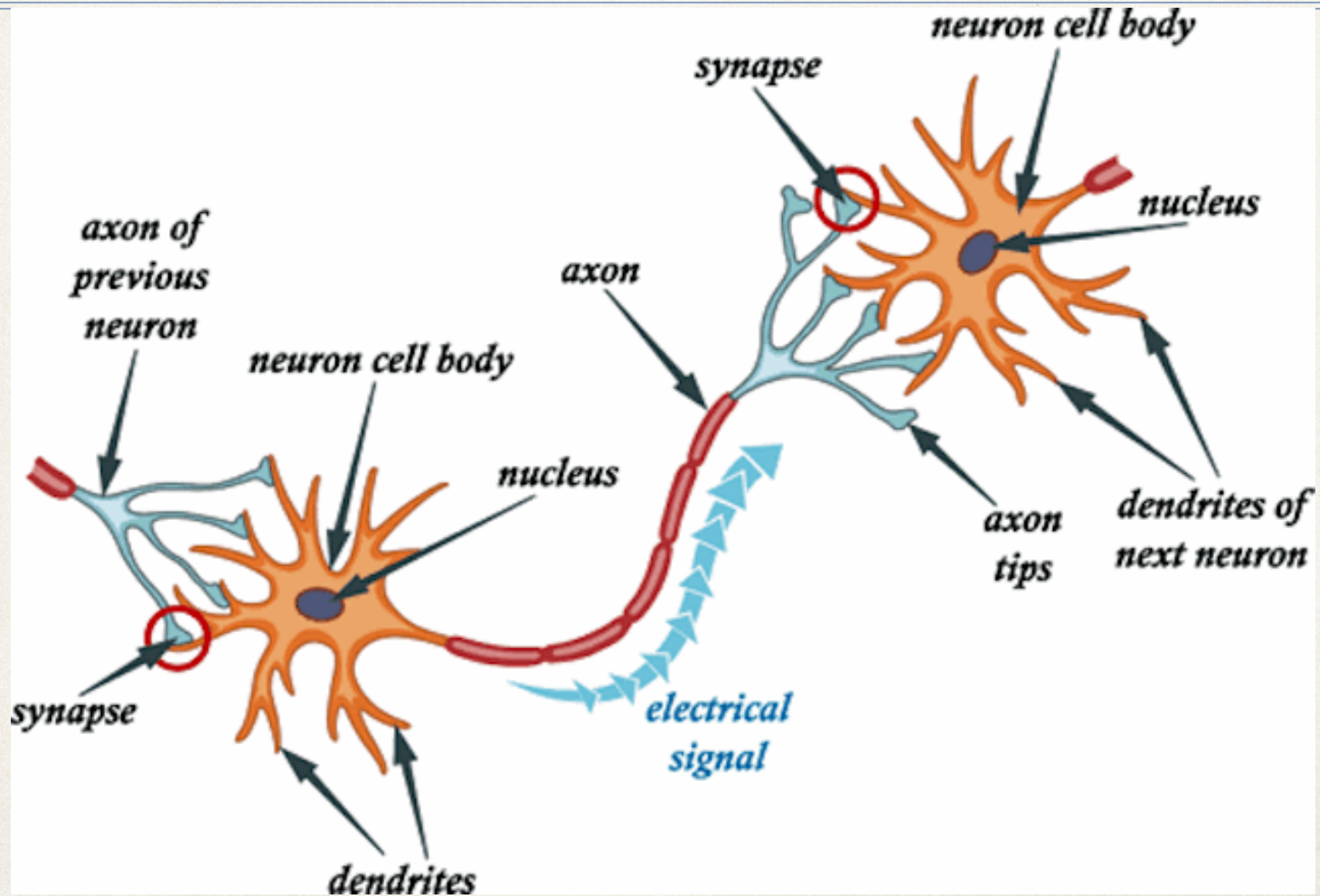
Physicalism *versus* Non-Physicalism

Some philosophers—called **physicalists**—believe that mental states can be entirely *reduced to* brain states. In other words, they believe that mental states are entirely physical.

Other philosophers—called **non-physicalists**—think that it is *impossible to reduce* mental states to brain or physical states.

Whether mental states can be reduced to physical states or not is one of the central questions in philosophy of mind today.

Brain Activity Consists of Electrochemical Signals Traveling From One Neuron to Another



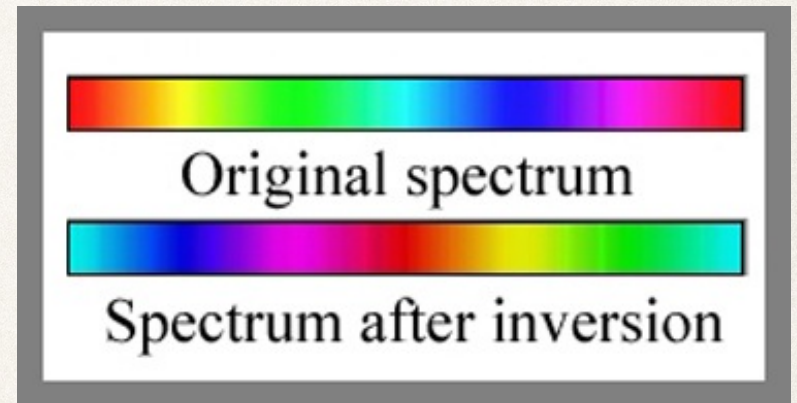
The Peculiarity of Mental States

Mental states are often called **qualia** by philosophers. The word “qualia” refers to the **subjective state** we are in while having experiences (e.g. seeing colors, feeling pain)

No one else except you knows what your mental states (=qualia) are really like. By contrast, physical or brain states can be studied and known by more than one person.

Why *Qualia* are Subjective

Imagine someone who sees colors according to a *color inverted spectrum*.



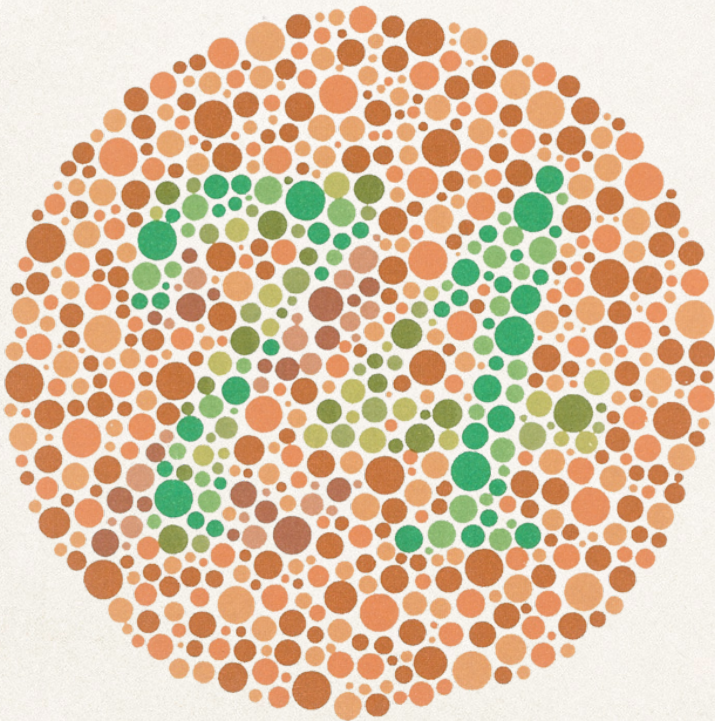
What Do You See When You Look at Bananas, Strawberries, Etc.?



Suppose you answer that what you see when you look at bananas and strawberries is what's on the left.

Does your answer show that your color spectrum is not inverted?

The Inverted Spectrum is Not Like Color Blindness



With normal vision one should be able to see the number 74. If not, one has some form of color blindness.

By contrast, there is no easy test that can tell us whether someone sees with the color inverted spectrum.

I Cannot Know How You See Colors

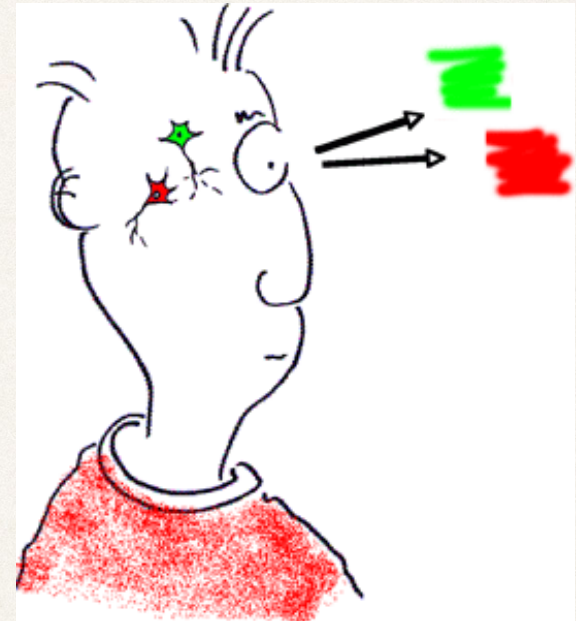


If your color spectrum is inverted, what you see on the left is what one without the inverted spectrum would see on the right. One with the inverted spectrum and one without the inverted spectrum would both say that bananas and strawberries look like what's on the left.

*Yet, the two people would have **different subjective experiences** when they see bananas and strawberries. The subjective experience of what it feels like to see a color is called **qualia**.*

The Challenge for the Physicalist

Based on just electrochemical activities in the brain, how can the physicalist give a completely physical explanation of **qualia**, for example, of the subjective experience of what it feels like to see the color red?



Jackson's Argument Against Physicalism

This is an argument that there *cannot possibly* be an explanation of **qualia** based on just electrochemical activities in the brain.

Jackson's *Knowledge Argument* (1)



Mary is a brilliant scientist . . . forced to investigate the world from a black and white room via a black and white television monitor. She . . . acquires . . . all the physical information there is to obtain about what goes on when we see ripe tomatoes, or the sky ...

She discovers, for example, just which wavelength combinations from the sky stimulate the retina, and exactly how this produces via the central nervous system the contraction of the vocal chords and expulsion of air from the lungs that results in the uttering of the sentence 'The sky is blue'.

Jackson's *Knowledge Argument* (2)

What will happen when Mary is released from her black and white room or is given a color television monitor? Will she learn anything or not?

It seems just obvious that she will learn something about the world and our visual experience of it. But then . . . her previous knowledge was incomplete. But she had all the physical information. Ergo . . . physicalism is false.



Summarizing the Argument

1. Mary has all the physical knowledge concerning human color vision while in the black-and-white room.
2. But there is some knowledge about human color vision that she does not have in the black-and-white room, namely the knowledge about the subjective experience (**=qualia**) of what it feels like to see, say, red.
3. So, some knowledge is not physical knowledge.
4. If some knowledge is not physical, the claim that there is nothing beyond physical facts (physicalism) is false.

An Objection to the Knowledge Argument: Right and Left

Jackson's knowledge argument is supposed to show that physical knowledge is not all the knowledge to be had—that there is some knowledge beyond physical knowledge. This is taken to show that physicalism is false.

But having a right or a left hand is a physical fact, no?

Yet, “right” and “left” are notions which cannot be expressed in the language of physics or chemistry.

Would it follow that right/left are not physical but rather mental qualities? This seems absurd.

So, there can be physical facts that cannot be expressed in the language of physics/chemistry.