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Philosophy

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Chalmers and the Thought Experiment

In *The Puzzle of Conscious Experience*, David J. Chalmers brings up the thought experiment to make the point that no one understands why consciousness is part of the subjective physical process of experience. He makes the argument that even though we do experience certain stimuli, that an automaton could easily be programmed to recognize such things. It is not convincing to me because much like Mary, to be taught to process or recognize qualitatively a certain object greatly differs from the act of experiencing it. Much like a photo of a mountain vista, it only truly gains meaning when one is there surrounded by the view. We can easily recognize it, appreciate the beauty, consider what it is like, but until one basks in the full experience it is only a distant subjective aggregate of what it might feel like, or an accumulation of other subjective experience on what it could feel like. The knowledge of experiencing things like deep purple or a certain song can only be gained in the experience of undertaking it.