

A SUMMARY OF CHAPTER ONE

This new theory of consciousness was born from the insight that a class of neurons in the brain may actually be functioning in the same manner as the colored pixels (the tiny phosphorescent dots) on a television screen. Individually, their firings produce only infinitesimal electromagnetic bursts of an inwardly visible light, perhaps in an assortment of wavelengths (an array of colors). In the aggregate, however, this coherent, spatially extended, fine-grained quantum electromagnetic field is directly experienced by and as the Light of consciousness. These presentation neurons are the natural conduit between the body (matter) and the mind (an energetic field of Light).

Presentation neurons can be arranged in circular rings, one firing into the next, like colored lights around a theater marquee. Since the constituent neurons can be made to fire at predictable rates, these rings behave like simple oscillators or resonators. Paired rings of various sizes are able to resonate and display simple ratios. In musical terms, for example, a ring of five neurons with a ring of six neurons forms a pitch ratio of 6:5 and can resonate—and therefore present to consciousness—an interval of a minor third. The neural resonance chamber can be compared to a violin—one that produces and resonates tremendously complex patterns of Light. The brain serves as an aesthetic device by means of which consciousness determines what is pleasing (desirable) and displeasing (undesirable).

These “pixels” and resonators are the building blocks used by natural selection to improve and refine the presentation. In due course they evolve into a platform that supports and presents the vast sound and light extravaganza that now surrounds you: the sensorium.

The electromagnetic field produced by the brain is minutely detailed, and it is precisely at this level of detail that we directly experience sights, sounds and bodily sensations. Even high resolution images of the electromagnetic field surrounding the cerebral cortex give no hint as to how intricately the field is actually arranged for presentation at the microscopic level.

A SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO

The chapters of this book present a series of progressive scans of the same complex object—sensorium consciousness in the bioluminescent brain. Each pass is intended to bring new features into focus, while deepening the understanding of material previously introduced. Here, the spotlight falls upon the spherical form of the sensorium presentation, revealing it to be a direct manifestation of the spheroid form of the cerebral cortex itself.

A catalogue of apparent inconsistencies in the topology of the brain has kept its straightforward presentational function well-hidden from scientific discovery. The very same cluster of anomalous features—when viewed 180° in reverse—constellate into a single, clear, and inescapable picture. Consciousness rides the brain backward! Like the prisoners in Plato's cave who can view only the shadows of reality cast upon the back wall and who can hear only echoes, we have no way of knowing from inside of our own sensorium that the soul's orientation is likewise reversed from that of the physical body.

The parietal lobe is theorized to function as a full-service, multisensory integration cortex that melds the presentation of our projected body image with other sonic and visual objects into a single, oceanic somatoaudiovisual space. The prefrontal lobe, on the other hand, occupies the "dark half" of the sensorium sphere; as the nerve center of the hyper-vigilant executive, it does not specialize in the presentation of reality per se, but uses its best "intelligence estimates" to generate its own set of hypothetical scenarios and contingency plans.

The cerebral cortex is also referred to as the iso-cortex (the "same-cortex") because it has a nearly identical structure over the full six and a half square feet of its surface area. It is not this fact alone but a preponderance of circumstantial evidence that leads me to make this overly bold hypothesis: that most, if not all, of the surface of the cerebral cortex is structured for neurobioluminescent presentation and continuously engages aspects of consciousness in unimaginably diverse modalities of sensory and symbolic display.

THE MYTH OF CUPID AND PSYCHE

A SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THREE

The myth of Cupid and Psyche is introduced. These characters will reappear throughout the book to illustrate aspects of the relationship between the body and the mind in much more visceral, human terms. In the myth, Cupid, the god of carnal love, builds a palace for the mortal Psyche, the personification of the mind of beauty and light. Cupid's palace represents the body, in particular the brain and the neuronal structures that support and constrain the sensorium presentation. This "living palace" provides Psyche with every sensuous delight but can also be experienced as an oppressive prison that she is never permitted to leave.

The vacillations in Psyche's mood highlight a curious facet of this new theoretical perspective—that the primary function of even the most primitive sentient animal mind is fundamentally "aesthetic." Desire (liking) propels movement toward an object; aversion (disliking) propels movement away from an object. These are the two most basic and universal functions of animal life. The ability to move toward and to move away from is, after all, what distinguishes mobile animals from their firmly rooted plant cousins.

Cupid is revealed to be both a loving husband and a monstrous tyrant who keeps Psyche in the dark as to his true nature. The relationship between Cupid and Psyche, the body and the mind, is strained. Psyche's curiosity to discover who her husband actually is represents our own thirst to understand what it means to be a spiritual essence housed within a physical body.

A SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR

This theoretical model of consciousness rests upon a single “meta-physical” postulate: that the quantum electromagnetic field is the source of a basic proto-awareness from which our own highly articulated conscious awareness is formed by evolutionary forces.

The sensorium is the quantum electromagnetic field produced by the firings of neurons that mimics the shapes and textures of the forms perceived in the outer world. The quantum field presentation is self-aware—its powerful sense of subjectivity due in large measure to the topology of the presentation—a hollow, spherical surround—from which it infers the self/world dichotomy and its own self-centrality.

The cerebral cortex is, topologically, a crumpled two-dimensional surface, overlaid with a wide variety of sensory cortical maps, which function as brightly-lit, constantly refreshed “presentation screens” of the primary sense modalities.

Awareness always arises in an initial state of blinding bewilderment at the moment of its emergence. It has no idea who or what it is—it is only aware of its own becoming. This is the source of its “affinity” for light and for further becoming, and its “disinclination” to return to darkness and annihilation.

The Light itself, an elaborate electromagnetic field fluctuation produced by the collective firings of billions of neurons, takes the form of a “lightbody” that emerges and reemerges moment after moment from a single point of origin in the brainstem, expanding in complexity, “fleshing” itself out, as it retraces the evolutionary and developmental pathways of the brain, all within a fraction of a second.

Our bodies go to the considerable trouble of providing lodging for an indwelling conscious entity in order to be able to exploit its innate capacity to distinguish what it likes from what it dislikes. Desire and aversion, wrapped up in a tight bundle of delusion that is mistaken for selfhood—these are the three primal forces that maintain the fundamental structure and functionality of the “sentient being.”

A SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FIVE

The most profound philosophical question of all—how bare awareness itself came to exist within the substratum of the universe—may be well beyond the scope of human understanding. In this chapter, the view is put forth that everything shy of this Eternal Mystery may actually lie well within the realm of the understandable.

The specific formulation of conscious awareness that we, as humans, are endowed with has been forged by hundreds of millions of years of Darwinian evolutionary pressures. We cannot find in this world examples of consciousness existing in the abstract; the human mind has evolved into its current form through natural processes deeply embedded in the wet world of biology. Sensorium consciousness is evolution's practical application of a potentiality already inherent in the understructure of the physical and energetic universe.

The links between Buddhist thought and evolutionary biology are first broached in this chapter. Buddhism's goal is to understand the true nature of reality and in so doing to alleviate the root causes of unhappiness. The Buddha's Three Marks of Existence—suffering, impermanence, and no-self—are all irrefutable biophysical realities, enunciated expressly to thwart our futile attempts to find enduring happiness through the usual channels: by satisfying all desires and avoiding all aversive situations. This sobering troika makes short work of our infantile dreams of Heaven (a place of Eternal Happiness for Me). We can gain fresh insights into the Dharma through the scientific investigation of consciousness and its pivotal role in evolution.

Jason Brown's theory of microgenesis is highlighted in this chapter because it offers a key insight into a possible mechanism for linking together three seemingly unrelated fundamental processes essential to the evolution of conscious, animate life. He shows how the entire evolutionary history of our species is not only paralleled in the stages of growth of a fetus during the course of its development, but that this recapitulation also happens continuously within the brain—moment after moment—propelling ever fresh iterations of consciousness through the same evolutionary and developmental sequence.