

Buddhism: Where and What is Consciousness

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The “Hard Problem” of Consciousness

- David Chalmers



- Why is it that when our cognitive systems engage in visual and auditory information-processing, we have visual or auditory experience: the quality of deep blue, the sensation of middle C?

Psychology

- Freud
- Gestalt (Berlin School)
- "The whole is other than the sum of the parts"

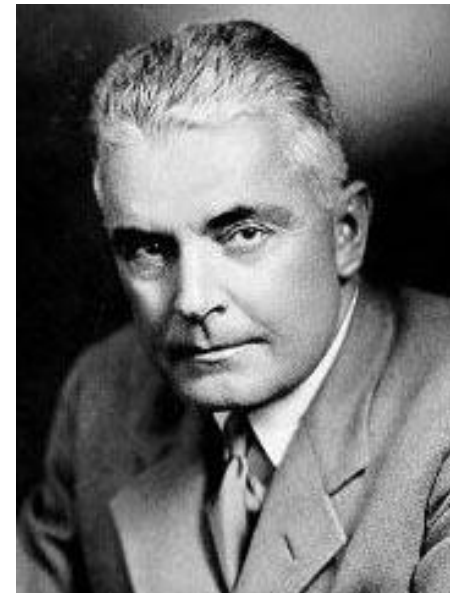


Buddhism

- "What is the All?
Simply the eye & forms,
ear & sounds, nose &
aromas, tongue &
flavors, body & tactile
sensations, intellect &
ideas. This, monks, is
called the All."
- Sensory and mental
consciousness is the
totality of human
experience.
- *Salayatana Vagga*

Psychology

- The time seems to have come when psychology must discard all reference to consciousness; when it need no longer delude itself into thinking that it is making mental states the object of observation.
 - Psychology as the Behaviorist Views it.
- John B. Watson (1913).



Buddhism

- Consciousness is a mental construct that is changing every moment depending on conditions.
- It is not a “thing” that exists as an independent entity

Buddhism

- Consciousness arises dependent on conditions...
 - Feeling, perception, volition, sensory-contact, and **attention**
- Cougar/Puma/
 - Mountain Lion

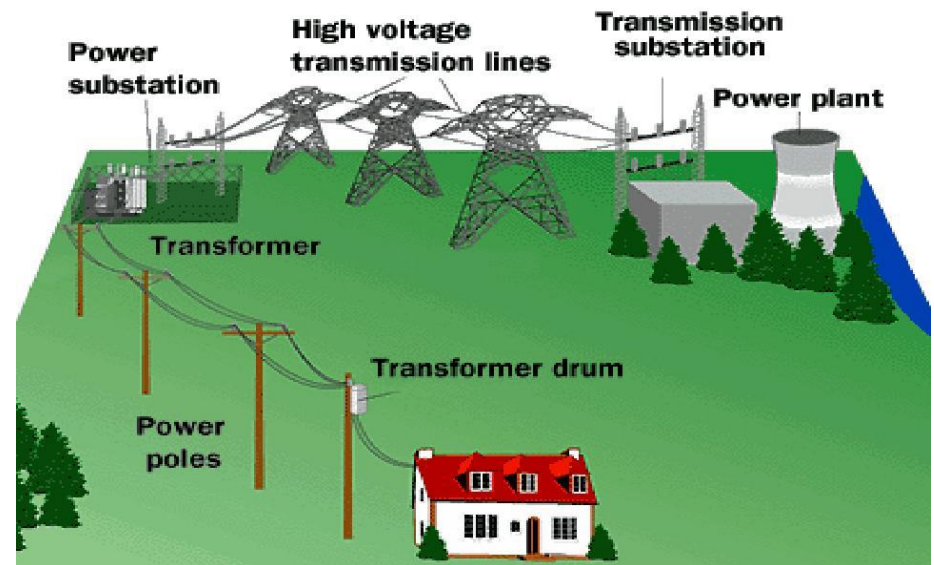


Behaviourism

- attempt to uncover laws describing the relationship between stimuli and responses, without reference to inner mental phenomena
- science of behavior like defining
- physics as the science of meter reading.
- Noam Chomsky



Appearance



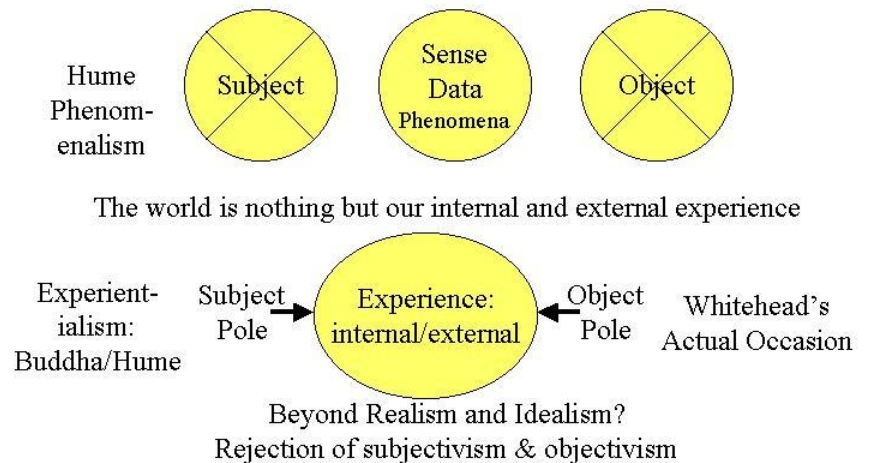
Epiphenomenon

- Is consciousness one?
- can be caused by physical phenomena, but cannot cause physical phenomena

ālaya-vijñāna

- “Store House Consciousness”
- Filled with *bija* ... the seeds for future experience.
-

Hume and Buddha



Buddhism

- Without consciousness there can be no sentient being
- Without body (materiality) there can be no sentient being



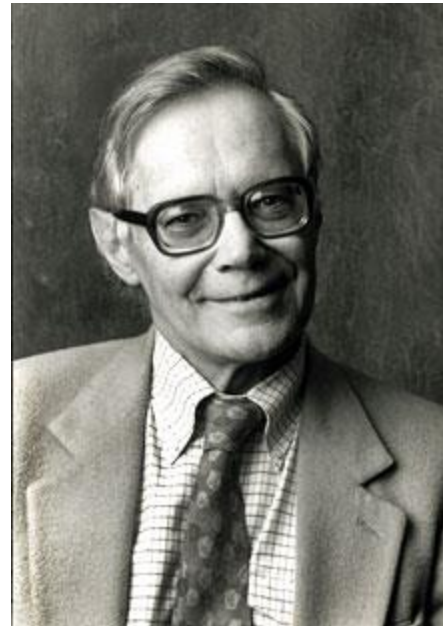
Cognitive Revolution

- Awareness and subjectivity are network effects involving many millions of nerve cells in the cortex and thalamus.
- Theoretical models can be tested by computers



Cognition

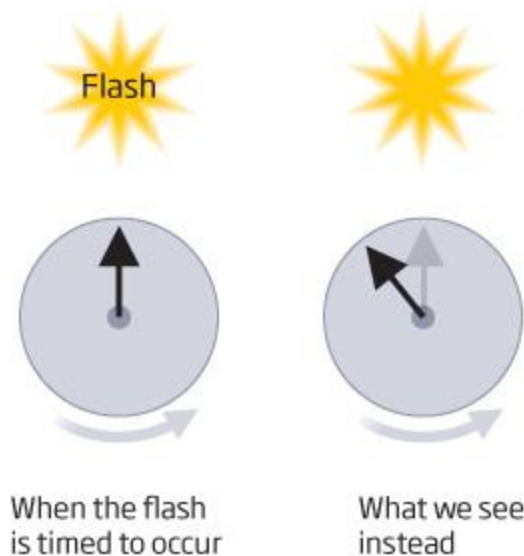
- The term "cognition" refers to all processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used. It is concerned with these processes even when they operate in the absence of relevant stimulation, as in images and hallucinations..
- Ulric Neisser



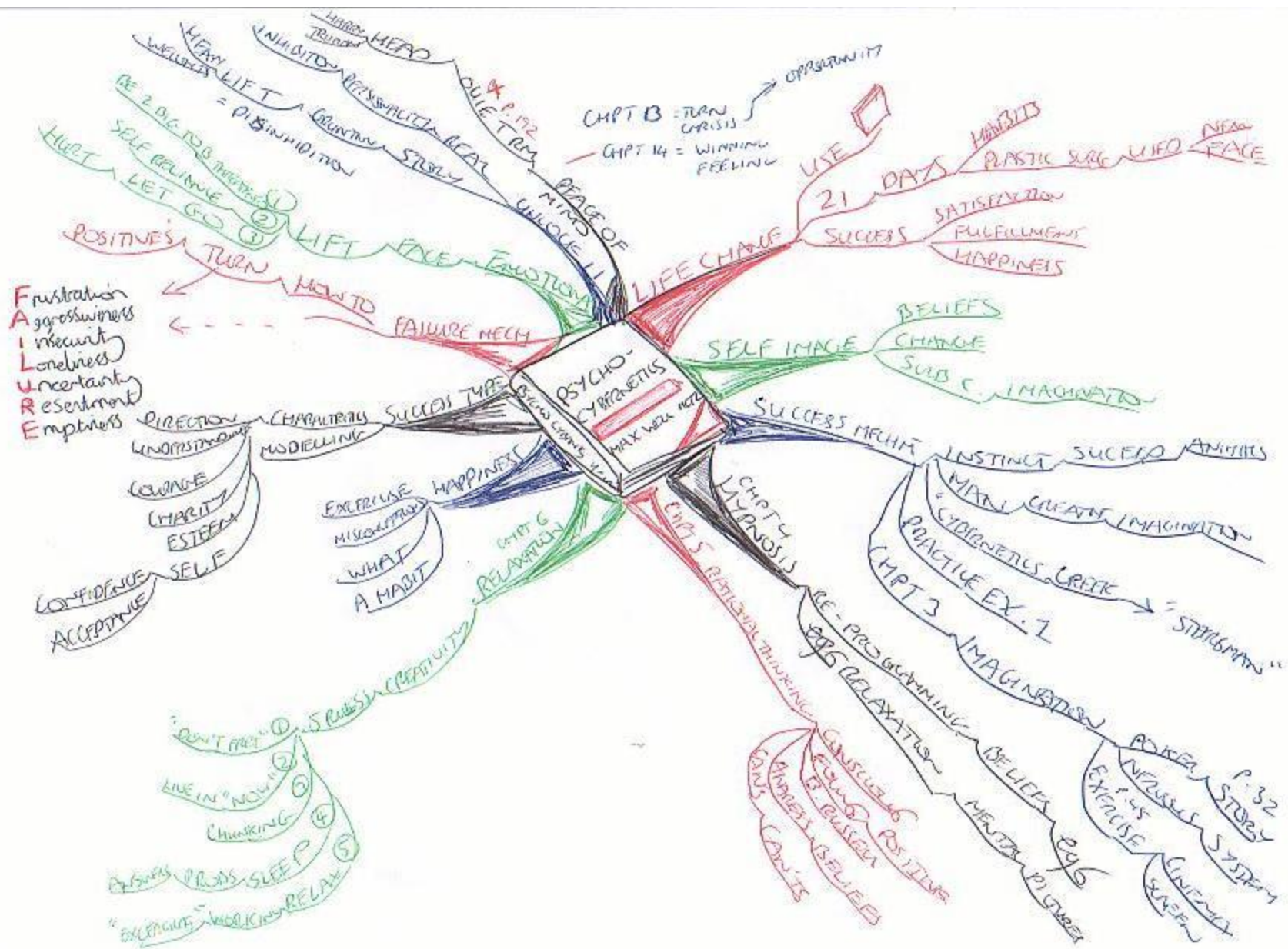
Buddhism

Now you see it... ©NewScientist

In this flash-lag illusion, a spinning arrow and flashing spot are programmed to coincide precisely in time – but that's not what we see



- Pratyaksa
- First moment of impulse of sensory data on the brain.



Artificial Intelligence



- Alan Turing

Who's in charge?



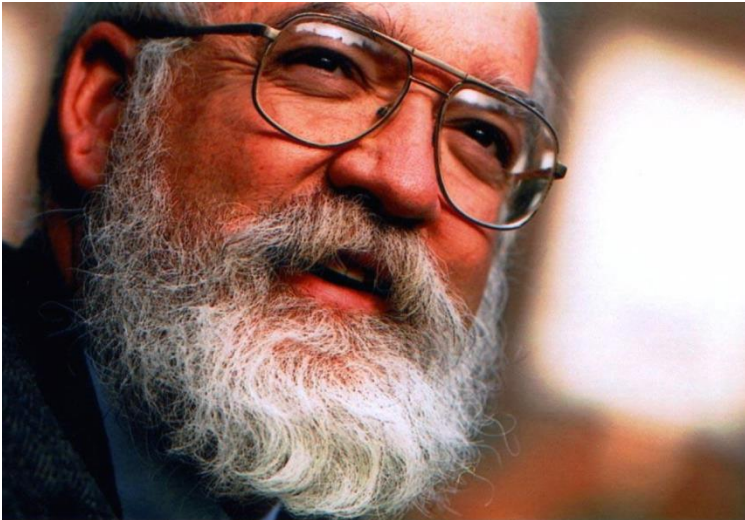
- Automatic car takes blind man to destination.

Stalinesque Paradigm



- All decisions have been pre-made and the trial is just a fiction of justice.

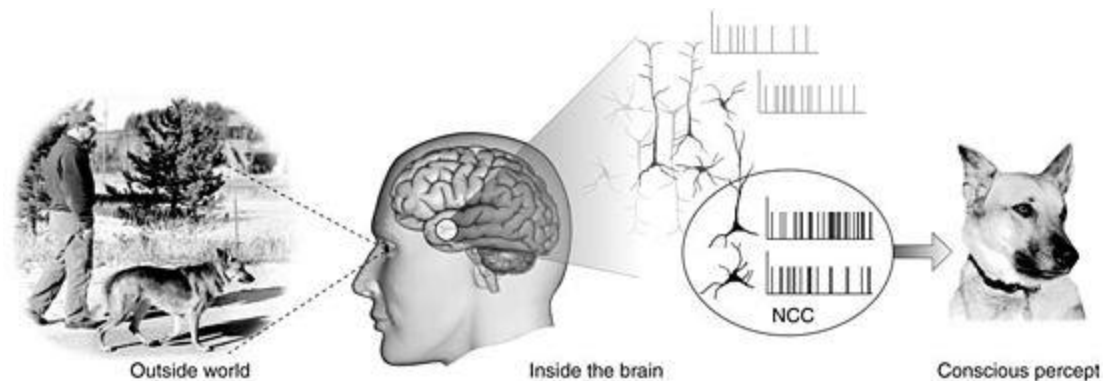
- Daniel Dennet



- Brain is an information processor.
- There is no internal conscious experience

Buddhist Consciousness

- Consciousness is not an agent
- It is a process of a system....



Predictive Coding

- Karl Friston

What are you really in?

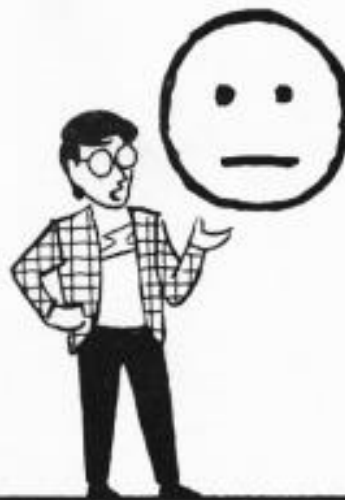


- The brain is an inference machine...providing probabilistic representations of what caused its sensory input

THE FACT THAT
YOUR MIND IS
CAPABLE OF TAKING
A *CIRCLE, TWO DOTS*
AND A *LINE* AND
TURNING THEM INTO
A *FACE* IS
NOTHING SHORT OF
INCREDIBLE!



BUT STILL *MORE*
INCREDIBLE IS THE
FACT THAT YOU
CANNOT *AVOID*
SEEING A FACE HERE.
YOUR MIND WON'T
LET YOU!

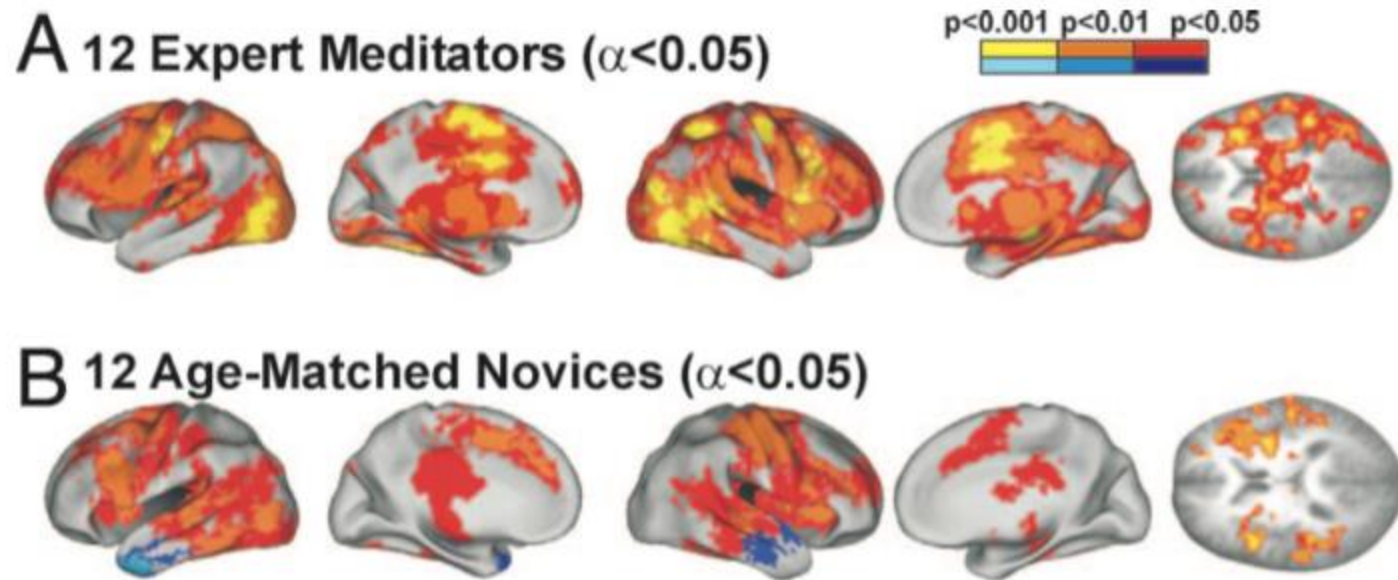


Plasticity

- "neurons that fire together, wire together"/"neurons that fire apart, wire apart."
- Medical students' brains were imaged during the period when they were studying for their exams. In a matter of months, the students' gray matter increased significantly in the posterior and lateral parietal cortex

Plasticity

- Buddhist meditation



- What comes to an end when *Nibbana* is attained is not the world, rather a wrong interpretation of the world.
- Y. Karunadasa