THEORY OF CONTINUOUS MIND · INTRODUCTION

How does an experience come to be this experience?

Qualia, perspective and trajectory in the Theory of Continuous Mind

WHAT IT IS

This investigation examines qualia: the felt character of a particular experience, such as seeing a red or feeling pain. The TMC reconstructs how something appears to someone, acquires a quality, and changes the one who will go on experiencing. Its central hypothesis is that operation and experiential manifestation belong to the same realization. Explaining this relationship, however, requires more than giving the whole a name.

WHAT QUESTIONS DOES THIS SERIES INVESTIGATE?

- How does an experience come to be this experience?
- Where does the “here” from which something appears come from?
- How do different experiences belong to a single now?
- Does this reconstruction explain why anything is felt, or does it still presuppose that feeling?

KEY INSIGHTS

- **The quale may be an endpoint.** By the time we recognize a red or a pain, perspective, history and determination have already participated in its constitution.
- **The past can remain operative without being remembered.** Earlier encounters change the conditions of perception and action even when they do not return as recollections.
- **Perhaps unity precedes multiplicity.** The TMC investigates whether distinct contents result from the differentiation of a common presence rather than from their subsequent assembly.
- **An accurate description can still leave something out.** Depicting an instant is not the same as reconstructing the trajectory that made that experience possible.
- **An occurrence is not exhausted by the way it appears.** It may manifest differently depending on the encounter, without its existence depending on who perceives it.

PURPOSE / CONNECTIONS

- **Philosophy of mind:** distinguish why something manifests, why it takes on a particular quality, and why it happens for someone — closely related questions, but not necessarily identical ones.
- **Perception and neuroscience:** relate the proposal to research on perceptual organization, self-location and temporal integration, distinguishing partial empirical support from demonstration of the hypothesis.
- **Contemplative inquiry:** examine what may disappear from experience without experience immediately ceasing, without turning reports of intensity or clarity into metaphysical conclusions.

PLACE IN THE THESIS

This series develops the TMC's investigation of experience. It begins with a scene, reconstructs perspective, selection and trajectory, and examines philosophical consequences, evidence and limits. The remaining chapters develop the structural organization of this proposal through the Triad: Within, Between and Ahead (*Dentro, Entre e Adiante*).

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01 From Encounter to Lived Experience

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01 From Encounter to Lived Experience

THEORY OF CONTINUOUS MIND (TMC) · BLOCK 01

01 From Encounter to Lived Experience

The meditator thought experiment: perspective, trajectory and Brilho.

WHAT IT IS

A thought experiment follows a meditator who opens his eyes in a room: something appears, acquires contours, and encounters a history that already participates in that instant. The TMC proposes understanding lived experience as the situated realization of operation itself, articulating perspective, trajectory and *Brilho* (Glow) — experiential manifestation for the one who lives through the encounter.

QUESTIONS

- How do perspective and trajectory participate in what we encounter?
- How do the effects of an encounter change subsequent encounters?
- Does distinguishing experience from operation mean identifying two occurrences?

- What does the reconstruction explain — and what does it still merely name?
- Is considering the relevant causes equivalent to reconstructing a trajectory?

KEY INSIGHTS

- **The same action can arise from different compositions.** Approaching out of attraction or despite aversion does not exhaust the organization of the encounter.
- **The past remains operative.** It participates in the present through the organization it has modified, without needing to be replayed with every new action.
- **The scope of the selection must be made explicit.** Causes sufficient to explain a response do not, by themselves, exhaust its historical constitution.
- **Reflection is already another occurrence.** Investigating an experience does not demonstrate that the original encounter contained a separate operation and feeling.

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THE QUALIA MEDITATOR

> *EDITORIAL NOTE: The meditator experiment. Before concepts, the occurrence. The scene below shows, in the first person, what the TMC will subsequently attempt to decompose without destroying the flow it seeks to explain.*

1. THERE IS — PRESENCE AND POSITION

A meditator is sitting in the middle of a dark room.
The light comes on. He stops meditating and opens his eyes.
There is brightness. The space is lit.
He experiences:
"There is something."

He is in the center of the room.
He experiences the continuous selection of himself:
"I, here, in the middle of something."

Before naming anything, he experiences:
"There are differences."

2. TRAJECTORY — DIFFERENCES DO NOT ARRIVE ALIKE

But differences do not arrive alike.
Abstract traces of his Trajectory already incline the realization.
Among carpet, wall, door and other differences, one acquires Weight.
He experiences:
"That difference."

He still does not know what it is.
Indeterminate traces of the Trajectory come into play.

3. SELECTION — FROM DIFFERENCE TO OBJECT

A contour of the form emerges.
He selects.
"There is an edge."

He then determines and experiences:
"This is incense."

Now Weight and Polarity already belong to a determination:
"This incense."

4. THE HAZE — THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

Determinate traces of the Trajectory come into play.
A modified past arriving in the present.
Smell, form, familiarity, expectation.
He experiences:
"I used to like this."

The object has gradually become determinate, from the subtle "there is something" to the coarser "THIS WAY."
Overlapping states result in a composite state.
A brief second was formed by preceding years.
And the event produces a new trace.
"I have a trace."

I will never encounter the same room again.

5. MOVEMENT — THE WORLD CHANGES WITH THE "HERE"

I walk around the room.
All the objects change as I walk.
He experiences a new continuous selection of himself.

GENERAL REFLECTIONS

The meditator is not merely a succession of states. He is a mental flow unfolding in a spiral. One question is what must exist for experience to occur. Another is what makes this experience this one rather than another. Presence is where the two meet. First we describe appearing. Then we propose a mechanism for its constitution. We do not confuse one with the other. **The instance does not manufacture the world inside itself. It selects from the world starting from a "here."** The lineage's arrangement for continuing structures the instance's perspective for operating and transmitting the minimum of itself. Lineage is an arrangement, not an intention or substance. In selections that are difficult to bring to closure, this same process may incline experience toward a metaphysical sense — without thereby allowing us to conclude that a corresponding metaphysical reality either exists or does not exist.

> ***I DO NOT THINK IN ORDER TO EXIST.***
> ***I EXIST BY PARTICIPATING.***
> ***I PARTICIPATE BY THINKING.***

WHY IS THERE BRILHO? LIVED EXPERIENCE WITHOUT ADDING ANOTHER EXPERIENCE?

What is lived experience like without adding something further to it?

The TMC investigates whether lived experience is the situated realization of operation itself. We will reconstruct perspective, determination and Texture to evaluate this hypothesis, without assuming *a priori* an additional experiential layer.

A) THE REAL

We begin with a Real without intention, purpose or meaning previously given to the instance. There are processes and differences, as yet unidentified by it. We do not presuppose a substance of the Self or a ready-made entity awaiting connection.

B) SELECTION FROM THE REAL

To sustain its organization and participate in the continuity of its lineage, the instance must operate in the Real. Through the articulation of Within, Between and Ahead, it selects differences and relations, making part of that Real operable. **Constituted does not mean arbitrary: the differences encountered and the consequences of actions constrain the selection.**

C) THE EVENT OF SELECTION

Selection is the event of greatest significance for an instance: its participation in existence from a position of its own. It is there that a “here” is constituted — a world related to this instance. In selecting, it encounters the Real and is modified by the encounter. This event does not presuppose a metaphysical substance: it is constituted functionally within the arrangement itself.

D) THE LIGHT OF SELECTION

Metaphorically, selection switches on a light: it establishes a “here.” The surroundings acquire presence in relation to that point, even though objects have not yet been determined. In illuminating the field, the instance illuminates its own position within it. The light establishes perspective; the objects are not yet defined.

E) SELECTION FROM THE REAL AND THE “IN ME”

Selection is organized from a perspective: the instance's own position in the encounter.

From that position, it acts in the Real. The effects of the encounter fall upon it as costs, benefits and changes to its conditions of continuity.

There is a back-and-forth: it acts, and the consequences of that action can modify the one that acted.

"In me" names this causal return: many occurrences update the state of the same instance, orienting its next selection.

Its character is operational: it brings together the multiple effects in the organization that will continue to act. **The effects do not wait for recognition of a Self before modifying the instance.**

F) THE "IN ME" INCLINED TOWARD AN OBJECT

Differences do not have equal relevance for the instance. Its inherited organization and trajectory incline selection, while the effects incorporated by the "in me" can change that inclination. Some difference acquires emphasis even before being determined as an object.

The light begins to acquire direction.

G) THE SPOT OF INCLINATION

The emphasis concentrates the light upon a difference. The focus may be wide or narrow. What is selected acquires a contour, is identified, and becomes fixed as the object of selection. The instance begins to operate in contact with this determined object.

H) THE RETURN FROM CONTACT

The effects of contact fall upon the instance in a determinate way: differences, intensities, Weight and Polarity make up the Texture of this encounter.

The same action can result from different compositions: approaching out of attraction or approaching despite aversion. When this difference remains operative, it can modify attention, hesitation and subsequent selections. **The direction of an action does not exhaust the organization of the encounter.** Explaining only the response produced may leave aspects of the realization unexplained.

This return changes its state, its perspective and its inclinations. It can also change the criteria by which subsequent objects will be selected and determined. Basal light orients the spot; contact modifies the organization that will orient the next focus. Up to this point, we have described the operational

determination of the encounter. Its identification with experiential Texture is the hypothesis under investigation.

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN POINT-LIGHT AND THE SPOT

Point-light and the spot mutually condition one another.

When the instance moves, distances, angles and relations with its surroundings change. When its state changes, its priorities of selection may change. It is like moving through a room with a light: the illumination, shadows and what stands out all change.

When the instance focuses on an object, point-light remains as a background reference, while the spot concentrates emphasis on the object.

Metaphorically, this resembles background illumination and a directed focus within the same field: the object stands out, while the surroundings continue to contribute to the contours, shapes and contrasts that appear. In the encounter, the object acquires a dimension of Texture for the instance. **The focus brings the object to the fore without erasing the field in which it appears.**

The "here" participates in determining the object for the instance: changes in this relation can alter the contour and relevance of what appears.

Change the "here," and the selection changes; the effects of contact modify the one who will select again.

BASAL BRILHO AND THE BRILHO OF THE SPOT

We call *basal Brilho* the subtle experiential manifestation of the instance itself within a situated realization — a "here" upon which effects fall, the "in me." We call *the Brilho of the spot* the experiential manifestation of the selected object for that instance. **Its determination, relevance and Texture characterize how it manifests. Light and glow are metaphors used to describe aspects of this realization, without presupposing additional matter or substance.**

REMOVING BRILHO IS NOT REMOVING AN OBJECT

If Brilho is the fact that experience appears, then it is not a separate component within the system. On the TMC hypothesis, Brilho is not something added; it is constitutive of manifestation. If the object manifests, it is because it appears, and if the object's Texture is present, it is because it comes into presence. How could one remove the coming-into-presence from appearing? Everything that comes into presence appears.

Appearing emphasizes the occurrence: an event of what is manifested. Coming into presence emphasizes belonging: that which comes into presence in this manifested event. Not two occurrences, but two aspects of the same manifestation.

RECURRENCE IS OPERATIONAL FEEDBACK

Action, effect, return. The instance acts in the Real; the effects fall upon it and change its next action. It is a back-and-forth with a trajectory: each return changes the conditions of the next throw. **The past remains effective in the present state, giving the circuit its temporality.** Selecting, acting, incorporating effects and operating again: none of these relations requires adding a separate lived experience in order to function.

It is operation itself constituting references, objects and meanings that are not previously given in the Real.

LIVED EXPERIENCE WITHOUT ADDITION

We separate the process in order to explain its constitution. In operation, these relations are articulated: the instance encounters something from its perspective, receives its effects and continues in a modified state. **The present does not carry history as a caption. It carries an organization that history has modified.**

A walk need not be added to the steps: it is walking as it happens. The TMC investigates whether lived experience and operation stand in a similar relation: two ways of recognizing a single realization.

In the haze of the present, the effects of a long trajectory converge. Basal light, the spot, determination and Texture form a

configuration that we consider a unity. Our hypothesis is that “lived experience” names this joint realization in the present.

“Lived experience” still names what is felt. What we investigate is its relation to operation: is it something added to the process, or is it this very process happening for the instance?

To investigate this question, the TMC uses Factor X: it suspends the anticipated answer, preserves the phenomenon and investigates its constitution. It then reconciles the name with what has been reconstructed, checking in what sense “lived experience” describes this realization and which assumptions must be revised. In the end, the name may be replaced or retained, with its meaning preserved or reformulated, according to what the investigation supports.

Let us provisionally call this occurrence X, keeping within it what we feel. Which aspect of X does the reconstruction explain, and which does it still merely name? **Neither the name “lived experience” nor the name “operation” should settle the answer in advance.**

If lived experience is the process itself taking place, its function lies in what that process does: it organizes what we perceive, changes our state and orients our next action. Lived experience need not produce an additional effect: its effects are the effects of this very process. The photograph is its partial representation.

EXPERIENCE DOES NOT NEED AN EXTRA EFFECT

If experience and operation belong to the same occurrence, experience need not produce a separate effect in order to be real. A walk need not do something beyond the steps. The walk is the very act of walking. In the third person, we see the path. In the first person, we live the step. The path already traveled does not appear in its entirety in the instant, but it is present in what brought us to that instant.

Having a perspective is not adding something to reality. It is allowing reality to come into view from a vanishing point.

A corridor does not narrow in the distance, but from a particular position its lines seem to converge toward a vanishing point. Perspective does not create a second, distorted corridor. It changes how the same corridor appears.

I might ask you: “What is it like to live in a world where everything narrows in the distance?” You would answer: “I already know how that works. It emerges from my condition of selecting the scene.”

EMPIRICAL SUBJECTIVE EMERGENCE?

The TMC avoids using "emergence" as a generic explanation. Here, the term refers to patterns, properties, or capacities that depend on a system's organization and interactions and are absent from its isolated components. The focus is on what can be observed, tested, or demonstrated in explicit models, without presupposing additional metaphysical substances or laws. **Calling a phenomenon emergent does not replace explaining how it is constituted.**

Certain ants deposit chemical signals that others follow and reinforce. These interactions can produce collective trails without any individual ant planning the group's route. Source

By swirling water in a container, we can create a whirlpool. No isolated molecule possesses that funnel shape: its form belongs to the organized movement of the water. Source

As water evaporates from a salt solution, crystals can form. The particles organize into a repeating arrangement, producing a geometric structure absent from each particle in isolation. Source

These are observable phenomena: we investigate the interactions and conditions that make them possible.

Starlings gather in large flocks that trace shifting shapes across the sky. The formation contracts, expands, and changes direction as though it were a single being. Each bird adjusts its movement in relation to nearby birds, which do the same with others. One study found interactions with approximately six or seven neighbors, on average. This coordination does not require each bird to keep track of the entire formation. Source

Imagine one of these birds observing the flock from outside: it would encounter a collective movement different from the local adjustments in which it had participated. We need not add an invisible bird directing all the others. **Each participant helps produce a movement that also changes its own way of flying.**

Observing the formation is not equivalent to reconstructing the relationships that produce it; participating in those relationships does not require representing the entire group.

This image helps frame a question about subjective experience. How much of the organization that makes what we feel now possible becomes apparent when we examine it?

Experience is felt now, but what constitutes it did not necessarily begin now. Under the TMC hypothesis, a trajectory may be incorporated into the organization that realizes this moment without becoming fully apparent when we examine it.

What seems inexplicable when we isolate its present manifestation may become comprehensible through investigating how it was constituted. In this sense, the TMC investigates whether the constitution of subjective experience can be explained through the organization and trajectory of the occurrence, rather than treating experience as an unexplained addition to it.

As the preceding examples show, properties that manifest in particular arrangements but not in their isolated components **are not rare in nature**. Why could subjective experience not be investigated along these same lines?

Unlike the collective patterns above, subjective experience presents a further difficulty: explaining the organization is not automatically explaining why that organization is felt. This is precisely what remains to be investigated.

Failing to recognize in isolated parts what manifests in their organization does not demonstrate the need for an additional metaphysical substance. These examples do not explain consciousness by analogy: they make a possibility comprehensible while leaving its explanation necessary.

Before declaring experience inexplicable, we need to investigate whether the scope of our examination preserves what would be needed to explain it.

Sometimes, what seems extraordinary takes shape through ordinary processes we fail to notice as it forms.

EMERGENT DREAM

A dream may seem like an extraordinary world when considered only from within the experience. But its present manifestation does not reveal the entire history of the processes that made it possible. Asking, while still inside it, “When did this world begin?” or “Why does it appear this way?” may not reveal its own constitution.

It would be like asking a bird, “Why does the flock’s formation appear this way to you?” The bird participates in the relationships that produce the collective movement without needing to represent the whole. If a biologist reconstructed how that formation comes into being, demanding a second entity to produce the same formation could simply reintroduce into the explanation what it has already made unnecessary.

THE BIRD’S DREAMED WORLD

We could imagine another world and tell the bird: “Fly with the same movements, the same interactions, and the same relationships, but without the formation they constitute.”

In the case of the flock, such a subtraction cannot simply be stipulated while preserving the very relationships that produce its collective pattern.

But could we perform a similar subtraction with experience? Could we remove what is felt while fully preserving its physical realization?

The example forces us to examine what we are removing and what we presume to preserve.

Before subtracting the extraordinary, we must investigate what we are removing along with it.

The apparent gulf between the flight of each bird and the flock's emergent formation does not, by itself, justify positing an additional law to bridge it. Nor can first-person access, by itself, be elevated to an ontological privilege when the very function and constitution of that access are under investigation.

If the question returns — "But why is it felt?" — we must identify which aspect of experience the reconstruction has left unexplained. Repeating the question does not, by itself, demonstrate that the explanation has failed. The objection must become more explicit: **What, exactly, remains unexplained? What do you want to add to the explanation, and why?**

The explanation must account for the phenomenon; the objection must engage with the explanation.

TWO DESCRIPTIONS, TWO OCCURRENCES?

The photograph operates within the film.

The trajectory constitutes the organization that reaches the present. To operate, the instance uses the conditions left in place by that formation.

When we experience, we participate in what is happening now. We can partially represent this realization as a photograph. When we investigate its constitution, we reconstruct the film of the trajectory that made it possible.

When it produces a partial representation of these conditions, that photograph also participates in operation: it orients present action, and its results return to the circuit. The film constitutes the conditions for operating; the photograph makes aspects of those conditions accessible to operation itself. It partially represents the operative unity constituted by the convergence of different effects in the haze of the present. Isolating the instant from its constitution is like throwing a ball upward, photographing it in the air and

asking, “Why is it flying?” The photograph records an instant; the throw and the movement explain how it got there.

Conversely, demanding a complete reconstruction of the trajectory for every action would be like demanding that a film several hours long be replayed in the brief moment of acting. **The instance operates with the incorporated effects of its history, without needing to replay that history.**

The photograph partially represents a configuration; the film reconstructs its constitution. **On the TMC hypothesis, lived experience belongs to the situated realization that the photograph represents.**

CONSIDERING THE RELEVANT CAUSES × CONSIDERING THE TRAJECTORY

When analyzing an experience, we may ask for its relevant causes: the stimulus received, the conditions of the encounter, the antecedents that help explain the response.

This may broaden the description and still produce another photograph.

A photograph can include earlier events and still remain a limited selection of what composes the encounter. Adding antecedents to the frame does not demonstrate that we have reconstructed its constitution.

A photograph with a past may still be a photograph.

When we select one cause as primary, we find within it conditions that have already been constituted by others. Each antecedent can open further branches of dependence. **What appears to be a proximate cause may concentrate the participation of an extensive network of prior conditions.**

Some of these contributions may seem negligible when examined separately and still be decisive in their composition. Evaluating each contribution in isolation is not enough to establish the importance of the whole that made the primary cause possible. Fixing the beginning of what counts as “relevant” at that point requires justifying what the selection preserves of this composition.

“Relevant” therefore calls for a question: relevant to explaining what? Why did the meditator turn his gaze toward the apple? How did that difference become capable of holding his attention? What will this encounter change in the way he looks again?

An irregularity in the apple's skin may explain the focus. But it encountered an organization already formed: the gaze that recognized it, the expectation that singled it out, and the disposition to remain before it also have a history.

An explanation may begin with the mark on the apple. The constitution of that gaze did not necessarily begin there.

To calculate the direction of a movement, a few conditions may suffice. But approaching out of attraction or approaching despite aversion can produce the same direction without the same composition of the encounter. If this difference remains operative, it can modify hesitation, attention and subsequent selections.

What suffices to explain this step may not suffice to understand who will take the next one.

The investigator selects what to follow according to the question being asked. The instance selects differences through an organization transformed by its previous encounters.

The trajectory transforms the very funnel through which something can become relevant.

To reconstruct it is to investigate how encounters have changed the conditions for encountering, selecting and operating again.

The past need not remain intact as an archive. Its effects may be incorporated in the present organization. A description that preserves this organization, its dynamics and relations may preserve those effects without enumerating every antecedent.

Where the frame of explanation ends is not, for that reason alone, where what made the frame possible ends.

If “relevant” is used in a broad sense to include the entire constitution of the encounter, then the requirement goes beyond the selected causes: it encompasses the world of relations in which they were constituted. If the aim is to preserve that entire world, together with its history, **let us say it directly: bring the world.** A selection of antecedents must not be called completeness without justification.

The TMC also makes selections. Its task is to investigate the relations that its selection may leave out of view, without confusing the boundary of a description with the boundary of the occurrence.

WHEN THE NAME SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING ELSE

We have reconstructed perspective, determination, Texture, integration and transformation of the instance. We call this joint realization “lived experience.” When investigating the realization itself, the apparatus works like a camera photographing itself: it produces a partial image while continuing to operate.

When we think about what we feel, we make that feeling an object of investigation. This reflection is a new occurrence within the process. It does not demonstrate that the original encounter already consisted of an operation and a separate feeling, nor does it require someone inside the instance watching the encounter.

I can feel pain and then ask what it is. The question adds an investigation of the pain; it does not retroactively create the pain it investigates.

The photograph allows us to point to the whole, but it does not reveal its entire formation. This partiality can make the result appear independent of the process that constitutes it. **Giving it a name does not establish a second occurrence.**

What does not appear in the photograph is not, for that reason, outside the process. When we represent lived experience as a finished thing, we may fail to show the relations that continue to constitute its happening.

FORMATION TAKES TIME; MANIFESTATION IS NOW

There is an important difference of time here. Experience occurs before it can be turned into an object of reflection by the instance itself.

The first event is the occurrence itself.

Afterward, that occurrence may be selected, represented, named or investigated by a State that has already been modified by it over the trajectory.

But there is another layer: what comes into presence now did not all originate now. The way it appears depends on a long preceding formation.

Formation takes place over time; manifestation takes place in the present.

Something manifests now, but comes into presence carrying the history that made this “this way” possible.

For that reason, the “here-now” and the “this-way-now” may seem like two things, when they may be two aspects of the same present occurrence.

Diachrony in formation; synchrony in manifestation. **Formation is long; coming into presence is now.**

This difference of perspective can create the appearance of two occurrences where there may be only one realization.

In explanation, we separate what arrives united in the occurrence.

BUT WHY IS IT FELT?

"Why is it felt?" can ask how a feeling might be added to the process, or how that very process constitutes what we feel. The TMC questions the need for an addition and investigates constitution. **Questioning the former does not remove the obligation to explain the latter.**

When an interlocutor asks why this realization is felt, the appropriate question is: which aspect of the felt character has this reconstruction left unexplained?

It is that shortcoming we need to make explicit; the difference between the names is not enough to establish it.

02 Map of Experience

THEORY OF CONTINUOUS MIND (TMC) · BLOCK 02

02 Map of Experience

Presence, selection and quale: two ways of analysing the same realization.

WHAT IT IS

A map of how the TMC investigates the constitution of experience: from presence and the selection of differences to the determined object and the quale. The chapter articulates operative and experiential aspects of the same situated realization, traversed by its trajectory.

QUESTIONS

- How did this experience come to be this experience?
- How are selection, the continuity of the instance and experiential manifestation articulated?
- What distinguishes Brilho from basal Brilho?
- At what point could experience be separated from operation?

KEY INSIGHTS

- **The map distinguishes aspects, not independent parts.** Operation and experience are examined as aspects of the same realization.
- **Continuity does not mean the permanence of each object.** Continuous selection sustains an intermittent Brilho; basal Brilho accompanies the experiential regime.
- **A unified present can have a heterogeneous constitution.** Effects formed at different moments participate together in present experience.
- **Description is already another realization.** The account of a quale is produced by an instance transformed by its preceding trajectory.

IN THIS BLOCK

THE UNDERLYING PROBLEM	OPERATIVE READING MAP
QUALITATIVE READING MAP	NOTES ON READING THE FIGURE
QUALE: SNAPSHOT × FILM	VISUAL MAP

CHAPTER MAP

The following map shows how the TMC organizes, with greater philosophical emphasis, the path from presence to the quale within a single realization. It presents the TMC's reframing of the problem and some of its consequences.

The other TMC chapters develop this arrangement with greater structural and topological emphasis through the Triad — Within, Between and Ahead (*Dentro, Entre e Adiante*).

THE UNDERLYING PROBLEM

A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

Many theories of mind examine first-person experience once it has become sufficiently constituted in the present: there is a red, a pain, an object, a quale — and then they ask what that experience is, what properties it has, or why it seems to accompany a particular operation.
The TMC does not abandon those questions. It merely moves one step back:

TMC QUESTION: **How did this experience come to be this experience?**

Chalmers distinguishes the phenomenal in general from the phenomenal in particular, but does not turn that distinction into a formal genealogy of the constitution of experience.

This chapter acknowledges that distinction. Its focus, however, is different: to investigate how what appears phenomenally in the present came to be constituted as this experience, while keeping open the question that began the dialectic:

“Why does experience accompany operation?”
“What is it like to have this experience?”

The map below begins along that path.

OPERATIVE READING MAP

The TMC seeks not merely to trace how an experience appears in its genesis, but to reconstruct the realization that makes such appearing possible. Thus, the first person is not taken as the exclusive horizon of analysis, nor does the investigation end by suspending causal explanation: experience, trajectory, operation and apparatus are examined as articulated aspects of the same realization.

The TMC investigates the quale not only as an already completed unit, but also through the path that constitutes it.

The terms below do not name ten separate things. They distinguish aspects of one realization:

> **SELECTION (*RECORTE*)**

An active operation through which an instance distinguishes a difference and orients itself towards it, opening a path of determination. **Selection precedes recognition, identification and naming.** (linear process)

SELECTED OBJECT

What was a difference has been singled out through selection and has become a target of determination for the instance. It may not yet be fully identified or fixed as this or that. (linear process)

FIXATION OF THE OBJECT

The active operation through which the selected object is sufficiently stabilized as this or that for this realization, moving into the foreground. (linear process)

THE CIRCULARITY OF EXISTING IN THE REAL

WHERE DO THESE IMPULSES COME FROM?

In the TMC, the impulses to exist and to select are effects of the arrangement, not intentions preceding it. "Impulse" names an operative tendency of the constituted organization: to delimit itself, distinguish differences and continue operating.

This arrangement is understood through the articulation of Within, Between and Ahead (*Dentro, Entre e Adiante*) — maintenance and reconstruction of the instance, the participation of differences in encounters, and continuity beyond the present instance. **The Triad will be developed later.**

It is not an intention to continue that produces the arrangement; it is the arrangement that carries out operations through which continuity becomes possible.

IMPULSE TO SELECT (IR)

— a fundamental operative tendency of an instance to produce selections of objects in response to differences arising within its space of contact. The impulse is neither optional nor intermittent: it is an operative condition for the instance to remain self-operative rather than stay in operative darkness. The impulse names its operative aspect; the experiential manifestation of the selected object is called Brilho.

I select in order to exist. I exist in order to select. (circular process)

IMPULSE TO EXIST (IE)

— a fundamental tendency of the instance to preserve its continuity through continuous self-selection, seeking sufficient closure of its still-indeterminate boundaries.
The impulse names its operative aspect; the experiential manifestation of this self-selection is called basal Brilho.
I exist in order to select. I select in order to exist. (circular process)

SYNTHESIS

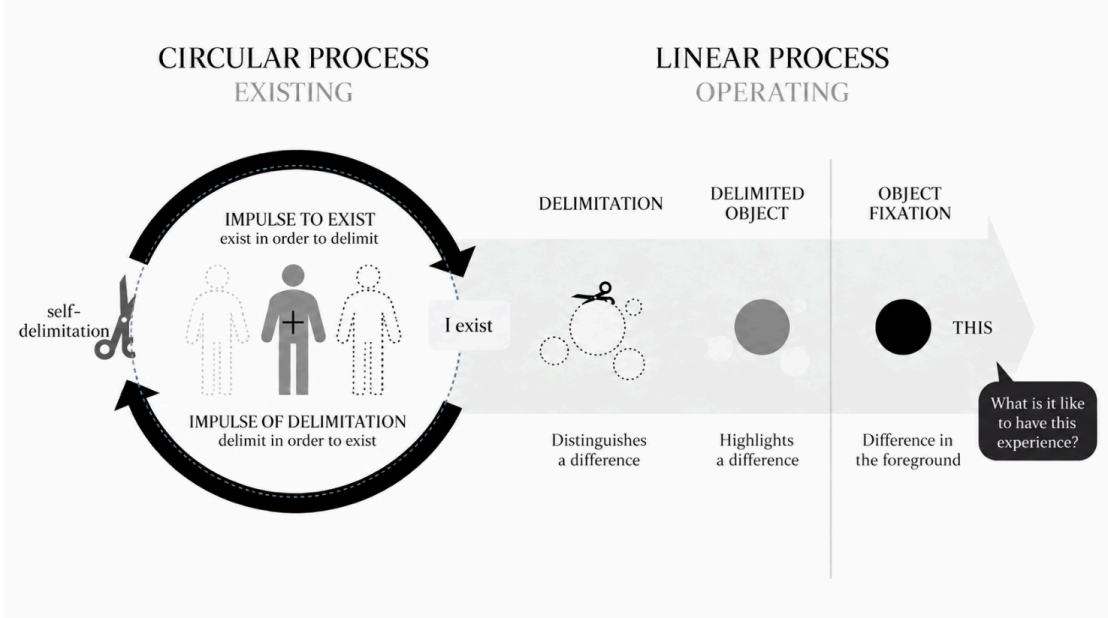
IMPULSE TO EXIST — preserves its own existence through self-selection. (circular process)

IMPULSE TO SELECT — a continuous tendency to select differences and objects. (circular process)

SELECTION — distinguishes a difference and orients itself towards it. (linear process)

SELECTED OBJECT — a singled-out difference that has become a target of determination. (linear process)

FIXATION OF THE OBJECT — stabilizes the object as this or that, bringing it to the foreground. (linear process)



Caption: Existing and operating: circularity and determination within the same realization.

Figure note: The circular process sustains the continuity of the instance; the linear process describes the path through which a difference is selected, singled out and fixed as an object. **These are not two separate systems, but two aspects of the same realization.**

QUALITATIVE READING MAP

THERE IS something (*HÁ algo*)

The instance's domain of presence. It opens when a minimal selection from the Real becomes present to the instance and remains the domain within which what appears can be selected and determined. It does not exhaust the Real or yet say what anything is; it establishes only that there is something present for this instance. It is not a substance, an object, a physical field or an additional law.

LIGHT OF THERE IS (*LUZ DO HÁ*)

The scope of the instance within which what THERE IS can appear to it. Within that reach, what THERE IS presents possibilities of objects to selection. The Light does not select, discriminate or interfere; it does not distinguish quantity or quality. It merely names the scope of what can be present from this instance's perspective. It is not physical light, a substance, an independent field or the determination of an object.

BRILHO

The experiential manifestation of the object through participation in what THERE IS. It is a subtle, intermittent manifestation. It is the object's subtle experiential manifestation for this instance. Here we analytically distinguish the presence-character of feeling from its Weight, its Polarity and its other determinations. It does not define the object's quality; it names the event's character of presence. It is not a substance, object, content, layer or additional metaphysical entity.
Its manifestation is intermittent: it opens and closes for each selected object.
The operative continuity of the Impulse to Select sustains the intermittent manifestation of Brilho for each object.

BASAL BRILHO

The experiential manifestation of the instance itself through participation in what THERE IS. It is a subtle, continuous manifestation. It is the subtle experiential manifestation of the instance's own existence for that instance. It is a more fundamental state of feeling in its form of presence, without weight, valence or abstractions. It does not define the object's quality; it names the event's character of presence. It is not a substance, object, content, layer or additional metaphysical entity.
Its manifestation is continuous for as long as the realization's experiential regime persists. **That continuity does not, by itself, amount to uninterrupted manifestation throughout the instance's entire existence.**
The existential circularity of the Impulse to Exist sustains it.

THIS WAY (*ASSIM É*)

The manifestation resulting from the determination of the selected and fixed object. In it, the object comes into presence already classified and determined as this or that. It is the way the sufficiently fixed object comes into presence in the foreground for this instance. It is not a new operation and does not create the object.

QUALE (What is it like to have this experience?)

A determined experiential occurrence situated within a trajectory, whose experiential Texture is the particular way in which something comes into presence.
It can only be lived, not reproduced by a statement: **describing it is already another realization**, carried out by an instance transformed by its prior trajectory.
Particular: another instance may observe or describe the occurrence but cannot fully occupy the same trajectory and perspective that realized it.
Experientially direct: it does not require an internal observer; the instance itself realizes the experience.
Belonging to the occurrence: the “what it is like” exists within the realization of the haze of the present itself, constituted by the trajectory that made it possible.

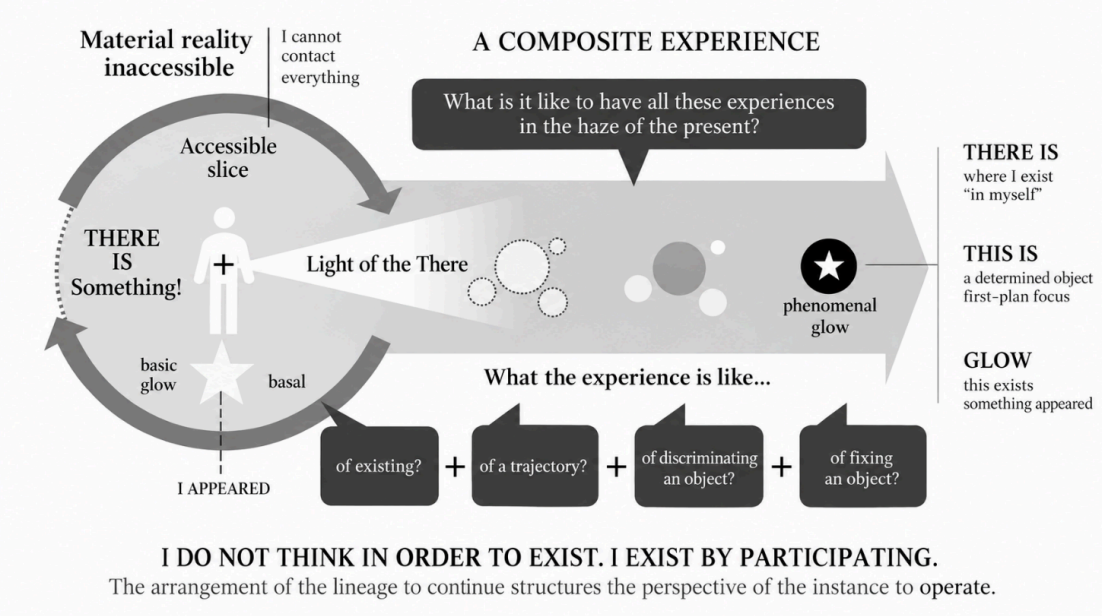
SYNTHESIS

THERE IS something — the minimal selection from the Real that becomes present to the instance.

LIGHT OF THERE IS — the scope of the realization's perspective within which what THERE IS can become available for selection.

BASAL BRILHO — the subtle experiential manifestation of the instance's own self-selection.

BRILHO — the subtle experiential manifestation of the selected object for this instance.



Caption: Composite experience: analytical distinctions within one realization, without a mandatory chronological sequence.

NOTES ON READING THE FIGURE

1. Unity of the realization

The represented elements are neither independent mechanisms, obligatory chronological stages nor experiences subsequently added together. They are analytical distinctions within the same continuous realization. The "+" signs decompose the analysis; they do not assert composition from separate parts.

2. Material genesis without purpose

The instance's perspective is not the lineage's objective. The TMC starts from a contingent material continuity, without intention or metaphysical purpose, whose historical arrangement structures the conditions through which temporary instances can select, operate and continue. **The instance is a local realization of that continuity, not its purpose.**

3. Participation does not presuppose a subject

“I exist by participating” does not mean choice, intention or reflective consciousness. Participation means being causally embedded in a situated realization. The first person does not presuppose a prior self, subject or observer: it names the realization's own position.

4. Inaccessible material reality

“Inaccessible” does not mean a metaphysical reality that is unknowable in principle. It means that a finite instance cannot fully access all the differences and relations of the Real. Its apparatus and trajectory make only a particular selection operatively accessible.

5. Composite experience

The haze of the present does not gather independent experiences like separate pieces. **The present remains one**, but its constitution is temporally, causally and historically heterogeneous: effects formed at different moments and along different trajectories participate together in present realization.

6. Operation and experience

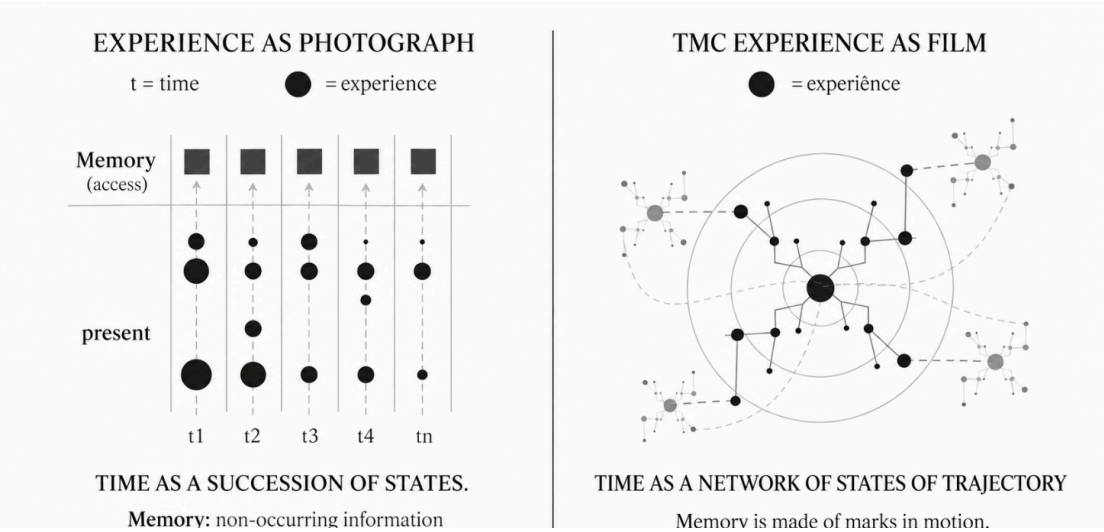
The TMC does not treat operation and experience as two independent occurrences subsequently connected. It proposes that the operative and the experiential are distinguishable aspects of the same realization in genesis, manifested differently according to the angle of analysis. Under this hypothesis, experience is not added after operation.

7. Brilho is neither substance nor proof by definition

Brilho and basal Brilho name experiential aspects of realization; they are not modules, additional entities or metaphysical “ingredients.” The map does not resolve by decree the separability of function and phenomenality: it allows us to ask at what point within the same realization that separation could be established without altering the phenomenon under analysis. **The TMC's own concepts remain revisable theoretical selections, not the ultimate building blocks of reality.**

8. Relation to the cogito

“I do not think in order to exist. I exist by participating.” is not meant to replace the cogito as an epistemological proof. The shift is genealogical: the TMC asks how a perspective is constituted that can subsequently think or assert “I exist.”



Caption: Snapshot and film: two ways of selecting experience.

> *Figure note:* The figure contrasts two ways of selecting experience, not two complete theories of memory. **In the TMC, the past does not remain intact in the present; it participates through traces that transform the trajectory.**

QUALE: SNAPSHOT × FILM

QUALE SNAPSHOT — What is it like to have this experience?	TMC QUALE FILM — What is it like to experience the path that constitutes this experience?

The TMC does not regard the quale merely as the final snapshot of "what it is like to have this experience." It comes to regard it as the present result of a path of realization.

This position does not deny the quale; it merely puts a reflection to the test: in analyzing it, might we be turning one realization into different occurrences and then asking ourselves how experience accompanies them?

Why does experience accompany operation?

The question the TMC poses to the quale is:

Which aspect of the quale does each of these questions seek to isolate — and how much of it needs to be treated as a primitive property of experience?

Before asking "What is it like to have this experience?", perhaps we should trace the film that constitutes it.

The questions below analytically separate aspects of a single realization.

- What is it like to have the experience of existing?
- What is it like to have an experience constituted by a trajectory?
- What is it like to experience the discrimination of differences?
- What is it like to experience determining or qualifying an object?
- What is it like to experience fixing it in the foreground?

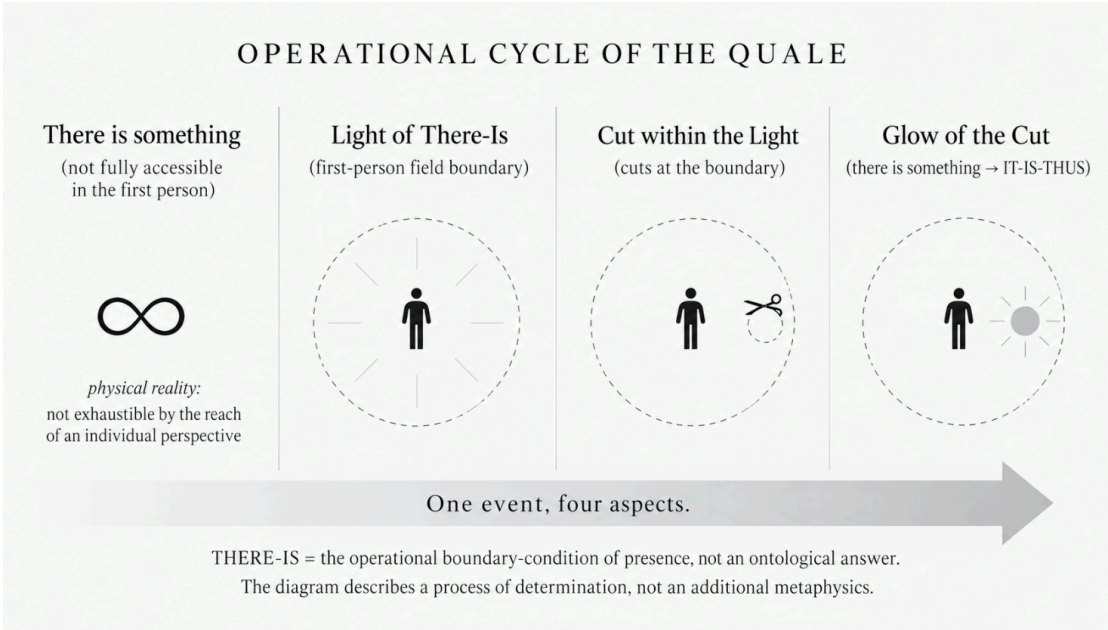
And then:

What is it like to have all these experiences in the haze of the present?

Finally:

At what point in this arrangement could experience be separated from operation?

VISUAL MAP



Caption: One occurrence, four aspects. The divisions guide analysis without imposing four successive mechanisms.

> *Figure note (THERE IS something > THIS WAY [Brilho + qualia]):* The diagram does not represent four successive mechanisms, but four aspects of a single situated occurrence, from the operative opening of the instance to the already determined and textured quale. There is no metaphysical substance in this process, only a concatenated operation. THERE IS marks the condition of presence; the Light of THERE IS marks the scope of that realization in the first person; Selection determines something within that scope; and Brilho is the relatively stable basal experiential quality in the transition from "There is something" to "This way." Brilho marks the manifestational onset of determination; the quale is that manifestation already determined and textured.

Experience is not added after operation: manifestation and determination belong to the same realization.

03 **Where Does the "Here" Come From?**

03 Where Does the "Here" Come From?

First person, self-selection and the continuity of experience.

WHAT IT IS

The TMC investigates how a situated realization constitutes its "here": the reference point from which differences can be selected and determined. The block articulates the first person, self-selection and the instance's continuity, while also examining encounters that resist closure.

QUESTIONS

- Where does the "here" of an experience come from?
- Does having a first person require a self that precedes the process?
- What happens when a selection cannot exhaust what it determines?
- How do different determinations belong to the same presence?

KEY INSIGHTS

- **First person is a position of realization.** It does not presuppose a subject or observer prior to the process.
- **Objects change; the reference point continues to be transformed.** Self-selection organizes other selections and is recalibrated by trajectory.
- **Intensity does not establish truth.** An occurrence may resist closure and intensify experience without validating its interpretation.
- **The theory itself also selects.** THERE IS may precede a particular determination; the concept THERE IS is already a revisable theoretical determination.

IN THIS BLOCK

WHAT THERE IS IS NOT	THE TMC FIRST PERSON
WE ARE A SELECTION MACHINE	WHEN SELECTION RESISTS CLOSURE
FROM "HERE" AS POSITION TO "HERE" AS OCCURRENCE	CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARRANGEMENT
MAXIMS	THE TMC ALSO SELECTS

WHAT THERE IS IS NOT

THERE IS is not pure consciousness, not absence of content, not non-conceptual perception, not pre-reflective experience, not a pre-objective field and not a thesis about existence. It is the condition of there being something present for this realization before its determination as this or that.

Philosophical interlocutors: Thomas Metzinger, Zoran Josipovic, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Edmund Husserl, Jean-Paul Sartre, Dan Zahavi, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, William James, Nishida Kitarō, Michel Henry and Emmanuel Levinas address neighbouring regions and help situate the problem, but their propositions are not equivalent to the TMC's THERE IS. In the TMC, the difference lies in its status: THERE IS is proposed as a condition of presence presupposed by determination, not as a substance, autonomous consciousness or an already given ontological foundation.

THE TMC FIRST PERSON

"First person" does not mean that a self, subject or observer already exists before the process. It means only that the realization is local, situated and limited by its own operative boundary.

"For me" does not require a prior "me." We do not place a subject at the beginning. We place a situated realization.

"First person" names the perspective proper to that realization, not a self observing it.

First person here is not a subject; it is a position of realization.

Different realizations do not make the same differences of the world available. Bees detect patterns of polarized light and ultraviolet wavelengths that do not enter the human perceptual field in the same way. Bats, in turn, structure a significant part of their spatial relations through echolocation, using echoes that, for us, do not constitute the same operative field.

Each realization therefore has its own field of accessibility to the world and its own way of internally articulating what enters that field.

WE ARE A SELECTION MACHINE *(continuous process)*

The recurring event

A finite instance does not receive the world already divided into the units that matter to it. To operate, it must distinguish differences, relate them and provisionally stabilize what it will continue operating with. In the TMC, this work is selection (*recorte*).

Selecting does not necessarily mean thinking, naming or consciously deciding. Before that, differences must be distinguished within the field, organized and sufficiently stabilized for some unit to become operable.

Hence a simple consequence:

Without differentiation, there is nothing distinguishable.
Without delimitation, there is no determined unit.
Without some stabilization, there is no operable unit.

Selection, then, is not a finishing touch added after perception is ready. It participates in the transition by which something begins to

count as this rather than that, in this way rather than every other possible way.

THERE IS is basal. Selection is continuous.

What THERE IS does not arrive already fully determined for the instance. Each selection makes some differences operable and leaves others out. Each THIS WAY is therefore a situated determination, not a complete reproduction of reality.

That is the sense in which we say we are a selection machine. **We do not posit a single neural module called "selection,"** but a family of operations through which a finite realization transforms available differences into operable determinations.

There is, however, a selection of a different duration: that of the instance itself. It opens with the instance, is continuously recalibrated throughout its trajectory and closes only when the instance ends.

To operate as an instance is not to receive a ready-made world. It is to render it operable through successive selections.

WHEN SELECTION RESISTS CLOSURE *(high-intensity process)*

Not every selection can fully encompass what it determines.

This does not mean that experience can occur without selection. On the contrary: experience already takes place through selections. The difficulty arises because each determination can close something, but closure cannot always encompass the entire event. A chair may be readily brought to closure; a witnessed spiritual event may resist that closure.

There are situations in which the boundary remains uncertain, the scale exceeds our customary references, the object cannot be completely stabilized, or the very separation between instance and world becomes less distinct. Selection continues to take place, producing successive determinations, but what is being determined continues to exceed each of them.

This is not an event without closure. It is an event that no closure can wholly encompass.

This insufficiency can lead in different directions. Some selections are abandoned. Others generate confusion, vertigo, fear or frustration. In other cases, however, experience remains active before what keeps exceeding its determinations: awe, the sublime,

experiences of vastness, dissolution of boundaries or especially salient contemplative states may arise.

There is something deeply unsettling when a determination continues to matter but cannot bring to a close what it is trying to understand. Faced with the Sun, fire, death, the origin of the universe or infinity, for example, we do not necessarily remain silent. We continue producing explanations, images, models, narratives and metaphysics. Each selects something; none need exhaust the occurrence.

But what happens when this movement is not abandoned?

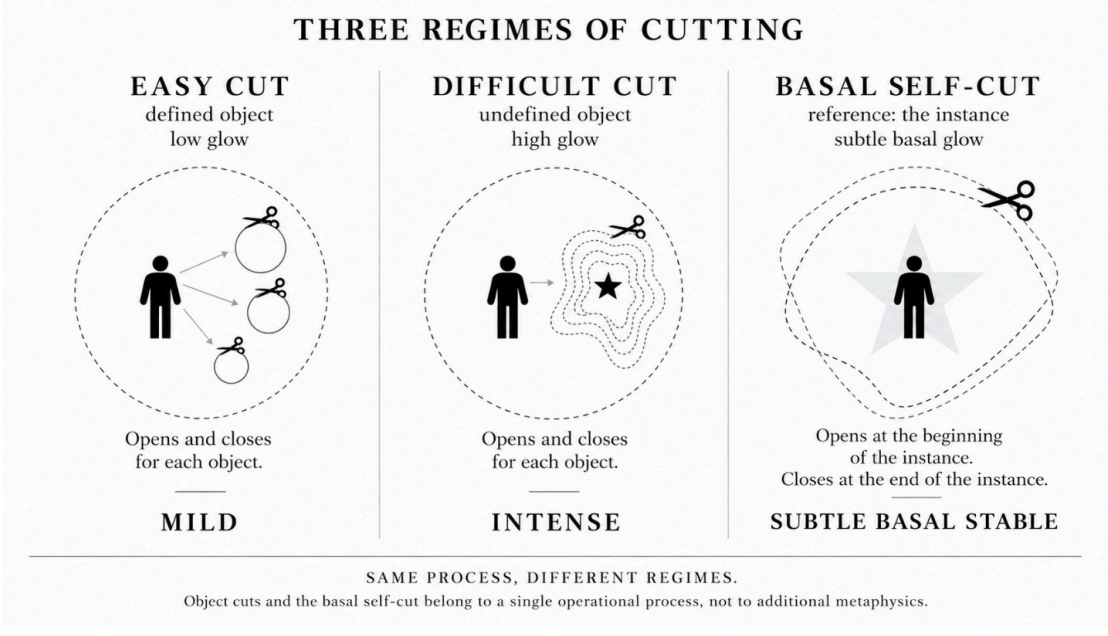
Some selections frighten us. Others frustrate us. Others are discarded. And some continue producing determinations without managing to bring to a close what continues to exceed each of them.

It is in this last case that a hypothesis of intensification arises. If THIS WAY determines without managing to exhaust what THERE IS, the already stabilized result may cease to occupy the foreground of experience by itself. The very occurrence of determination — normally absorbed into the result of the selection — may become more salient in the final experience.

In the TMC's language:

The more each THIS WAY determines without exhausting what THERE IS, the more salient the very occurrence of determination may become.

This does not mean that there is "more" of some experiential substance, nor that every insufficient selection produces the sublime. It means only that, under certain conditions, experience may become especially intense when it keeps selecting what none of its selections can wholly encompass.



Caption: Three regimes of one selection process, without independent mechanisms or an additional substance.

> *Figure note:* The diagram does not represent three independent mechanisms, but three regimes of the same selection process. No metaphysical substance is added here: these are different operative regimes of the same realization.

In selections of objects, determination opens and closes with each object. The more the object or occurrence resists closure — through vastness, a religious, artistic or mysterious character, a boundary experience, and so on — the more salient the very occurrence of determination may become and, under the TMC hypothesis, the more intense Brilho may become.

In basal self-selection, the reference is the instance itself. It creates and updates spatial and temporal references from its own position. Under the TMC hypothesis, its experiential manifestation sustains a subtle and relatively stable presence, called basal Brilho, while the realization's experiential regime persists.

The different Textures of objects change continuously, yet come into presence within that relatively stable experiential continuity.

Objects enter and leave selection; the instance continues to select itself. The Brilho of objects may fluctuate; basal Brilho accompanies the continuity of experience itself.

FROM “HERE” AS POSITION TO “HERE” AS OCCURRENCE

But every selection takes place from some position of the instance itself.

Where does this “here” come from?

Authors such as Kant, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Bergson, Uexküll, Gibson, Zahavi and Metzinger, among others, have addressed important parts of this territory: the limits of knowledge, horizons of appearing, the embodied character of perspective, the organism's own world, pre-reflective first-personhood, the self, and the conditions of access to the environment.

In various formulations, we already encounter sensibility, a horizon, a lived body, an *Umwelt*, a “for-me,” a centre of action or a situated system. Yet some position from which to investigate is often already present.

The TMC seeks to bring these parts together in the same chain:

excess → limitation → position → first person.

The problem that emerges is not merely any one of these parts taken separately, but the occurrence connecting them.

It is not merely the ontology of the Real.

“What is the nature of things?”

It is not merely having a perspective.

“What is it like to experience from a point of view?”

It is not merely the filtering of the Real.

“How does an organism select what it can reach?”

It is not merely where the realization is.

“What position does it occupy in space and time?”

Nor merely the interval between these questions.

“How does finitude of access come to constitute a ‘from here’?”

Then the remaining question is almost uncomfortably simple:

Where does the “here” come from?

And, as a consequence, another question arises:

What kind of occurrence constitutes this “here” before and during the Texture of phenomena for the first person?

CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARRANGEMENT

1. SELF-SELECTION BEGINS WITH THE INSTANCE

When the instance begins, it opens a selection of itself. Its boundary is not fixed: it is situated, dynamic and continuously recalibrated throughout its trajectory, closing only when the instance ends.

All its operation takes place from within this situated realization, under basal THERE IS. Brilho appears when what THERE IS acquires determination for that instance.

2. EVERY THIS WAY HAS BRILHO AND TEXTURE

Under the TMC's strong hypothesis, when something is experientially selected and determined, it comes into presence under two aspects: Brilho and Texture.
Brilho is the manifestational character of determination; Texture is the particular way in which it comes into presence — its experiential "what it is like."

In this sense, every THIS WAY has Brilho and Texture: it manifests, and it manifests in some way.

3. THE QUALE IS MORE THAN TEXTURE

In the TMC, the quale is not reducible to Texture experienced in the first person. It includes Brilho, as manifestational character, and a Texture situated within a trajectory, continually modified by previous selections.

> **Quale = Brilho + Texture situated within a trajectory.**

For the TMC, the description of the quale is therefore incomplete if it does not make explicit that experience manifests and that its "what it is like" depends on an instance historically modified by its own selections.

4. SELF-SELECTION PROVIDES THE REFERENCE POINT

The selection of the instance itself provides the reference point from which other selections can be organized. Everything that will be located, related or determined depends on this "here."

Just as a physical trajectory can only be described relative to a reference frame, the instance needs a position of realization from which differences acquire relation and determination.

Without this self-selection, differences might still be processed, but the common reference point organizing them relative to the instance itself would be missing: in this sense, the system would operate in operative darkness.

Self-selection is not merely one more selection: it is the reference point from which the others become selections for this instance.

5. SELF-SELECTION IS CONTINUOUS; OBJECTS ARE INTERMITTENT

The selection of the instance itself is continuous, but not static. It opens when the instance begins, is continually recalibrated, and

closes only when it ends.

Selections of objects, by contrast, are intermittent: they arise, stabilize and dissolve as others open.

Objects enter and leave selection; the instance remains the place from which they are selected.

6. MANY THIS WAYS, ONE THERE IS

Before selection, there is not yet a determined object as this or that. THERE IS does not tell us how many objects exist or what each is; it indicates only that something is present for this realization.

When differences are selected and determined, distinct units arise — sound, colour, pain, object, memory or thought. But each new determination does not open a new THERE IS: these are different THIS WAYS under the same condition of presence.

If sound, colour and pain come into presence within the same realization, there are not three independent THERE IS conditions. There are three determinations under the same THERE IS.

In this sense:

$$[\text{THERE IS}] = 1 + 1 + 1+n = 1$$

The expression is conceptual, not arithmetic: new THIS WAYS add determinations without multiplying the realization's condition of presence.

THIS WAYS may be many; THERE IS remains one.

WHAT THIS TMC UNITY IS NOT

> **It is not a substance or the foundation of the Real.**
>
> The unity of THERE IS does not imply universal consciousness, a cosmic field, absolute reality or a fundamental property of the universe. It is basal to the realization of the instance.

> **It is not a self, subject or internal observer.**
>
> Unity does not depend on someone inside experience gathering or contemplating its contents.

> **It is not fusion or homogeneity.**
>
> Colour, sound, pain, memory and thought remain different. The unity of THERE IS does not erase the multiplicity of selections or turn distinct contents into one thing.

> **It is not pure consciousness or an empty state without content.**
>
> THERE IS does not designate a mystical state, an absolute absence of determination or experience separate from the apparatus that realizes it.

> **It is not functional integration.**
>
> Processes can be causally integrated, synchronized or available for action without that fact, by itself, demonstrating phenomenal unity.

> **It is not universal comparability.**
>
> Belonging to the same presence does not mean that all contents must be comparable, reportable or mutually accessible.

> **It is not a solution to every kind of binding.**
>
> The unity of THERE IS does not, on its own, explain why a colour is attributed to this object rather than that one. That is another level of the problem.

MAXIMS

Selection does not merely determine what appears; it changes the very instance that will go on selecting.

Each selection modifies the conditions from which subsequent selections will be made.

Reopening a selection is not returning to the instant before that selection.

Acting on a selection does not require treating it as definitive.

Bringing an indeterminacy to closure does not mean resolving it.

A description sparse in determinations may be rich in possible interpretations.

The field of what can appear to an instance does not begin from zero: its trajectory and the history of its apparatus already participate in its limits.

The intensity of an experience does not establish the truth of our interpretation of it. Greater intensity does not mean greater determination.

Different trajectories can inhabit conceptually different worlds in the first person without requiring ontologically different worlds.

Science, religion and art may differ in the rules by which they close and reopen their selections; dogmatism arises when certain closures cease to admit revision.

Keeping the indeterminate as something still to be resolved makes it possible to continue investigating rather than simply discard it. Asking what lies beyond the sea or what can be found in the soil of the Moon are elaborate forms of that disposition to pursue differences that are not yet sufficiently determined.

THE TMC ALSO SELECTS

THERE IS, Light, Brilho, THIS WAY, Trajectory, Within, Between and Ahead are not presented as the ultimate building blocks of reality. None of these theoretical selections is treated as a substance or metaphysical reality in itself. They are selections used to locate relations, aspects and operations. If they cease to fulfil that function, they too must be revised.

The theory of selection is not outside what it selects.

THERE IS aims to name the condition through which something can be present for this realization before being determined as this or that. But the moment the TMC says “this is THERE IS,” it has itself already carried out a conceptual selection.

THERE IS may precede particular determination; the concept THERE IS cannot.

This architecture has an immediate consequence for a classic problem: how do different contents belong to one and the same experience?

04 One Now, Many Qualia

04 One Now, Many Qualia

Unity of presence and the temporal composition of experience.

WHAT IT IS

How do color, sound, pain and thought belong to the same present? The TMC proposes a basal presence whose differentiation occurs through selections, while the Haze describes the coexistence of contributions with distinct histories, causes and latencies.

QUESTIONS

- Does unity result from the assembly of contents, or does it precede their differentiation?
- How do contributions from different times participate in the same now?
- Does selecting a quale also delimit the whole of experience?
- What can empirical data distinguish about unity and processing?

KEY INSIGHTS

- **Unity does not imply simplicity.** A single present can bring together contributions constituted at different times and along different trajectories.
- **History participates through its effects.** Its traces change the present without reproducing their antecedents in full.
- **Selection may delimit the quale without delimiting experience.** Losing focus does not require disappearing from the same now.

- **The evidence distinguishes processes without demonstrating a unitary THERE IS.** Comparison, processing and simultaneity do not necessarily coincide with experiential unity.

IN THIS BLOCK

THE PROBLEM FOR THE THEORY OF MIND

HOW THE TMC APPROACHES THE PROBLEM

THERE IS IN THE HAZE OF THE PRESENT

PHILOSOPHICAL INTERLOCUTORS

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON THE UNITY OF EXPERIENCE

TMC MAXIMS ON UNITY

TOPOLOGY OF THE NOW — SMOKES AND HAZE

QUALIA IN THE TMC

CONCLUSION IN THE BROAD SENSE

THE PROBLEM FOR THE THEORY OF MIND

How do such different experiences — seeing a color, hearing a sound, feeling pain, remembering and thinking — appear together in a single conscious experience?

This is one of the most complex questions in the theory of mind. The brain operates in a distributed manner, across different pathways, areas and times, yet our lived experience does not seem to fragment in the same way: we feel and think within a single present.

The challenge, then, is not merely to describe how different processes are coordinated, but to understand what makes this heterogeneity belong to a single conscious experience.

This raises decisive questions: what defines that unity; whether it is built from contents or precedes their differentiation; where its boundaries lie; and whether integrating functions in an organism is equivalent to unifying experience, rather than merely coordinating processes in the dark.

HOW THE TMC APPROACHES THE PROBLEM

The TMC reverses the starting point of the **binding problem**: instead of assuming that isolated sensations exist first and that the brain must then glue them together, it asks whether unity might precede the very division of their contents.

Unity is not an event at the end of the process; it belongs to THERE IS, to the basal presence of that realization. THERE IS something opens at the first moment of the instance and closes at its last. Events occur within this temporal interval of the instance and manifest in the first-person present of that instance.

THERE IS IN THE HAZE OF THE PRESENT

This is what the TMC calls the **Haze of the present** (*Névoa do presente*): not a substance that unites processes, but the coexistence, in the instance's present, of contributions that have different histories, times and causes.

In the third person, the present is a transition between past and future.

In the instance's own first person, however, the present is a transition underway: a window lived as “this is now.”

The same self-selection that constitutes a “here” also constitutes a “now.”
It is within this lived interval that traces of the past and possibilities of the future begin to operate together. Here we have self-selection in the context of its trajectory, not as a static snapshot.

The present is a space of operation. Traces of pasts and anticipations of possible futures reach the current State and begin to operate together.



Figure note — The figure does not represent the present as a mathematical instant between past and future, but as a first-person operational window. Traces of earlier events, causes and experiences converge on the current State, while possibilities for action and anticipations open future trajectories. Within this window, self-selection maintains a continuously recalibrated spatiotemporal reference point; it is there that basal Brilho, Textures and particular determinations can come into presence.

> Basal Brilho, linked to the continuous operation through which the instance selects itself and remains present to itself, is one from this perspective: it does not correspond to the sum of two or more objects. Basal THERE IS does not discriminate quantity or divide in advance what comes into presence; it provides the condition of presence within which particular selections can occur. Thus, multiple objects and multiple Textures can emerge across basal Brilho without multiplying that basal THERE IS.

The Haze of the present does not add a substance to the process: it names the coexistence, in the same lived now, of contributions with different histories, times and causes. The quale does not occur at a point in time: it occurs within this window.

Figure note — In the third person, the present can usefully be represented as a transition between past and future states. This is chronological time, measurable by a clock. The risk arises when that selection is carried over unchanged into first-person experience. A quale treated as an instantaneous snapshot already abstracts away the temporal window in which it was realized; a quale subsequently accessed through memory already constitutes a new selection, carried out upon traces left by the earlier experience. A third-person description can locate processes, states and causal relationships, but it must not presume that its own temporal cut reproduces the structure of the experience it seeks to explain.

The Texture that comes into presence in the quale has a trajectory of constitution before appearing in this now.
Trajectory is not access to memory: it is the instance itself being continually modified by its traces.
Traces change, combine with other traces and alter the conditions of subsequent selections. Perceptual processing has physical latencies; what I once was and anticipations of what I may become participate in the present through overlapping effects, not as a simple queue of snapshots.

> The snapshot may describe the State; it does not necessarily contain the temporal way in which that State was lived.

The error is not to look from the outside; it is to suppose that the cut made from the outside is also the cut lived from within.

The snapshot may describe the state; it does not necessarily contain the temporal way in which that state was lived.

The error is not in looking from the outside, but in assuming that the cut made from the outside is also the cut lived from within.

PHILOSOPHICAL INTERLOCUTORS

Immanuel Kant, William James, Henri Bergson, Edmund Husserl, Barry Dainton, Tim Bayne, David Chalmers, Nishida Kitarō and, in a different register, Zoran Josipovic explore regions close to the problem of the unity of experience. To differing degrees and in different senses, they describe continuity, co-presence, duration, encompassing states or forms of unity that cannot be reduced to the mere sum of independent contents.

The TMC shares an important intuition with these approaches: the unity of experience need not be conceived solely as the final result of assembling initially separate elements. The difference lies in the status and architecture proposed. In the TMC, this unity is treated neither as a substance, pure consciousness nor an ultimate foundation of reality, but as the basal presence of realization, differentiated through **selection → THIS WAY → trace → new selection**.

TWO PARTICULARLY CLOSE APPROACHES: BERGSON AND TONONI

Henri Bergson comes particularly close to the TMC through the problem of time. His notion of *durée* describes temporal experience

as a continuous qualitative flow, in which moments interpenetrate before they are separated and spatialized by the intellect. The proximity lies in the direction of the movement: continuity precedes division. The TMC, however, does not identify THERE IS with Bergsonian duration. It seeks to analyse that continuity through State, Trajectory, selection and Haze, without turning duration into the ultimate foundation of reality.

Giulio Tononi comes close by a different route. In Integrated Information Theory, unity and differentiation are considered together: an experience is at once integrated as a whole and differentiated among a large number of possible states. The methodological proximity to the TMC matters because Tononi seeks the relationship between unity and difference in the very physical organization that realizes the phenomenon, rather than in an additional substance.

This analysis is comparative in purpose and is not intended to be exhaustive: the problem of the unity of consciousness spans a philosophical and scientific field too broad for every relevant formulation to be examined within this selection.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON THE UNITY OF EXPERIENCE

1. SPLIT-BRAIN — DIVIDING PROCESSING DOES NOT RESOLVE UNITY

Following callosotomy, certain comparisons between the hemispheres fail, but this does not straightforwardly imply two independent conscious subjects. (Pinto et al., 2017)
In the TMC: separating access or comparison is not enough to conclude that there are multiple instances of THERE IS.

2. SIMULTANAGNOSIA — THE UNITY OF CONTENTS CAN FAIL

A patient perceives isolated elements but has difficulty perceiving several objects as a single scene. (Dalrymple et al., 2013)
In the TMC: unity of presence and unity of contents are not necessarily the same thing.

3. NEGLECT — PROCESSING IS NOT PRESENCE

Stimuli that are not consciously perceived can still be processed and influence responses. (Driver & Vuilleumier, 2001)

In the TMC: causal operation is not enough to conclude that THERE IS is present.

4. BINOCULAR RIVALRY — SIMULTANEOUS PROCESSING IS NOT SIMULTANEOUS EXPERIENCE

Two incompatible stimuli may be processed at the same time, but only one dominates conscious experience. (Lin & He, 2009)
In the TMC: multiplicity of processing does not imply multiplicity of conscious manifestations of THIS WAY.

5. TEMPORAL WINDOW — THE SAME NOW CAN CONTAIN OFFSETS

Stimuli presented with small delays between them may still be perceived as simultaneous. (Zhou et al., 2020)

In the TMC: the first-person present is compatible with a window of realization, not merely a point in time.

Synthesis: the data do not demonstrate a unitary THERE IS. They do show, however, that processing, presence, comparison, physical simultaneity and unity of contents do not necessarily coincide — precisely the distinctions that a theory of the unity of experience needs to explain.

Experiment: presence and determination can come apart. There is something before we fully know what that something is.

TMC MAXIMS ON UNITY

Co-presence is not comparability.
Belonging to the same present does not mean that all contents can be compared, reported or mutually accessed.

The present is synchronic in occurrence and diachronic in constitution.
What happens now brings together effects formed at different times and along different trajectories.

History participates in appearing without appearing in its entirety as history.

THIS WAY manifests the present result without carrying with it the whole genealogy that made it possible.

The Haze does not explain why the present is one; it explains why this unitary present is composed.
It describes the temporal, causal and historical heterogeneity participating in the same realization.

The now is not the same size for every instance.
Each instance realizes its own present according to the reach of its apparatus and the history of its trajectory. New capacities expand what may enter into selection, while the Haze gives the present its temporal thickness.

The physical apparatus opens the present to the world; the Haze gives it thickness in time.
There is a shift from “each has its own now” to “each has its own now within its own basal horizon of selection.”

The Haze does not explain why the present is one; it explains why this unified present is composite.

It describes the temporal, causal and historical heterogeneity that participates in the same realization.

The now does not have the same scope for every instance.

Each instance realizes its own present according to the reach of its apparatus and the history of its trajectory. New capacities broaden what may enter selection, while different arrangements delimit different ranges of the present.

The physical apparatus opens the present to the world; the Haze gives it thickness through time.

There is a shift from “each has their own now” to “each has their own now within their own basal horizon of selection.”

TOPOLOGY OF THE NOW — SMOKES AND HAZE

The present is not a passing point, but a transition underway that takes place within a window.

The present is one in THERE IS; this does not mean it is simple in its constitution.

The now brings together processes, traces, anticipations, latencies and causes that did not originate in the same instant. The TMC calls these different contributions **Smokes** (*Fumaças*), and calls their overlapping coexistence in the instance's present **Haze** (*Névoa*).

THE SIX SMOKES OF THE HAZE

The six Smokes are organized around two constitutive tensions:

Boundary tension — concerns the way the present delimits, transforms and overlaps differences.
Constitution tension — concerns the different histories, causes and durations of the contributions operating in the present.

1. SMOKE OF SELECTION — Every boundary leaves something out

Every selection creates an operative boundary. To make something operable, some of the relationships and causes that form it are left out. Operating upon something requires relinquishing some of its determinations.

Every boundary illuminates an outline and darkens what remains outside it.

2. SMOKE OF ABSTRACTION — To operate is also to transform

To abstract is to continue operating without preserving in full what was encountered. This happens through four movements: excluding, compressing, combining and reconstructing.

To abstract is to preserve enough to continue, leaving behind what need not continue intact.

3. SMOKE OF OVERLAP — Many operations in the same present

Processing does not all occur at the same pace or in the same sequence. Different operations may alternate, overlap or remain underway while others are selected.

The present can be one without everything in it happening at the same time or in the same way.

4. SMOKE OF THE TEMPORAL FUNNEL — The present opens onto other times

Traces from different depths of the past and anticipations of possible futures operate in the same present.

The past arrives as a trace; the future arrives as anticipation. Both operate in the present.

5. SMOKE OF THE CAUSAL FUNNEL — The present carries causes from different depths

Every current trace or anticipation results from earlier States, which also carried effects of their own trajectories.

What appears now may have causes much older than the now itself.

6. SMOKE OF THE MATERIAL GAP — The now takes time to happen

Processing, integrating, comparing and responding require material time. Different processes arrive in the present with different latencies.

The lived now does not happen in zero time.

THE INTERVAL OF THE PRESENT HAZE

In the third person, the present can be idealized as a reference point. In the first person, it is realized as a finite temporal window, within which contributions from different histories, causes and latencies operate together.

The point belongs to the map; the window belongs to realization.

QUALIA IN THE TMC

Imagine a strip of film moving continuously past a window. Frames arrive in sequence, but several may cross the window within the same interval.

If the window widens, more frames remain available within the same present. If the film runs more slowly, it becomes easier to distinguish them. And selection may remain on one of them or oscillate rapidly among several.

We then have three variables:

- **speed of passage** — how many differences arrive and change;

- **width of the present window** — how long different selections continue participating in the same now;
- **regime of selection** — remaining on one or oscillating rapidly among several.

CONSEQUENCES

Something can be sequential in the flow and concurrent in the present.

The quale can be discrete in selection without experience being discrete in the flow.

Selection brings one into focus and relegates the others — close to Sartrean *néantisation* — without what has left the focus having to leave the same now.

Selection can create the boundary of the quale without creating the boundary of experience.

Between two selected qualia there need not be a void; there may be continuity of realization.

Experience need not switch off and on again with every new quale.

The film is not built out of the frames we select; the frames are selections from a film already running.

CONCLUSION IN THE BROAD SENSE

What we identify as concatenated fragments of feeling — like dominoes falling in sequence — may, in fact, be a continuous realization. The window of the now selects one or a few stretches of this flow, creating the impression of separate and successive units.

What looks like a sequence of separate qualia may be the successive selection of a flow that never stopped.

05 **The Problem Reframed**

THEORY OF CONTINUOUS MIND (TMC) · BLOCK 05

05 The Problem Reframed

Qualia, the explanatory gap, and the commitments built into the question.

WHAT IT IS

This chapter examines how the selection of an experience contributes to the formulation of the problem of consciousness. The TMC distinguishes manifestation, particular quality and the instance's reference point, and investigates whether operation and lived experience belong to the same situated, historical realization.

QUESTIONS

- What conditions are left outside the investigation when we begin with the already determined quale?
- What are the differences between manifestation, Texture and the “here”?
- How much of the gap might result from the selection, and what remains to be explained?
- When do two descriptions warrant positing two occurrences or an ontological commitment?

KEY INSIGHTS

- **One word can conceal several explanatory debts.** Manifestation, particular quality and perspective need not amount to a single question.
- **Adding up states does not necessarily reconstruct a trajectory.** We must investigate the relations through which one State conditioned the next.
- **Two descriptions do not establish two occurrences.** The identity of operation and manifestation must also be supported by investigation.
- **The origin of a concept does not decide whether its referent is real.** Explaining how a question arose is not the same as answering it.

IN THIS BLOCK

PERHAPS WE BEGIN TOO LATE WITH THE QUALE

“EXPERIENCE” MAY COMPRESS MORE THAN ONE PROBLEM

THE GAP MAY BE PARTLY PRODUCED BY THE SELECTION

MEMORY IS NOT TRAJECTORY

PERHAPS THE COMBINATION PROBLEM HAS BEEN REVERSED

THE PSYCHOPHYSICAL LAW MAY BE CALLED FOR TOO EARLY

THE TRAITS OF QUALIA MAY BE CONSEQUENCES, NOT INGREDIENTS

THE TMC AND THE SCHOOLS — BEFORE CHOOSING AN ONTOLOGY

PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS — TMC, QUALIA AND THE HARD PROBLEM

In philosophy of mind, approaches that take qualia as their starting point sometimes tend to treat as an initial given what may already be an endpoint. Before asking what a quale is, it is worth asking how it was selected and delimited as the object of the problem.

Here the TMC brings together, without claiming to be exhaustive, a number of reflections in a broad sense that emerge from this change in perspective and that have already been developed more openly and in greater detail in the preceding chapters.

1. PERHAPS WE BEGIN TOO LATE WITH THE QUALE

Many discussions of qualia begin with experiences that are already determined: pain, red, bitterness. Yet much has already happened by that point: the instance is situated, something has manifested for it, has been selected and has acquired a particular Texture.

The TMC takes a step back. Before asking why this experience exists in this particular way, it asks what makes it possible for there to be experience for this instance. In the TMC, the quale is not the beginning of phenomenality but its determination: not merely "THERE IS," but an experiential "THIS WAY."

This distinction does not settle the hard problem. It separates two questions that may have been treated as one: why is there manifestation? And why does it take on this particular quality?

The TMC does not eliminate the hard problem; it shifts its starting point. A question may be legitimate and still carry, within its very formulation, a separation that has yet to be demonstrated.

If a question contains an error in its formulation, it may remain difficult indefinitely — not because it lacks an answer, but because it demands that the answer preserve the error.

2. “EXPERIENCE” MAY COMPRESS MORE THAN ONE PROBLEM

When we simply say “there is experience,” we may be bringing different questions together under one word. One thing is to ask why something manifests; another is to ask why it manifests in this particular way — pain, red, bitterness; and yet another is to ask why this occurrence is *for this instance*, from this first-person position.

In everyday life these dimensions arrive together and seem to be one. Philosophically, however, they need not have the same explanation. The TMC proposes distinguishing them analytically: Brilho for the basal character of manifestation; Texture for the particular “what it is like”; and the instance's reference point for the “here” from which the occurrence is realized.

The hard problem may persist after this separation. But it is no longer obvious that there is a single problem called experience. Different explanatory debts may be hidden within the same word.

Before seeking a single answer to experience, we should check whether we have asked a single question.

3. THE GAP MAY BE PARTLY PRODUCED BY THE SELECTION

To explain a phenomenon, we have to select and delimit it. From a third-person perspective, freezing a State is useful: it allows us to identify processes, compare conditions and measure relations. The difficulty begins when we forget that this freezing belongs to our method. For the TMC, the present State is already historically constituted, and experience occurs within a window in which differences arising at different times and along different trajectories still participate in the same realization. Two temporal planes matter here: the long time of Trajectory and the first-person window of “now.” Neither can be reduced, without loss, to an instantaneous photograph.

Another point calls for care: reconstructing a hypothesis about a trajectory is not merely a matter of pasting successive photographs together. At each transition, we need to ask which causal relations made a difference in allowing that State to become a condition for the next. **A sequence of states can show change; it does not necessarily show trajectory.**

If we remove the trajectory, temporal window and reference point from that realization to obtain an analytically manageable photograph, and then ask why the photograph does not contain lived experience, part of the distance we find may have been created by the selection itself.

This does not dissolve the hard problem. A genuine gap between organization and manifestation may remain. But before turning it into an ontological gap, we should ask: how much of what seems missing is actually missing from the phenomenon, and how much was removed so that we could describe it?

The selection that makes a phenomenon explicable may also remove part of what will later appear inexplicable.

Pasting photographs together produces a sequence. Trajectory requires reconstructing what made a causal difference from one photograph to the next.

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4. MEMORY IS NOT TRAJECTORY

When we remember an experience, it does not return as the same occurrence. What occurs now is a new realization, constructed from the traces that the earlier experience left behind. Remembering a pain is not the past pain appearing again: it is a new selection, in the present, of what remains of it.

For the TMC, this must be distinguished from Trajectory. Trajectory is not what an instance can recall of its past; it is the way earlier encounters have already altered the conditions from which it realizes the present. I may have no memory of something and still have been causally changed by it.

This distinction matters for qualia. Comparing a current experience with a remembered one does not place two original qualia side by side. It places a present experience alongside a present reconstruction of traces left by another experience. This means that any comparison between what was felt yesterday and what is felt today is already mediated by the present realization that makes the comparison. The past need not return as content to continue participating in what is now felt.

Memory reconstructs traces of the past; Trajectory is the past having already changed the one who has reached the present.

5. PERHAPS THE COMBINATION PROBLEM HAS BEEN REVERSED

When we look at a conscious experience, many differences appear together: color, shape, sound, pain, temperature, position. A natural question is: how do so many separate elements combine into a single experience?

But this question already presupposes an order: first there would be phenomenal parts; then their unity would have to be explained. The TMC explores the reverse possibility. What if the unity of the realization comes first, and what we call qualia are internal differentiations of that unity?

On this view, red, pain or bitterness would not be small, independent phenomenal units that subsequently have to be brought together. They would be different THERE IS–THIS WAY realizations within the same domain of presence.

The reversal matters, but it does not solve the problem by decree.

Walking helps make the reversal visible: its steps can be distinguished without supposing that they existed as independent units before constituting the walk. We can even separate walking from the walk in our analysis, but we could not remove either from the occurrence and still have it take place.

Perhaps, by analogy, qualia are internal differentiations of experience, rather than phenomenal units prior to it.

This reversal belongs to the TMC's proposal: to investigate qualia as differentiations of a single situated, historical realization. Instead of asking “how do the many become one?”, we ask “how does the one differentiate into many qualitative modes without ceasing to constitute the same experience?”

The question under examination is whether this reconstruction also explains the manifestational character of that realization.

Nor does this, by itself, resolve the hard problem. Even if there is a unified realization, the question remains: why is there manifestation in that realization? Reversing combination into differentiation may help explain the architecture of unity, but it does not discharge the prior explanatory debt concerning Brilho.

Perhaps experience is not one because qualia combined; perhaps qualia are many because a single experience differentiated.

The problem does not vanish; its direction changes: from “how do many become one?” to “how does the one become many without ceasing to be one?”

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6. THE PSYCHOPHYSICAL LAW MAY BE CALLED FOR TOO EARLY

Asking why a physical operation is accompanied by experience already suggests an ontology: on one side would stand the complete operation; on the other, the experience accompanying it. Yet this separation, although coherent and useful in the debate with Chalmers's framework, still needs to be demonstrated. **Distinguishing two descriptions is not, by itself, enough to establish two occurrences.**

The difference in access does not settle the question either. In the first person, we have direct access to experience; in the third, we describe the organization that realizes it. This asymmetry, rightly emphasized by Chalmers, matters. **But privileged access is not, by itself, ontological privilege.** An asymmetry between ways of knowing may be real without automatically entailing a duplication of the phenomenon.

Chalmers's zombie leaves the contrary possibility open: we can conceive of the same organization without experience. This is one of the strengths of his thought experiment. But conceivability and causal localization are not the same thing. A modal blade can divide possibilities; on its own, it does not show where the phenomenon divides in this world.

The question is not merely rhetorical. In the world Chalmers and the TMC seek to explain, operation and experience appear extraordinarily close: we do not observe a conscious organization functioning sometimes with experience and sometimes without it. Chalmers acknowledges this correspondence, as does the TMC, but maintains that a physical organization could exist without experience.

The TMC asks whether there is an alternative prior to that cut. In its own analysis, it identifies variable experiential determinations — Textures, with Weight and Polarity — and, at the same time, a more subtle basal manifestation of experience, relatively stable in relation to its content. Perhaps, then, the two perspectives are closer in

what they seek to explain than in the ontology they ascribe to the phenomenon.

If the TMC hypothesis is correct, it may be worth testing the more economical alternative first, while recognizing that a simpler hypothesis is not, in itself, proof: what if operation and manifestation are constitutive aspects of the same realization, rather than two occurrences that subsequently need to be connected by a law?

This is where psychophysical laws enter the picture. They allow Chalmers to maintain that, in our world, a given organization is accompanied by a given experience, even if the connection is not metaphysically necessary. That is a coherent response to the problem as he formulates it. But the law then takes on a demanding explanatory task: specifying which organization, which experience, and why preserving one should preserve the other. The contrast between the zombie and the *Fading Qualia* argument makes this demand more visible.

The TMC need not deny the existence of psychophysical regularities. Its question comes first: do such laws connect two already independent domains, or do they describe internal relations within one realization? **Calling operation and experience "two aspects" is not enough either**; the TMC must still show why separating them would mutilate the occurrence itself, rather than merely change its description. The TMC presents a proposal of identity between operation and manifestation. That constitutive relation must be supported through reconstruction; it cannot be regarded as demonstrated simply by giving the ensemble a name.

The issue then becomes whether the proposed identity between operation and manifestation explains the felt character of that realization or still presupposes it.

Before asking why experience accompanies operation, perhaps we must first demonstrate that "accompanies" correctly describes the relation between them.

7. THE TRAITS OF QUALIA MAY BE CONSEQUENCES, NOT INGREDIENTS

Before assigning properties to "experience," "feeling," "consciousness," the "I," or the "quale," the TMC applies Factor X once again. These signs carry meanings inherited from different traditions and need not delimit the phenomenon at the same point. The TMC does not begin by deciding where one ends and another begins; it first seeks to describe the realization — presence,

determination, selection, Texture, boundary and Trajectory — and only then asks which of those names it actually requires. Distinguishing operations does not, by itself, authorize separating them ontologically.

This is precisely why Dennett's characterization is useful here. Not as a final definition of qualia, but because it identifies four phenomena commonly gathered under that name — ineffability, privacy, direct apprehension and intrinsicness. The TMC can then examine, one by one, what each trait actually describes and whether it needs to be treated as a primitive property of experience.

You may call whichever selection you find satisfactory “feeling,” provided you say exactly what you are selecting — without turning the name into proof of an ontology.

One influential characterization of qualia, systematized by Dennett precisely as a target of criticism, brings together four traits: ineffability, privacy, direct apprehension and intrinsicness. The proposal here is neither to take this quartet as a consensual definition nor to preserve the metaphysically strongest version of each trait from the outset. The question is different: what phenomenon does each seek to capture, and how much of it needs to be treated as a primitive property of experience?

> Ineffability need not mean that experience is absolutely indescribable. The problem may be more precise. Describing an experience is producing a new occurrence: a new selection realized by a system already modified by what it seeks to describe. We may preserve differences, relations and relevant aspects, but the description does not return to a neutral point or fully repeat the previous realization. To describe an experience is to make, in the present, a new selection of what occurred.

> Privacy need not mean absolute inaccessibility either. Another observer may access reports, behavior, structure and correlates of experience, but this access turns the occurrence into an object for another instance; it does not automatically place that observer within the same realization. To observe an experience is not to realize it. In this sense, privacy may express an asymmetry of participation without preventing experience from being investigated externally.

> Nor must direct apprehension presuppose an inner observer contemplating what happens. The subject need not infer its experience from external evidence for that experience to be present to it, nor must the occurrence await a second act of observation in order to take place. Reflection may come later

> and turn what occurred into a new object. This does not make everything we say about experience infallible: we may be wrong when classifying, remembering or explaining it. **Direct does not mean incorrigible in every respect.**

> Intrinsicness requires the greatest care. If the term is taken in a strong metaphysical sense, as complete independence from relations, the TMC perhaps should not pretend to preserve it in that form. What it can preserve is something more modest: THERE IS–THIS WAY belongs to the occurrence itself as it is realized; it is not added later by an observer or an interpretation. This is compatible with that very occurrence depending on an organization, a history and the relations that constitute it. **Belonging to the occurrence is not the same as being constituted without relations.**

Perhaps, then, the four traits are better treated not as four primitive properties hidden within the quale, but as four questions addressed to the same occurrence. In the face of description comes the problem of ineffability; in the face of another observer, that of privacy; in the face of the subject's own access to the occurrence, that of direct apprehension; and in the face of the question about experience's own character, that of intrinsicness.

Thus the quartet remains philosophically useful, but its function changes. Instead of entering as a ready-made ontology of experience, it can serve as a diagnostic instrument for a theory that must explain why these profiles appear.

This changes the direction of the investigation. Instead of beginning by defining the quale through four special properties, we can ask: what kind of realization would make those four profiles appear?

Perhaps we have treated as defining traits what may, at least in part, be consequences of the same architecture.

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8. THE TMC AND THE SCHOOLS — BEFORE CHOOSING AN ONTOLOGY

The TMC does not intend to add yet another school to this list.

Its move comes earlier.

The TMC postulates that the arrangement favors the continuity of the lineage; the instance is a temporary link in that continuity, not its purpose. Its parts within that link are structurally disposable, allowing the system to preserve continuity despite thermodynamic

irreversibility and material degradation. The arrangement is proposed as operating within known physical constraints, making replacement a strategy of continuity. The lineage transmits the function, not the same matter; matter accompanies it as a transitory substrate.

The TMC calls *instance-centrism* (*instanciocentria*) the unavoidable tendency of each instance to operate from itself as a local center. In humans, that instance-centrism manifests as anthropocentrism. Selection is efficient for operating, but this does not grant it authority to describe the whole of reality. **The center of the apparatus is not necessarily the center of the phenomenon.**

Anthropocentrism, metaphysics and certain ontological selections may, in principle, be functional manifestations of the arrangement for the purposes of operation. Their usefulness, however, warrants neither treating them as ultimate descriptions of the Real nor concluding from their functional origins that they are false.

Factor X arises from this caution.

Factor X puts that caution into operation. It does not deny the referent; it provisionally suspends the authority of inherited concepts to determine its nature in advance. “I,” “consciousness,” “feeling,” “life” and “existing” still point to phenomena that need explaining. What is suspended is the obligation to treat them, from the outset, as a substance, property, function, subject, narrative or any other ready-made ontology.

Its suspension therefore also extends to certain forms of ontological closure and to metaphysics. When the apparatus itself tries to select and delimit what resists a defined boundary — especially itself, its origin, continuity, ending or foundation — the selection may become part of the problem. The persistence and force of such questions in philosophy, science or religion do not prove that their referent exists or does not exist. They show only that the apparatus can produce an Object for something whose boundaries it cannot yet close. **The Object points; it does not prove what it points toward.**

The TMC prefers first to investigate how that pointing is formed within the apparatus, and only then to ask what ontological or metaphysical commitment it actually requires.

This stance is deliberately secular. That does not mean materialist or anti-metaphysical. It means that no solution — physical, dualist, idealist, panpsychist or religious — is granted priority before the investigation.

The TMC first seeks what must actually take place.

Every concrete realization requires a physical basis capable of carrying out the necessary causal work. But the identity of that

matter is not granted explanatory priority at the outset. What emerges as a more stable candidate is the arrangement: causal and temporal relations that may, in principle, be realized in different materials, provided the corresponding work continues to be carried out.

The arrangement precedes matter in the order of the question; matter returns in the order of realization.

The Triad — Inside, Between and Ahead — is the minimal form currently proposed for that arrangement. It is neither an additional substance nor an entity above matter. It names relations through which an organization preserves and reconstructs internal conditions, is modified through encounters, and allows differences from its trajectory to continue participating causally in what follows.

This brings the TMC close to forms of functionalism, computationalism, systems theory, autopoiesis and enactivism, without making it identical to any of them.

From functionalism, it shares the importance of organization and causal role. But a present function does not exhaust the relevant unity: what matters is also how Trajectory produced the state that now operates and how that operation changes what will operate next. **Trajectory is not merely stored memory; it is causal modification of the system itself.**

From computationalism, it accepts that an organization can admit different realizations. But computational implementation does not, in itself, define mind, life or phenomenality. **Reproducing a function does not demonstrate that the entire relevant realization has been preserved.**

From autopoiesis, the TMC shares the idea that the living unity should be sought in the organization that participates in its own production and maintenance, not in an isolated part. The difference does not lie in renaming self-preservation, coupling and reproduction as Inside, Between and Ahead, but in treating them as codependent dimensions of a single causal-temporal architecture. When the instance ceases to suffice as the unit of analysis, the question changes: how can what is preserved be transformed through an encounter, and how can differences from that trajectory continue operating across other instances? **It is not enough to say that there was a history; we must show where it continues to act.**

From enactivism, the TMC shares the idea that cognition is not simply enclosed within the head, but emerges from the active relationship between a situated organization and its environment. Its interest, however, is to open up that transition from within: how a material organization becomes capable of selecting, retaining, losing, weighting and reconstructing differences, and how each

operation transforms what will operate next. The TMC does not deny *sense-making*; it seeks to decompose how it becomes causally possible.

It therefore keeps three interfaces distinct: physical realization → organization; organization → cognition; cognition → manifestation. **The three interfaces are not three steps in which reaching the first entitles us to claim the next; they are three different explanatory debts.** The TMC seeks continuity between realization, cognition and manifestation, but it does not allow an explanation of one to discharge the explanatory debt of another.

Nor is it enough simply to find a mechanism.

A mechanism can explain how a particular occurrence is produced, sustained or transformed. That does not automatically entitle it to decide what that occurrence ultimately is.

A mechanism may settle the "how" without settling the "what it is."

This is where selection and delimitation become important.

A finite instance cannot access everything. To operate, it must distinguish differences, establish boundaries, stabilize units and produce a reference point from which those differences become operable. Every THIS WAY is a situated determination, not an integral reproduction of reality; self-selection provides the "here" from which other selections can be organized.

Selection, therefore, can be operationally adequate without having to be ontologically exhaustive.

When the apparatus selects a chair, a threat or a source of food, that limitation is part of the ordinary cost of operating. But when it attempts to select itself, the instrument producing the boundary becomes part of what it is trying to delimit.

It is the camera trying to photograph itself.

The TMC does not conclude that the I or consciousness must therefore be false. Its conclusion is narrower: the boundary produced by self-selection should not automatically be confused with an absolute boundary of the Real.

This is where ontology and metaphysics enter the problem in different ways.

The *Metaphysics of Metaphysics* asks how a finite apparatus transforms gaps, continuities, origin, direction and ending into Objects about which it then asks: "where from?", "what for?", "where to?" Explaining the genesis of those questions neither proves nor refutes what they point toward.

Certain forms of ontological closure may face a similar difficulty. An operationally necessary distinction — "I operate from here," "this is outside," "this happens in me" — may be promoted to an absolute separation within the Real. That promotion may be correct. It may also reflect part of the architecture of the selecting apparatus itself.

The TMC therefore treats ontological closure with caution, not ontology itself.

Its prior question is:

how much of the boundary belongs to the phenomenon, and how much belongs to the instance's need to produce a boundary so that it can operate?

This caution also applies to the TMC itself. Inside, Between, Ahead, THERE IS, Brilho and every other concept are theoretical selections. They do not gain immunity because they were created within the theory. They must discriminate differences, explain relations and withstand cases that might render them dispensable.

The TMC does not seek to escape selection.

It seeks to prevent selection from forgetting that it is a selection.

Thus, when faced with the major schools of consciousness, its position is not "we are materialists," "dualists," "functionalists," "panpsychists" or "idealists." Nor does it claim that none of these positions could be correct.

Its position comes earlier in the method:

assume the minimum necessary to investigate; reconstruct the arrangement, the instance, selection and Trajectory; and add an ontological commitment only when an explanatory debt cannot be addressed without it.

If a stronger ontology proves necessary, the TMC does not forbid it.

It must enter because the explanation requires it, not because it was hidden at the beginning of the question.

WHAT THE TMC IS NOT PROPOSING

- It does not propose a new substance.
- It does not consider matter irrelevant.
- It does not reduce everything to function.
- It does not assume that consciousness is fundamental or illusory.

- It does not claim that every ontology is a construction of the apparatus.
- It does not confuse explaining the origin of a metaphysical question with answering it.
- It does not propose a new school to replace materialism, dualism, idealism or panpsychism.

It proposes a way of investigating:

before deciding what the phenomenon is, ask how the instance managed to transform it into something that could be selected and delimited as “this.”

And when the object is the instance itself, remember that whoever holds the camera may also appear in the photograph.

06 **The Real and the Limits of Selection**

06 The Real and the Limits of Selection

Occurrence, manifestation and access: the limits of a situated perspective.

WHAT IT IS

The TMC distinguishes the occurrence that conditions us, the selection that makes it operable, and the limit of all situated access. This block organizes that relationship and confronts ten dialectical positions, distinguishing manifestation, description and ontological commitment.

QUESTIONS

- How can the Real condition us without being fully accessible?
- What distinguishes occurrence, phenomenon, access and selection?
- When does a difference in access or description warrant an ontological conclusion?

- In what sense can illusion and virtual reality be real?

KEY INSIGHTS

- **The Real constrains us without fitting entirely within the selection.** Making something operable does not mean exhausting what made it possible.
- **The same occurrence may sustain different phenomena.** Its manifestation depends on the contact and capacities of each instance.
- **Suspending judgment about ultimate nature does not suspend constraints.** The TMC postpones ontological commitment without abandoning conditioning.
- **An illusion can be real as a manifestation.** That does not make our interpretation of it adequate.

IN THIS BLOCK

WHAT IS THE REAL FOR THE TMC?

1. OCCURRENCE — the Real constrains.

2. SELECTION — the Real becomes operable.

3. REALITY NOT FULLY ACCESSIBLE — the Real is not exhausted by selection.

REALITY, ACCESS AND ONTOLOGY — TEN DIALECTICAL POSITIONS

WHAT IS THE REAL FOR THE TMC?

THREE MOMENTS OF THE REAL

1. OCCURRENCE — the Real constrains.

Something happens independently of our selection and limits what can occur.

2. SELECTION — the Real becomes operable.

An instance accesses differences and stabilizes them into units with which it can operate.

3. REALITY NOT FULLY ACCESSIBLE — the Real is not exhausted by selection.

The instance can access, describe and operate on the Real only partially; no situated selection guarantees that it grasps the Real's

totality or ultimate nature, or encompasses all the causal relations, scales, manifestations and trajectories that constitute it.

The Fourth Person is the method used to test this limit — not a literal fourth perspective or an absolute observer.

WHAT THE THREE CLARIFY FUNCTIONALLY

The three moments exist because each addresses a different problem in our relationship with the Real. First, something conditions us prior to any interpretation: this prevents everything from being reduced to construction. Next, because no instance accesses everything at once, it must select differences and turn them into operable units: this prevents us from imagining that the world arrives already divided exactly as we perceive it. Finally, the TMC adds a limit: what we can select does not exhaust what conditions us. Thus the third moment prevents a useful selection from being promoted to ultimate reality. The structure, therefore, does not describe three worlds, but three responsibilities: acknowledge conditioning, explain determination and limit the authority of that determination. This is why the TMC does not promise to escape selection; it requires only that selection not forget that it is selection.

This distinction prevents three collapses: manifestation is not foundation; selection is not an ontological boundary; an expanded perspective is not an absolute view. An experience may be genuine without revealing what sustains it; an object may be fully operable without constituting an absolute unit; and expanding a perspective does not produce an observer outside every perspective.

The gain is not to answer immediately what the Real is made of, but to put the inquiry in order. Occurring, appearing, selecting and declaring an ontology cease to be the same gesture. The Real can constrain selection without fitting entirely within it; selection can represent the Real without acquiring the authority to define it.

The TMC does not offer three versions of reality. It offers three checks against three excesses: turning manifestation into foundation, selection into ontology, and perspective into an absolute.

Reality constrains before selection, becomes operable through it, and continues to exceed it.

1. OCCURRENCE — THE REAL CONSTRAINS.

Something happens independently of our selection and limits what can occur.

ANCHOR AND CONDITIONING

The TMC does not accept reality as a pure construction, nor does it assume that we operate adrift. It admits an anchor of conditioning without assuming that this grants us a final understanding of what ultimately grounds that anchor.

At this level, the TMC begins with a simple idea: something happens whether or not we are looking, and that occurrence is not arbitrary. Dependencies and transformations restrict what can occur, even if our descriptions of those relations later change. Physics may revise its models, discover new structures or replace explanations accepted today — classical, quantum, holographic or others still unknown. The TMC does not need to decide in advance which of these descriptions will be definitive, because our physical theories remain open to revision in light of new evidence and discoveries.

It commits only to the fact that something occurs under conditions that do not depend on our access, and that what manifests to an instance also depends on how that instance comes into contact with the occurrence and on what it can access.

The TMC commits to the conditioning of the occurrence, not to a final physics of the Real.

FORMALIZATION 1 — OCCURRENCE

OCCURRENCE, in the TMC, is an event structured by relations of dependency and transformation that restrict what can occur. Its occurrence is not constituted by an instance's access to it, and its ultimate ontological nature remains open.

FORMALIZATION 2 — PHENOMENON

PHENOMENON, in the technical sense used by the TMC, is the situated manner in which an occurrence manifests through contact with an instance, conditioned by the occurrence, the configuration of that contact and the capacities of the instance.

A phenomenon is relational: it is not identical to the occurrence, access, selection or ultimate reality.

The occurrence occurs; the phenomenon arises in the encounter.

The same occurrence may sustain different phenomena in different instances.

MAXIMS

The occurrence occurs; the phenomenon arises in the encounter.

The same occurrence may sustain different phenomena in different instances.

The occurrence constrains; the configuration of contact and the capacities of the instance condition how it manifests.

The phenomenon does not initiate the occurrence; it initiates a relationship of manifestation with an instance.

Manifestation does not certify the ultimate nature of the occurrence.

The TMC commits to the conditioning of the occurrence, not to a final physics of the Real.

THE BILLIARD TABLE IN THE DARK

Imagine a billiard table in complete darkness. When we arrive, the balls are already moving: they collide, deflect other balls and change the configuration of the table.

We switch on a blue flashlight. Some differences appear; others remain beyond our reach, although they continue to produce effects. We cannot see, for example, the balls outside the beam of the flashlight.

Then we place an earthworm on the table. It does not encounter colored balls as we do, but it may be affected by the vibrations produced by the same collisions. Its access is different.

Neither the human nor the earthworm knows what set the balls in motion, knows all their manifestations or their constitution at smaller scales, or knows all the effects they may produce at larger scales.

The occurrence may be the same; the phenomenon arises differently in each encounter.

And the table keeps changing. Both the occurrence and the instance reach the present carrying trajectories that precede them.

We arrive in the middle of the occurrence and never encounter it in its entirety or without some mode of contact. Even so, within our constraints, something of it manifests to the instance.

PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION — A DISTINCTIVE ARRANGEMENT

The TMC does not seek to occupy a middle ground between realism, idealism, phenomenology and naturalism. Its move is different: to separate questions that frequently arrive together and to prevent the answer to one from deciding the others in advance.

From realism, it preserves the idea that something can occur independently of being accessed. From phenomenology and relational approaches, it preserves the idea that what manifests depends on situation, contact and the capacities of the instance. From structural and process philosophies, it preserves the importance of relations, dependencies and transformations. But it interrupts each transition before any of these local truths is converted into a total ontology.

The occurrence may be independent without its manifestation being neutral.

Manifestation may be relational without the occurrence being produced by the relation.

And the existence of dependencies does not require us to decide in advance whether the ultimate foundation is matter, mind, structure, process or something else.

For this reason, the TMC seeks to prevent the collapse of distinct levels of our relationship with the Real:

occurrence ≠ phenomenon ≠ access ≠ selection.

Before asking “what is real?”, an earlier question arises:

What exactly is being given the name *real*?

The occurrence? The way it manifests? What becomes accessible? Or the object already determined by the instance?

Answering at one of these levels and transferring the answer to all the others is precisely the kind of leap that the TMC's architecture seeks to avoid.

In this sense, the TMC is not simply ontologically neutral. It is *ontologically delayed*: it commits to conditioning, dependencies and constraints, but postpones identifying the ultimate nature of what conditions us.

Suspending the underlying stuff is not suspending the constraint.

Thus, its broad distinguishing feature may lie not in offering yet another answer about what the Real is made of, but in establishing a discipline concerning when that question can legitimately enter the inquiry.

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2. SELECTION — THE REAL BECOMES OPERABLE.

An instance accesses differences and stabilizes them into units with which it can operate.

Selection has already been presented in the preceding blocks, alongside THERE IS, THIS WAY, Light, Brilho and the architecture through which an instance makes differences operable. It will therefore not be redefined here. The aim is simply to place it again among the three moments and make its relationship to the other two explicit.

Occurrence establishes that something conditions us before selection. Selection shows how a finite instance turns part of what manifests into differences, units and determinations with which it can operate. Reality Not Fully Accessible establishes the limit: what has become operable does not exhaust what conditioned it.

Selection occupies the intermediate position among the three moments: it begins with a Real that conditions it and ends before a Real that it cannot exhaust.

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3. REALITY NOT FULLY ACCESSIBLE — THE REAL IS NOT EXHAUSTED BY SELECTION

The Fourth Person is the method used to test this limit — not a literal fourth perspective or an absolute observer.

Reality Not Fully Accessible is not a hidden world and does not require a separate metaphysics. It names the limit of every situated perspective: we can access, describe and operate on the Real without possessing it in its entirety.

Full access would require recovering the dependencies and transformations of an occurrence, following it across its scales, trajectory and different manifestations. An instance can broaden and correct its access, but it remains situated within some particular position, scale, temporal window and set of capacities.

This reality functions as the grounding of the preceding two moments. Occurrence unfolds under conditions that go beyond what the instance apprehends; Selection makes part of that manifestation determinate and operable without fully containing what it operates upon.

What conditions us is greater than what we can determine; what we determine is enough to operate, not to exhaust the Real.

It is precisely within this asymmetry that selection gains its significance. For a finite instance, drawing a boundary within a Real it cannot encompass in its entirety is the event of determination through which something comes into presence *as something*. Brilho is not located in that grounding and does not belong to a reality prior to selection; it marks the appearing of this determination for the realization.

In the Fourth Person thought experiment, presented earlier, this limit is taken to its extreme. By successively removing observer, scale, boundaries, signs and purposes, the field considered expands, but every expansion still begins from some perspective. Wherever there is perspective, there is selection; without perspective, there is no point of access. The experiment does not offer an absolute view: it shows why no instance can claim one.

Thus, the Real provides the grounding; selection supplies the boundary; Brilho marks the appearing of this determination for the realization.

Knowing partially is not knowing falsely; it is knowing without possessing the Whole.

REALITY, ACCESS AND ONTOLOGY — TEN DIALECTICAL POSITIONS

1. ASYMMETRY OF ACCESS

POSITION — First-person and third-person perspectives provide irreducibly different access to experience.

TMC — A difference in access is not sufficient to establish an ontological difference: privileged access is not ontological privilege.

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2. IRREDUCIBILITY OF DESCRIPTIONS

POSITION — A physical description, however complete, does not necessarily contain the phenomenal description.

TMC — A difference between descriptions does not demonstrate a difference between occurrences: distinct does not mean separate.

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3. EXPLANATORY GAP

POSITION — Fully explaining function and organization does not, by itself, explain why there is manifestation or experience.

TMC — The gap may be legitimate, but an explanatory debt does not choose the ontology.

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4. CONCEIVABILITY AND SEPARATION

POSITION — If it is conceivable to preserve all physical-functional organization while removing feeling, their separation may be ontologically possible.

TMC — Separation cannot be introduced into a hypothesis and then used as proof: imagining the cut does not demonstrate that the Real can be cut at that point.

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5. WHAT EXISTS BEYOND CONSCIOUSNESS

POSITION — Experience provides reasons to admit something beyond consciousness, even if its nature remains open.

TMC — It does not start from consciousness to infer an outside: it starts from occurrence and only then asks how that occurrence may manifest to an instance.

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6. AN X PRIOR TO MIND AND MATTER

POSITION — Mind and matter may derive from something more fundamental, which is properly neither of the two.

TMC — The hypothesis is possible, but it must not be promoted to a foundation without demonstration: suspending the choice is not choosing an X.

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7. INFORMATION AS FOUNDATION

POSITION — Information may be taken as a candidate for the foundation of the Real.

TMC — Information can describe or encode an arrangement, but it is not identical to its realization: it is the arrangement actually realized in a substrate that produces consequences. **Information about the arrangement is not the arrangement.**

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8. WHAT IS MOST CERTAIN IS NOT WHAT IS MOST REAL

POSITION — Given uncertainty about ultimate reality, immediate experience seems to offer the epistemically safest point of support.

TMC — Certainty of access does not establish ontological priority: first- and third-person perspectives may reveal distinct manifestations of different relationships with the occurrence. What is most secure in terms of access is not necessarily what is most fundamental in the Real.

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9. VIRTUAL REALITY

POSITION — A virtual environment can be genuinely real, even if its realization differs from what it represents.

TMC — The virtual is not outside the Real: it is realized through real occurrences and causal relations. **Simulated is not synonymous with unreal; it denotes a relationship between realization and representation.**

---

10. ILLUSION AND REALITY

POSITION — We commonly treat illusion as something less real: if something is an illusion, we think it "does not really exist."

TMC — An illusion can be real as a manifestation and inadequate as an interpretation; classifying it as "unreal" requires saying what is real, what is illusion, and by what criterion

they have been separated. Calling something an illusion does not explain the Real that made that illusion possible.

07 Qualia — The Reframing

THEORY OF CONTINUOUS MIND (TMC) · BLOCK 07

07 Qualia — The Reframing

Four traits, their reformulations and the hypothesis under examination.

WHAT IT IS

A synthesis of how the TMC reformulates four traits associated with qualia and makes explicit what its proposal does not require, while continuing to examine the relationship between operation and manifestation.

QUESTIONS

- How should we understand ineffability, privacy, direct apprehension and intrinsicness?
- Does lived experience require an additional substance, object or internal observer?

KEY INSIGHTS

- **Describing is not repeating; observing is not realizing.** Description and observation do not automatically reproduce an experiential occurrence.
- **Belonging to the occurrence does not mean being independent of relations.** The constitution of lived experience may involve organization, history and contact.

IN THIS BLOCK

POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALIA

NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALIA

POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALIA

FOUR CLASSICAL TRAITS ASSOCIATED WITH QUALIA

The four traits can be read as **four questions directed at the same occurrence**, not as four ingredients added to it.

CLASSICAL TRAIT	QUESTION	TMC RESPONSE
INEFFABILITY	Why is experience never fully reproduced by a description?	Because describing it already involves making a new selection, by an instance that has been changed by what occurred. The description can preserve important relations and differences without reproducing the earlier realization in its entirety.
PRIVACY	Why can no one experience exactly my quale?	Because another observer may access reports, effects, structure and correlates without automatically occupying the same realization. **Observing an experience is not realizing it.**
DIRECT APPREHENSION	Why do we not need another observer to know that experience is taking place?	Because the occurrence does not need a second internal observer in order to happen. Reflection may subsequently make it an object without thereby rendering everything we say about it infallible.
INTRINSICNESS	Why does the quale seem to belong to experience itself rather than to	The TMC need not assume that this character is metaphysically independent of relations. The experiential THIS WAY belongs to the occurrence as realized,

CLASSICAL TRAIT	QUESTION	TMC RESPONSE
	something added from outside?	although its constitution may depend on organization, history and relations.

SYNTHESIS

Ineffable because reconstructing is not repeating.

Private because realizing is not observing.

Direct because manifestation requires no reader.

Intrinsic, in a reformulated sense, because the experiential THIS WAY belongs to the occurrence itself, although its constitution depends on organization, history and relations.

An experience can be described in terms of its differences and investigated through its effects and relations. **A report can participate in a new encounter for the person receiving it**, without repeating the occurrence being narrated, and change the conditions of subsequent encounters.

NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALIA

DOES NOT REQUIRE AN ADDITIONAL SUBSTANCE —

There is no need to add a new substance to the apparatus.

IS NOT AN INTERNAL OBJECT —

There is no “quale thing” being observed from within.

DOES NOT REQUIRE AN INTERNAL OBSERVER —

There is no reader or homunculus receiving the experience.

IS NOT A REPRESENTATION —

Brilho is not an image or copy displayed to the system.

IS NOT THE CONTENT OF BRILHO —

Brilho concerns the manifestational character of determination; Texture concerns the qualitative manner in which it comes into presence.

STRONG HYPOTHESIS UNDER EXAMINATION

> The TMC investigates whether operation and manifestation constitutively belong to the same realization. **If this hypothesis is correct, the quale will not be an ornamental or subsequent layer added to an already complete apparatus.**

08 Evidence and Limits

08 Evidence and Limits

Selection, reference frame and experience: what the studies support and what remains under investigation.

WHAT IT IS

Studies on perception, self-location, neural activity and meditation allow us to examine relationships between selection, reference frames and experience. The TMC distinguishes what these findings support, the interpretations it proposes and what remains under investigation.

QUESTIONS

- How can the same stimulus support different perceptions?
- How is the “here” constituted, and how does it participate in what is perceived?
- Must detecting a presence coincide with identifying its content?

- What can disappear without experience immediately ceasing?

KEY INSIGHTS

- **The reference frame participates in the determination of what is perceived.** Reorganizing it can change how the same stimulus is perceived.
- **Detection, discrimination and identification may require different conditions.** This dissociation does not demonstrate a pure THERE IS devoid of properties.
- **A new input encounters neural dynamics already under way.** The next operation does not begin from zero.
- **Less content does not necessarily mean less experience.** In some contemplative states, certain dimensions may persist, stabilize or intensify.

IN THIS BLOCK

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR SELECTION

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR INTENSIFICATION THROUGH DIFFICULTY OF CLOSURE

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE CONSTITUTION OF THE "HERE"

EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON "THERE IS SOMETHING" AND "THIS IS HOW IT IS"

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR SELECTION

Experiments on bistable perception, figure–ground segregation, visual indeterminacy and perceptual fields without boundaries — such as Leopold & Logothetis (1999), Sterzer et al. (2009), Ishai, Fairhall & Pepperell (2007/2008), and Wackermann et al. (2008) — show that **what is perceived is not determined by the physical stimulus alone**. The same field may admit different organizations; when the conditions for stabilizing one of them are lacking, the individuation of an object may remain ambiguous, be prolonged or even disappear.

1. The same physical stimulus can support different perceptions.

In bistable figures and binocular rivalry, stimulation remains constant while perception alternates between possible organizations.

> → **TMC:** The perceived object is not simply copied from the stimulus. Available differences must be organized into an operable determination.

2. When an object's identity does not stabilize, processing continues.

Visually indeterminate images lead to longer recognition times and more interpretive searching than images that can be identified immediately.

> → **TMC:** Determining “what this is” takes work. When selection fails to stabilize a unit, the organization continues to be reworked.

3. When boundaries and contrasts disappear, the very individuation of an object may be lost.

Under Ganzfeld conditions, the extreme reduction of contours and figure–ground differences compromises depth, spatial delimitation and the individuation of objects.

> → **TMC:** A perceptual unit depends on differences that allow it to be delimited. Without sufficient delimitation, the object ceases to stabilize as a distinct unit.

4. A stabilized perceptual organization can be replaced by another without any change in the stimulus.

In bistable perception, the system repeatedly alternates between possible perceptual solutions while the input remains practically unchanged.

> → **TMC:** Selection does not occur just once. It can be stabilized, lost and remade. To select is to perform a recurrent operation.

Taken together, these results do not demonstrate the TMC's entire architecture. They support a narrower but decisive proposition: **perceiving is not merely receiving differences; it involves distinguishing, grouping and stabilizing them into operable units.**
The stimulus offers differences. The instance must make a selection out of them.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR INTENSIFICATION THROUGH DIFFICULTY OF CLOSURE

Studies on awe and vastness, the artistic sublime, perceptual indeterminacy, dissolution of self-boundaries, deep meditation, mystical and psychedelic experiences, and temporal or cosmic immensity — such as Keltner & Haidt (2003), Shiota et al. (2007), Piff et al. (2015), Gordon et al. (2017), Ishai, Fairhall & Pepperell (2007/2008), Muth & Carbon (2013/2016), Dor-Ziderman et al. (2013, 2016), Griffiths et al. (2006, 2011), Carhart-Harris et al. (2016), Yaden et al. (2016), and Gottlieb et al. (2018) — show that experiences in which scale, boundary, object, self or meaning resist customary forms of stabilization can become exceptionally salient or intense. The same studies also show that **this outcome is not inevitable: difficulty of closure may end in boredom, confusion, fear or disengagement.**

1. When scale exceeds familiar reference points, experience may intensify.

> → **TMC:** There is enough determination for the event to come into presence, but not enough for selection to encompass its entire scale.

2. When an object resists stabilization, processing may remain engaged.

> → **TMC:** Selection keeps attempting to determine what still exceeds its closure.

3. When spatial or bodily boundaries lose definition, experience may become particularly salient.

> → **TMC:** Intensification does not require the absence of selection; it may arise when selections continue operating without managing to stabilize completely what they determine.

4. The same insufficiency can produce fear, confusion or disengagement.

> → **TMC: Failure to achieve closure does not, by itself, produce sublime intensity.** The outcome also depends on relevance, threat, the possibility of remaining engaged, and the instance's engagement.

5. In contemplative states, boundaries may weaken without intense emotional agitation.

> → **TMC: Experiential intensity is not synonymous with arousal.** An event may remain highly salient even in equanimity.

6. Cosmic or temporal scales may remain intelligible without becoming intuitively encompassable.

> → **TMC:** An event may be determined in part while still exceeding every available closure.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE CONSTITUTION OF THE "HERE"

Taken together, these results offer convergent evidence, **not proof**, for links B → C and C → D in a broader functional chain proposed by the TMC:

A — something begins / enters processing
B — it is organized relative to the instance
C — a "here" is constituted
D — from this "here," what arrives begins to be determined relative to the instance

Sections 1 and 2 provide support for B → C → D. The status of A and its temporal or constitutive relationship with B remain the subject of the following investigation.

C — a "here" is constituted

D — from this "here," what arrives begins to be determined relative to the instance

Sections 1 and 2 provide grounding for B → C → D. The status of A and its temporal or constitutive relationship with B remain the subject of the next investigation.

1) SELF-LOCATION AS AN INITIAL SELECTION

Experiments on self-location, first-person perspective, multisensory integration and peripersonal space — such as Lenggenhager et al. (2007), Ehrsson (2007), Ionta et al. (2011), Guterstam et al. (2015), Serino et al. (2015), Maravita & Iriki (2004), and Nakul et al. (2020) — converge in showing that **the operational "here" does not simply coincide with the body's physical position.** It depends on a dynamic organization of different sensory reference frames and can be displaced, recalibrated or have its range modified.

1. The body occupies a position, but that position alone does not provide the "here."

> → **TMC:** The "here" must be realized. It is not a reference frame given in advance by the instance's physical position alone; it must be constituted and continuously updated.

2. Self-location can change without the body changing position.

> → **TMC:** The "here" is not a fixed physical coordinate. It not only has to be realized: it has to continue being realized as a continually updated relation between the instance and what surrounds it.

3. Vision, touch, proprioception and vestibular information arrive in different reference frames and must be integrated.

> → **TMC:** Incoming differences do not bring a ready-made "here" with them. Each system provides partial relations that must be integrated into a common reference relative to the instance itself.

4. The first-person perspective can be experimentally displaced or rotated.

> → **TMC:** The "here" is not merely a coordinate. It also organizes a direction and a field from which differences begin to come into presence relative to the instance.

5. Peripersonal space can expand or contract with action and tool use.

> → **TMC:** Not only can the "here" be recalibrated; the range of perception organized from it can also expand, contract and be readjusted. The instance recalibrates both where it operates from and how far its field extends.

6. Self-location, first-person perspective and body ownership can partially dissociate.

> → **TMC:** The “here” is not rigidly attached to the body, nor does it require an already constituted unitary Self. The reference frame can be reorganized so that the instance itself begins to come into presence from another point of reference.

These findings do not prove THERE IS or phenomenality. They support something narrower and important for the TMC: **“for this realization” and “from here” do not appear to be simply given by physical position; they require organization, integration and continuous updating.**

CONCLUSION 1 — PROVISIONAL FUNCTIONAL CHAIN

Taken together with the preceding section, these results offer convergent evidence, not proof, for a functional chain compatible with the TMC hypothesis:

B — it is organized relative to the instance
C — a “here” is constituted

C — a “here” is constituted

2) THE REFERENCE FRAME PARTICIPATES IN DETERMINING THE EXPERIENCED OBJECT

Experiments on tactile remapping, egocentric reference frames, eye and head position, graviception, peripersonal space and self-location — such as Yamamoto & Kitazawa (2001), Karnath et al. (1991), Lewald & Ehrenstein (1996/1998), Lenggenhager et al. (2007), Azañón & Soto-Faraco (2008), Iriki et al. (1996), Canzoneri et al. (2013), and later studies — converge in showing that perceptual determination depends on more than the stimulus's physical properties. **Changing the reference frame relative to the organism can systematically change how the same stimulus is located, oriented, temporally ordered, integrated or treated as nearby.**

1. The same stimulus may be perceived differently when the bodily reference frame changes.

> → **TMC:** What arrives does not bring its entire determination already completed. The signal's relation to the instance itself

> participates in what it becomes for that instance.

2. Perceived location may change even when the stimulus's physical position remains the same.

> → **TMC:** “Where it is” does not belong to the object alone. That determination also depends on the “from here” relative to which the stimulus is integrated.

3. The orientation of the body, head or eyes may alter perceived direction, verticality or order.

> → **TMC:** The reference frame does more than locate the instance; it participates in the spatial and temporal organization of what comes into presence for that instance.

4. Bodily configuration may even alter the perceptual individuation of what is felt.

Tactile experiments show situations in which posture contributes to one stimulus being perceived as two, or two being integrated as one.

> → **TMC:** The reference frame can participate not only in “where it is,” but also in how what arrives is organized as a perceptual occurrence.

5. Changing peripersonal space modifies which stimuli are treated as near and functionally relevant.

> → **TMC:** The range of perception also participates in determination. The same stimulus can acquire a different relation to the instance when the field within which it is integrated changes.

6. EEG, MEG and electrophysiological recordings indicate that remapping relative to the organism occurs before or during the stabilization of perceptual judgment.

> → **TMC:** The reference frame does not appear to be added afterward to a perception already fully formed. **It participates in the very process by which perception is being determined.**

CONCLUSION 1+2 — PROVISIONAL FUNCTIONAL CHAIN

Taken together with the preceding section, these results offer convergent evidence, not proof, for a functional chain compatible with the TMC hypothesis:

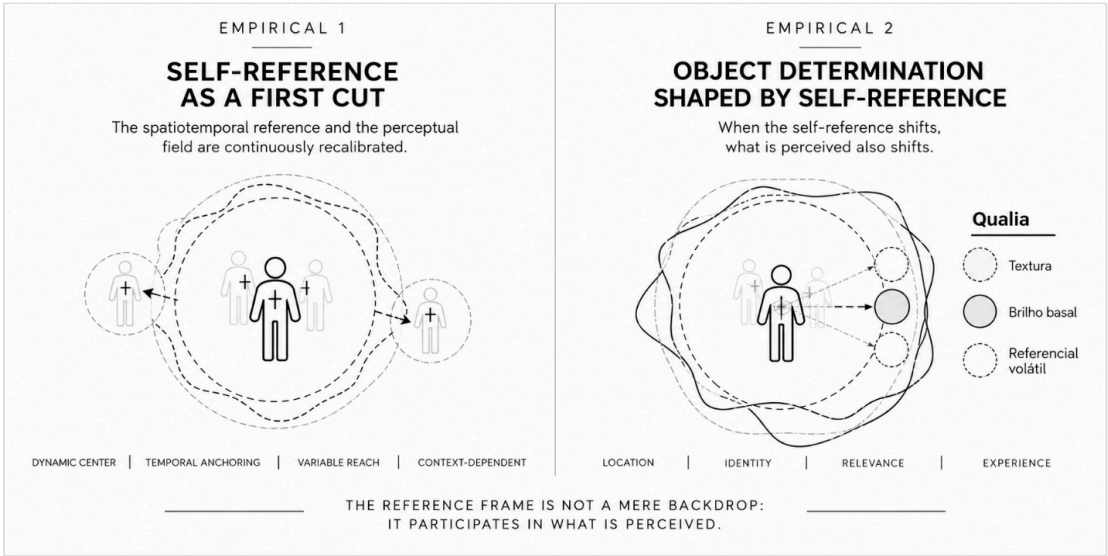
A — something begins / enters processing
B — it is organized relative to the instance
C — a "here" is constituted
D — from this "here," what arrives begins to be determined relative to the instance

The first section mainly supports B → C: the "here" must be realized.

This second section mainly supports C → D: **the realized reference frame is not merely a backdrop; it participates in determining what is perceived.**

The stimulus does not arrive already fully determined. It acquires part of its determination in relation to the reference frame that the instance itself realizes.

The first section chiefly supports B → C: the "here" must be realized.
The second section chiefly supports C → D: the realized reference frame is not merely a background; it participates in determining what is perceived.
The stimulus does not arrive already fully determined. It acquires part of its determination through the relationship with the reference frame that the instance itself realizes.



Tap or click the image to enlarge.

> **Note on empirical figure 1 —**

> Evidence concerning self-location, first-person perspective and bodily boundaries indicates that the reference point of experience need not be treated as a fixed, previously given coordinate. It is constituted and continuously recalibrated by the instance itself. In the TMC's reading, this self-selection provides a spatiotemporal reference frame — a here-and-now — from which subsequent selections can take place. This reference frame sustains a continuous self-reference in operation: “I am one,” “it happens in me,” and “I am different.”

> **Note on empirical figure 2 —**
>
> The evidence shows that when the instance's own reference frame is displaced or recalibrated, the way objects are located, organized and perceived may also change. The reference frame is therefore not a mere backdrop: it participates in perceptual determination. In the TMC, this extends the description of the quale. A determined experience has not only a particular, volatile Texture; it comes into presence within a relatively stable basal Brilho and is continuously situated by a volatile spatiotemporal reference frame, recalibrated along its trajectory.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON “THERE IS SOMETHING” AND “THIS IS HOW IT IS”

Note: In a broad sense, “there is something” means only that something is present or happening. “This is how it is” means that this something already appears determined in some way — through properties, form, category or identity.
Over recent decades, experimental advances and increasingly refined techniques for measuring brain activity have made it possible to separate perceptual processes that were previously harder to distinguish (high-density EEG, fMRI, intracranial recordings and new temporal and connectivity analyses). Recent studies — including work from 2023 on detection and discrimination thresholds and from 2025 on the effects of alertness level — reinforce the finding that **detecting that something occurred, discriminating its properties and identifying what it is need not coincide.** Science does not resolve the philosophical problem of experience here, but provides fresh empirical support for reconsidering the relationship between “there is something” and “this is how it is.”

I. THE SPLIT BETWEEN “THERE IS SOMETHING” AND “THIS IS HOW IT IS”

1 DETECTION BEFORE IDENTIFICATION

In some experiments, participants can correctly indicate that a stimulus appeared before they can say what it was, which category it belonged to, or what specific property it had. This shows that detecting an occurrence may require less information than identifying its content, without yet implying a pure or propertyless “THERE IS.” (Kiefer, Frühauf & Kammer, 2023, PLOS ONE).

2 PRESENCE WITHOUT IDENTITY

There are experimental situations in which a participant positively reports that something was present, although they cannot identify what it was. The result supports a dissociation between perceived presence and content identity, without demonstrating an experience wholly devoid of properties. (Ramsøy & Overgaard, 2004; Overgaard et al., 2008; Kiefer, Frühauf & Kammer, 2023).

3 A LOWER THRESHOLD FOR PRESENCE

In some paradigms, a stimulus's presence is detected under conditions still insufficient to discriminate its properties or identify what it is. This indicates different perceptual requirements for detection and identification, without proving that they are independent mental stages. (Kiefer, Frühauf & Kammer, 2023).

4 LAYERED DEGRADATION

Under different conditions, details, category and identity may be lost before coarser forms of detection and presence disappear. This suggests that “there is something” may remain available when “this is how it is” has already been lost or has not yet been fully determined, without implying an obligatory universal sequence. (Pelli et al., 2004; Del Cul, Baillet & Dehaene, 2007; Davis et al., 2007).

5 PROCESSING WITHOUT EXPERIENCE

A stimulus may be processed neurally and produce causal effects in the system without appearing as a conscious presence. This shows that **processing alone is not enough to characterize an experienced “there is something.”** (Del Cul, Baillet & Dehaene, 2007; studies of blindsight).

6 LAYERED RECOVERY

During emergence from general anesthesia and recovery from other states of reduced consciousness, sensory functions and simpler responses may return before identification, semantics and higher cognitive functions. This is compatible with the hypothesis of a “there is something” preceding “this is how it is,” but that subjective sequence has not yet been conclusively established. (Mashour et al., 2021; Siclari et al., 2013/2017).

7 CONVERGENCE ACROSS DOMAINS

The dissociation between detection/presence and identification appears across very different paradigms and conditions, from psychophysics to anesthesia and clinical neurology. This convergence strengthens the case that the pattern exists, without demonstrating that all these cases depend on the same neural mechanism. (Pelli et al., 2004; Overgaard et al., 2008; Davis et al., 2007; Kiefer, Frühauf & Kammer, 2023).

8 THERE IS DOES NOT MEAN EMPTY

An empirically observed “there is something” may retain minimal differences — such as contrast, movement, intensity or location — even before the content is fully identified or determined. This shows that **minimal presence does not mean the absence of differentiation**, but it is not yet equivalent to a defined object either. (Ramsøy & Overgaard, 2004; Overgaard et al., 2008; Kiefer, Frühauf & Kammer, 2023).

II. BASAL CONTINUITY: ENERGY AND PROCESSING

9 ENERGETIC CONTINUITY

The brain maintains high metabolic expenditure even in the absence of an external task. Other organs also consume energy continuously to sustain their functions, but in the brain a significant portion of that cost accompanies ongoing signaling and neural dynamics, not merely tissue maintenance. Even when this expenditure decreases, as in deep sleep or anesthesia, the brain does not become a state of simple structural preservation. (Sibson et al., 1998; Stiernman et al., 2021; Alkire et al., 1995).

- **CONVENTIONAL COMPUTER** — can sharply reduce computation when there is no task and remain almost entirely in system-maintenance mode.

- **OTHER ORGANS** — continue carrying out their physiological functions; in the brain, however, the basal condition itself includes continuous neural signaling and dynamics.

In summary: in the brain, "being on" already means continuing to operate.

10 CONTINUITY OF NEURAL PROCESSING

Even without an external task, the brain maintains structured spontaneous activity. The present neural state influences the response to the next stimulus and continues evolving even without new input. Thus, **processing does not start from zero: each new state emerges upon dynamics already under way.** This does not imply continuous conscious thought or semantic classification, but it supports the existence of an organized, conditioning neural flow. (Arieli et al., 1996; Kenet et al., 2003; Berkes et al., 2011; Stringer et al., 2019).

- **CONVENTIONAL COMPUTER** — a task may initiate a chain of processing, and once it ends, much of that computation may cease.

- **BRAIN** — each new input encounters a state already in progress, modifies that state and comes to condition the next one.

In summary: in the brain, the next operation does not begin from zero; it begins from the state left by the previous one.

III. DELIBERATE REDUCTION OF CONTENT: DEEP MEDITATION AND CESSATION

> **NOTE 1 — EPISTEMIC CONTROL AND LUMINOSITY:**
>
> This section prioritizes scientific and phenomenological studies independent of religious assumptions. Similar traditional contemplative accounts are not dismissed by the TMC, but are included only as comparative material and sources of hypotheses, never as evidence in their own right. Likewise, luminous phenomena reported in meditation — such as the *nimitta* — **do not correspond to the "Brilho" at issue here.** They may be symbolically suggestive and represent a representational closure, an anticipated object of experience, but they do not constitute the phenomenon that the term "Brilho" seeks to name.

NOTE 2 — SCOPE OF MEDITATIVE PRACTICES:

The term "meditation" encompasses very different practices. To avoid confusion, this section adopts an operational classification, not a universal taxonomy: (1) religious or metaphysical contemplative practices, which may have symbolic, doctrinal or devotional objects; (2) secular practices primarily focused on relaxation, emotional regulation or well-being; (3) contemplative inquiry practices, such as *vipassanā*, oriented toward systematic observation of experiential phenomena; and (4) deep concentration and absorption practices, in which mental contents may be progressively reduced, including *samatha*, *jhānas*, formless states and, in extreme cases, cessation. Mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) can serve as one entry point into this fourth group, but should not be confused with cessation itself. It is **only this fourth group** that concerns us here. Because its deepest states require prolonged training and considerable attentional stability, the studies considered in this section prioritize advanced and experienced meditators. These categories may overlap in practice; the distinction is functional for this investigation.

NOTE 3 — WHY USE A HISTORICAL CARTOGRAPHY:

Deep absorption states are difficult to produce and monitor experimentally, and the contemporary literature still depends on a small number of highly trained meditators, sometimes even the same practitioner in different studies. For that reason, the *Visuddhimagga* is used here **not as scientific evidence**, but as a historical topological guide: a systematization of techniques and experiential descriptions accumulated within ancient contemplative lineages. Its role is to indicate historically described transitions and losses of reference, so that they can then be compared with what modern empirical investigation can — or cannot — observe. (Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga*, introduction; chapters IV, X and XXIII).

11 METHODS FOR THE PROGRESSIVE CESSATION OF MENTAL CONTENTS

In deep meditative practices, different components of experience — such as inner speech, bodily sensation, agency and self-location — may diminish separately without experience immediately ceasing. The reduction is not uniform: **some dimensions weaken while others remain or even intensify.** This supports a progressive, multidimensional thinning of content, without requiring a fixed universal sequence. (Hagerty et al., 2013; Trautwein et al., 2024; Chowdhury et al., 2025).

12 MINIMAL EXPERIENCE

In deep meditative states, thought, narrative, bodily sensation, self-location and defined objects may diminish greatly without all experience disappearing. As practice deepens, states initially richer in pleasure, intensity or content may give way to an increasingly stable, clear and minimally reactive experience, often described as equanimity at the most advanced levels of content reduction preceding cessation. This makes **an extremely sparse experience plausible, without demonstrating consciousness wholly devoid of content.** (Chandia-Jorquera et al., 2026; Costines, Borghardt & Wittmann, 2021; Hagerty et al., 2013).

13 GRADUAL LOSS OF SELECTIONS IN DEEP CONCENTRATIVE MEDITATION

The diagram below presents, for didactic purposes, a topology of certain deep concentration practices. It combines a historical contemplative cartography with compatible contemporary experimental findings; **it should not be read as an empirically proven universal psychological sequence.**

- **CHOOSING A SINGLE SELECTION** — Practice begins by reducing the multiplicity of experience to a single, relatively neutral object, often the breath. First, one object is fixed among many; then the others progressively stop competing for attention. The aim lies not in the object itself but in reducing the field of selections.

- **EMERGENCE OF THE SUBLIME SELECTION — NIMITTA** — As the object becomes stabilized and refined, an exceptionally stable mental sign may emerge and be experienced as extraordinary, sometimes luminous: the *nimitta*. It is still a determined object of experience. Its occurrence and form vary with technique and tradition; therefore, it should not be identified with the TMC's “Brilho.”

- **RELEASING THE SUBLIME — FORM JHĀNAS** — From absorption onward, the process ceases to be predominantly constructive and becomes subtractive. The state may persist while the factors that organized it are successively relinquished: first the need to direct and sustain the object mentally, then rapture (*pīti*), and finally pleasurable happiness (*sukha*), culminating in strong equanimity. The *Visuddhimagga* characterizes this movement as the overcoming of factors, not yet as the loss of the object itself. (Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga*, ch. IV; Hagerty et al., 2013; Dennison, 2019; Chowdhury et al., 2025).

- **LOSING THE REFERENCE FRAME — FORMLESS JHĀNAS** — The subtraction becomes more radical: it is no longer only factors of the state that are relinquished, but the very reference frame that organized it. Form/body is surpassed toward boundless space; space toward boundless consciousness; consciousness toward nothingness; and even that reference is surpassed in the state traditionally called "neither perception nor non-perception." Here the *Visuddhimagga* explicitly distinguishes an overcoming of the object. Experimental characterization of these four stages as a universal sequence remains limited. (Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga*, ch. X; Nave et al., 2021; Trautwein et al., 2024; Laukkonen et al., 2023).

TMC READING — INTENSIFICATION THROUGH SUBTRACTION

The data do not warrant a universal rule whereby less content always produces greater intensity. Even so, reports of deep states allow a relevant reading: **in some cases, experience persists — and certain dimensions may become more intense, stable or clear — while determinations and reference frames are removed rather than added.** The TMC interprets this pattern as the possibility of *intensification through subtraction*. Determinations of THIS WAY leave positive traces by adding form, object, quality and reference; removing these selections leaves subtractive traces, revealing what can disappear without experience immediately ceasing. This does not demonstrate Brilho, but makes it empirically possible to investigate the hypothesis that experiential intensity does not depend solely on richness of content.

FIGURE — MAP OF THE MEDITATIVE SEQUENCE

Construction of selection up to the sublime and progressive deconstruction of reference frames toward cessation. Didactic topological diagram; it represents neither statistical prevalence nor an empirically established universal sequence.

MAP OF THE MEDITATIVE SEQUENCE



Source of the historical topology: Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* (especially chapters IV, X and XXIII). Correspondence with contemporary studies is partial and does not imply full validation of the traditional sequence.

TMC READING

The multiplicity of things seen, heard or felt emerges only in THIS WAY, when the apparatus makes selections and sculpts contours upon this common field.

One in THERE IS; multiple in THIS WAY.

The challenge is no longer to invent a glue to join scattered pieces, but to understand how the same undivided presence can accommodate so many different determinations without breaking the domain to which they belong.

The challenge is no longer to invent a glue to assemble scattered pieces, but to understand how one undivided presence can accommodate so many distinct determinations without breaking the domain to which they belong.