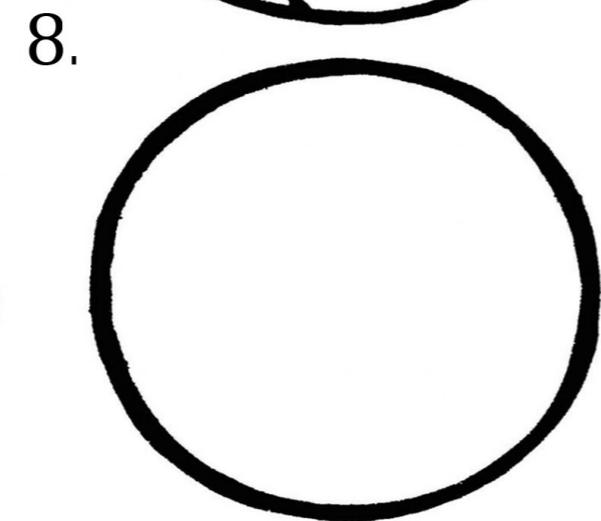


PSYCHOLOGY
OF
NONDUALISM

Alec Rogers

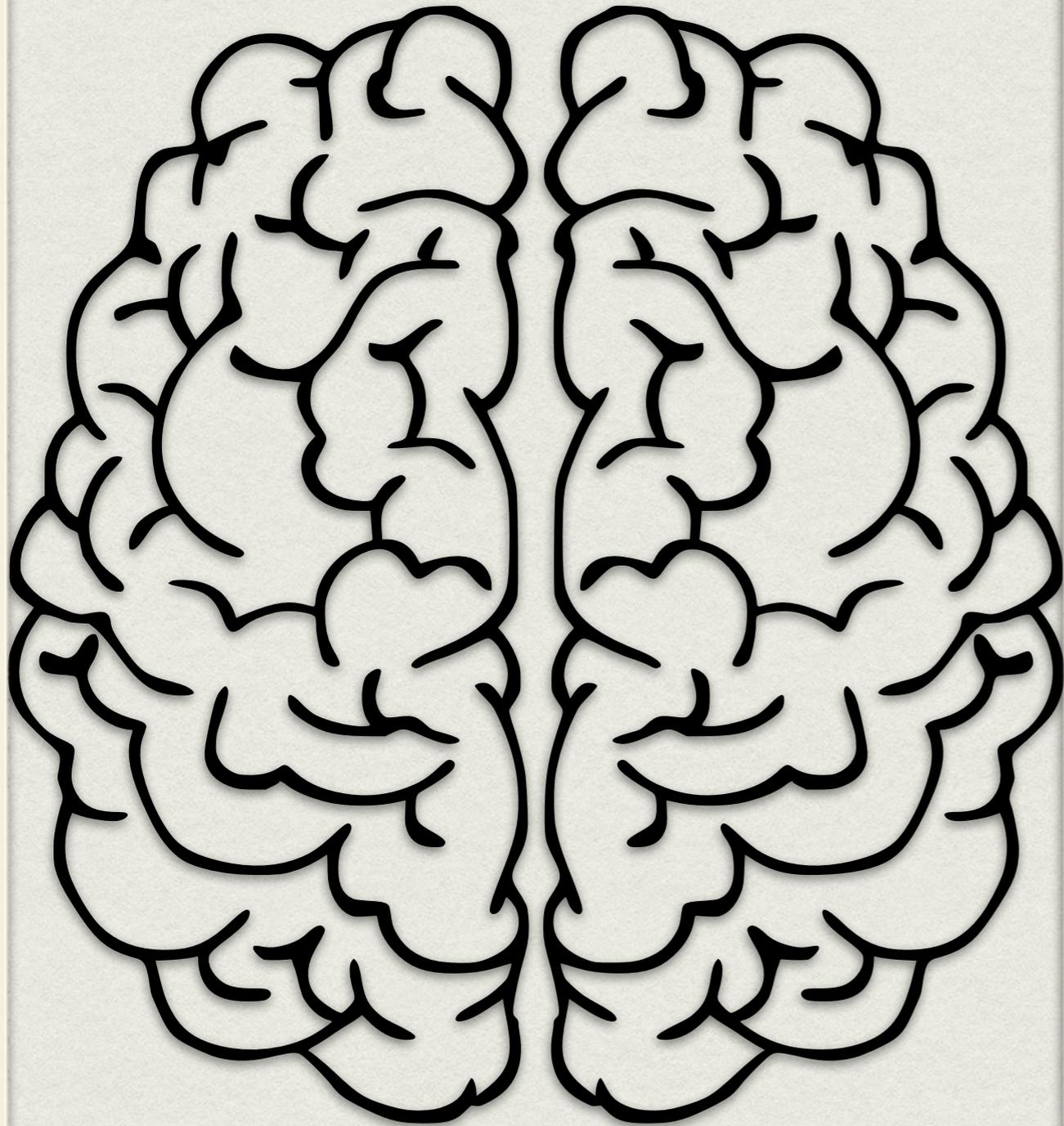
OVERVIEW



- Nondualism is often explored as a part of mystical traditions.
- The *psychology* of nondualism is not mystical.
- Psychological nondualism may not entail as much as mystical nondualism.

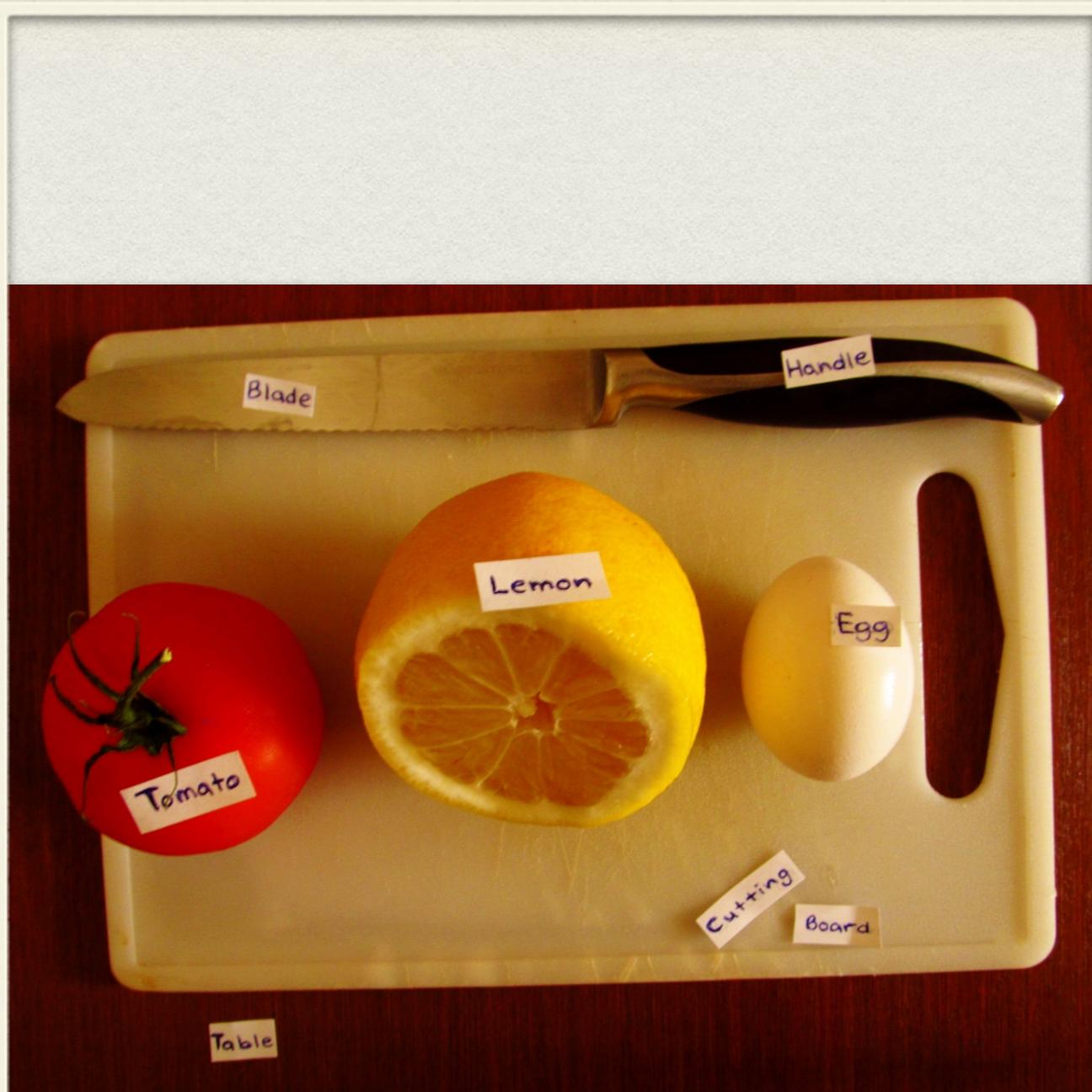
NONDUALITY

THE WORD “NONDUALITY”



- “Nondual” is a literal translation of the Sanskrit term *advaita*, which means not-two-ness.
- Nonduality does not entail singularity, which is why many people prefer the term: it does not make any positive assertions.

PROBLEMS WITH DUALITY



Dualism can cause:

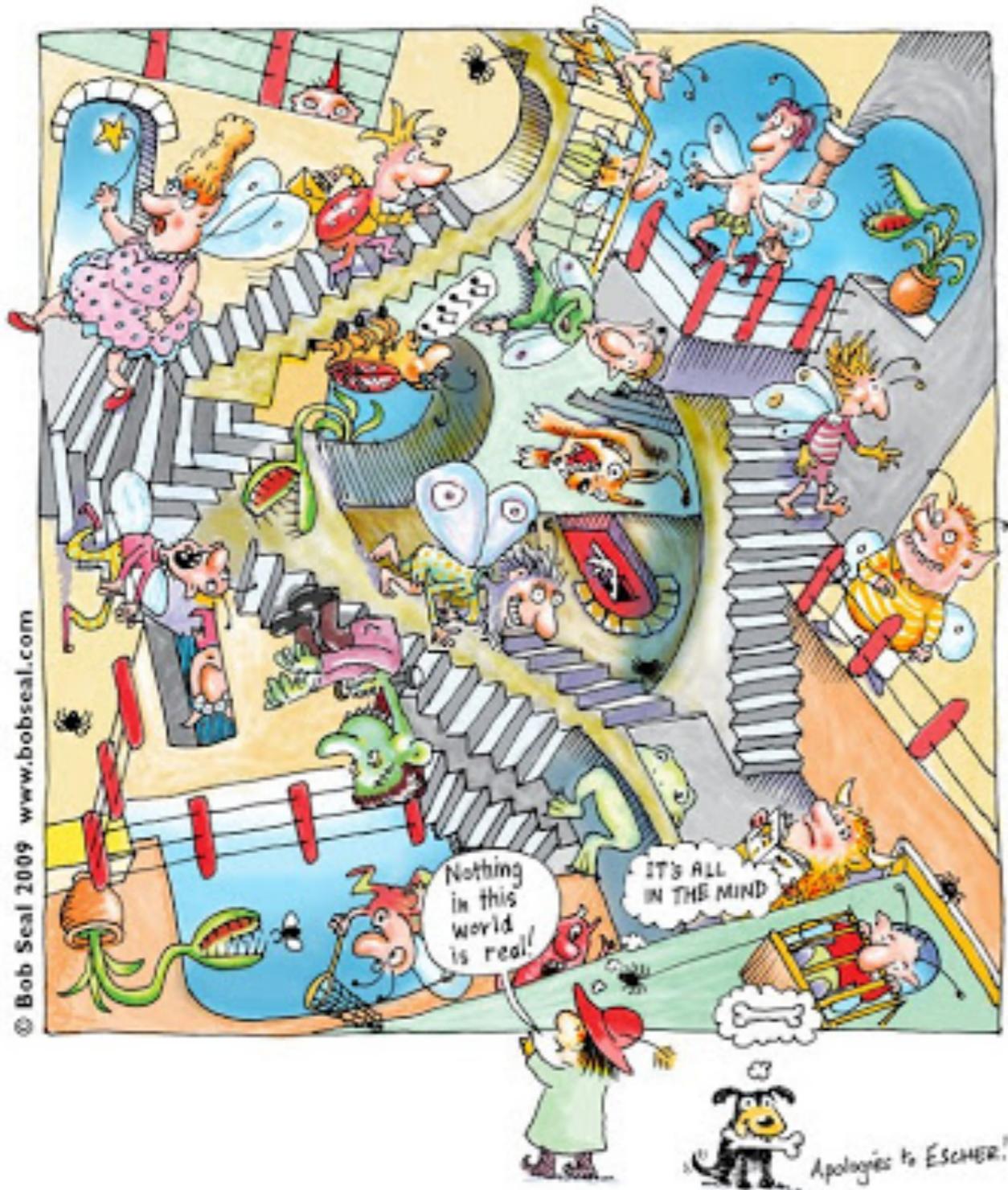
- A sense of isolation and separateness.
- A barrier between the sacred/profane, self/other, etc, which is overly reified in our daily lives.

PROBLEMS WITH NONDUALITY

Nondualism can cause:

- An anti-intellectual attitude.
- Lack of discrimination.

PROBLEMS INTEGRATING DUALITY AND NONDUALITY



Combining nondualistic experience and dualistic conceptualization is difficult:

- Is it necessary to alternate between them?
- Is a synthesis possible such that both can operate at once?

PROBLEMS NOT INTEGRATING DUALITY AND NONDUALITY

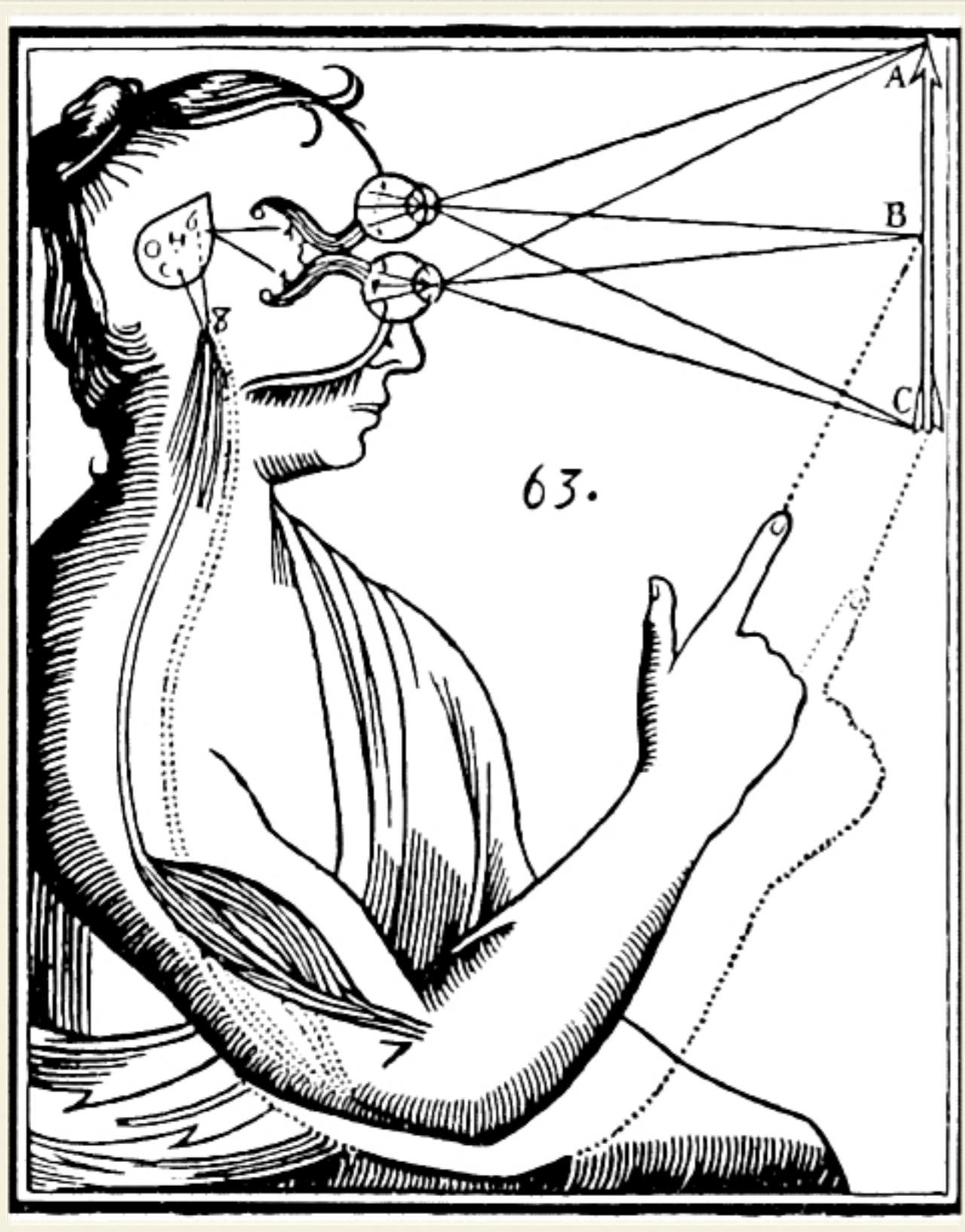


Mystics and psychotherapists both maintain that if the self/other duality is not understood, we may attack our *shadows* (or aspects of the world that are due to our projections).

NONDUALITY:

THE HISTORY

BACKGROUND



- Dualism (and therefore nondualism) appear in all areas of study.
- Duality and nonduality have been studied the longest within philosophical and religious traditions.

PHILOSOPHICAL NONDUALITIES

DUALISM vs MONISM	
Cartesian Duality: MATTER-MIND 	Physicalism: MATTER > Mind 
<small>KEY:</small> Physical and Mental substance is either fundamental or derivative. (solid line) (dashed line)	Idealism: Matter < MIND 
	Neutral Monism: 3rd SUBSTANCE > Matter & Mind 

A primary categorization of philosophy divides things according to how many types of things (or ontological categories) exist:

- Dualism (mental/material)
- Monism:
 - Materialism
 - Idealism
 - Neutral Monism
- Pluralism
- Nondualism

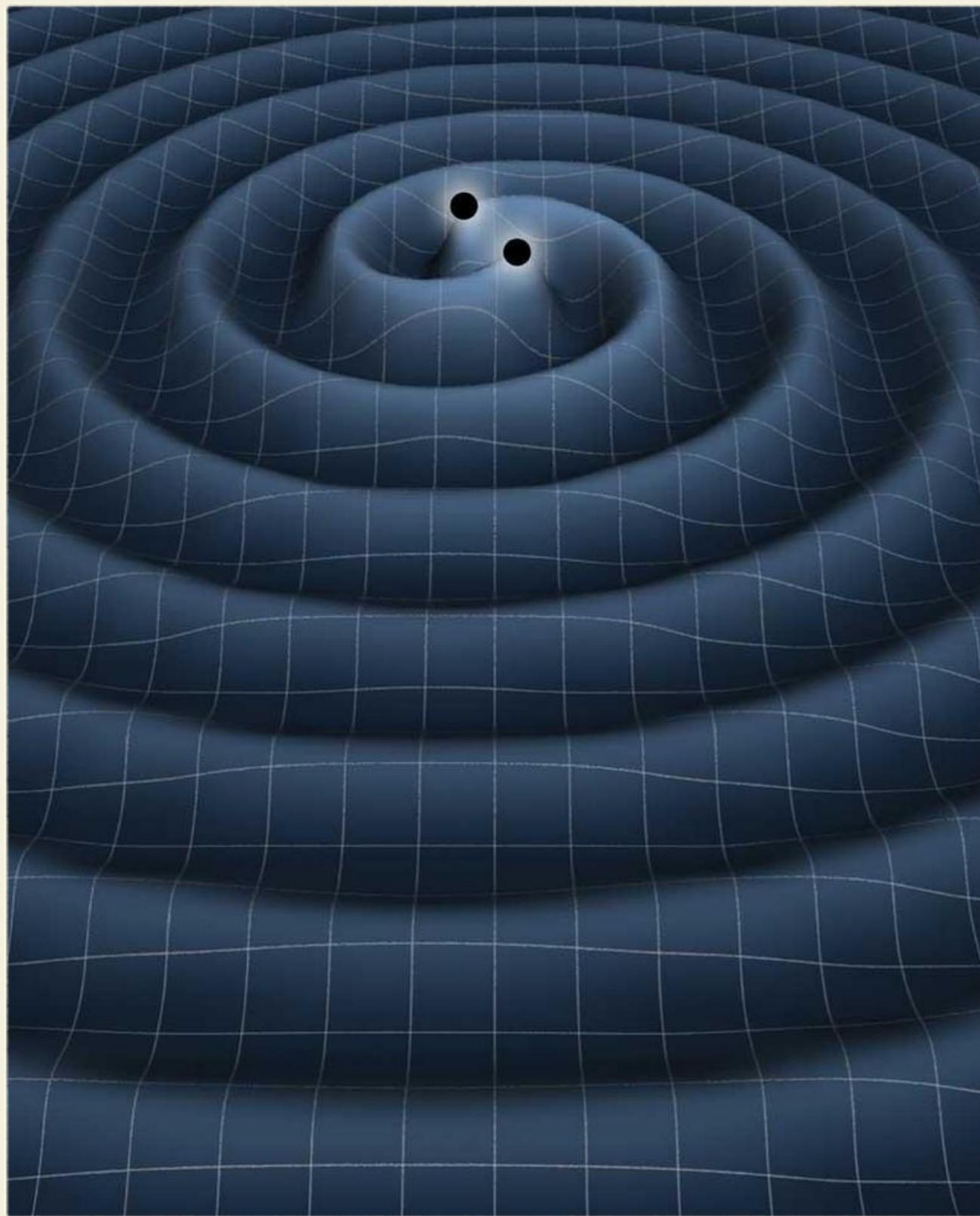
RELIGIOUS NONDUALITIES



Religious dualism takes many forms:

- I / thou
- Self / other
- Self / God
- God / devil
- Yin / yang
- Name / form (*nama / rupa*)
- Soul / matter (*purusha / prakriti*)
- Relative / absolute
- Nihilism / realism

OTHER NONDUALITIES

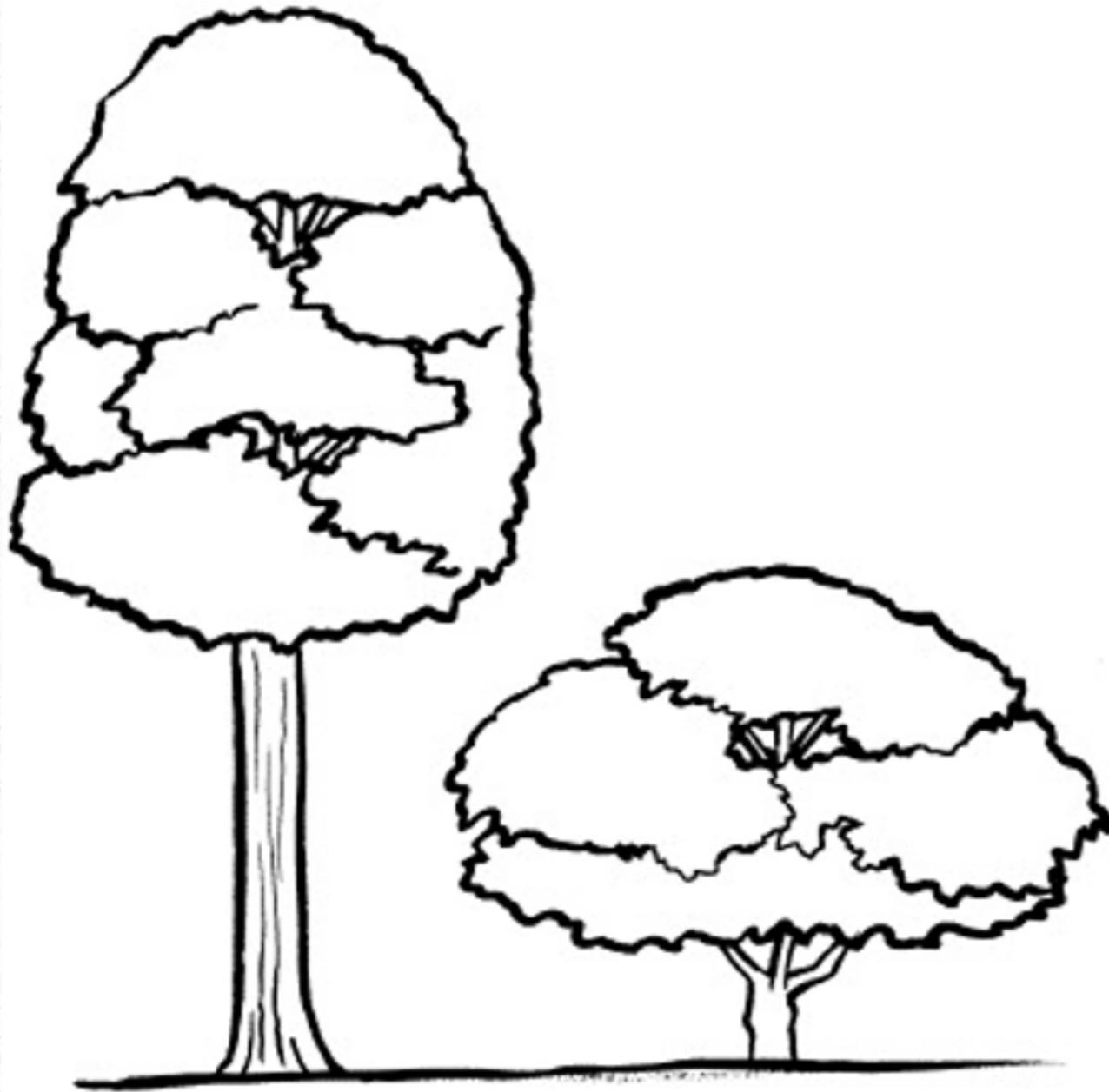


- Physics: the particle-wave duality.
- Logic: non-affirming negation.

NONDUALITY:

FIVE TYPES

1. RELATIVE (CONCEPTUAL) NONDUALITY



- Thoughts are generally considered dualistic, but they are also relative to one another.
- For example, big and small are relative terms, as you can't have one without the other.
- There are many such relative concepts:
 - Samsara/Nirvana
 - Self/Other
 - Good/Evil

2. NONPLURALITY



- Nonduality can mean exactly “not two”, which implies “without number”.
- Monism is an expression of nonplurality as singularity: the phenomenal world appears as many, but it is really one.

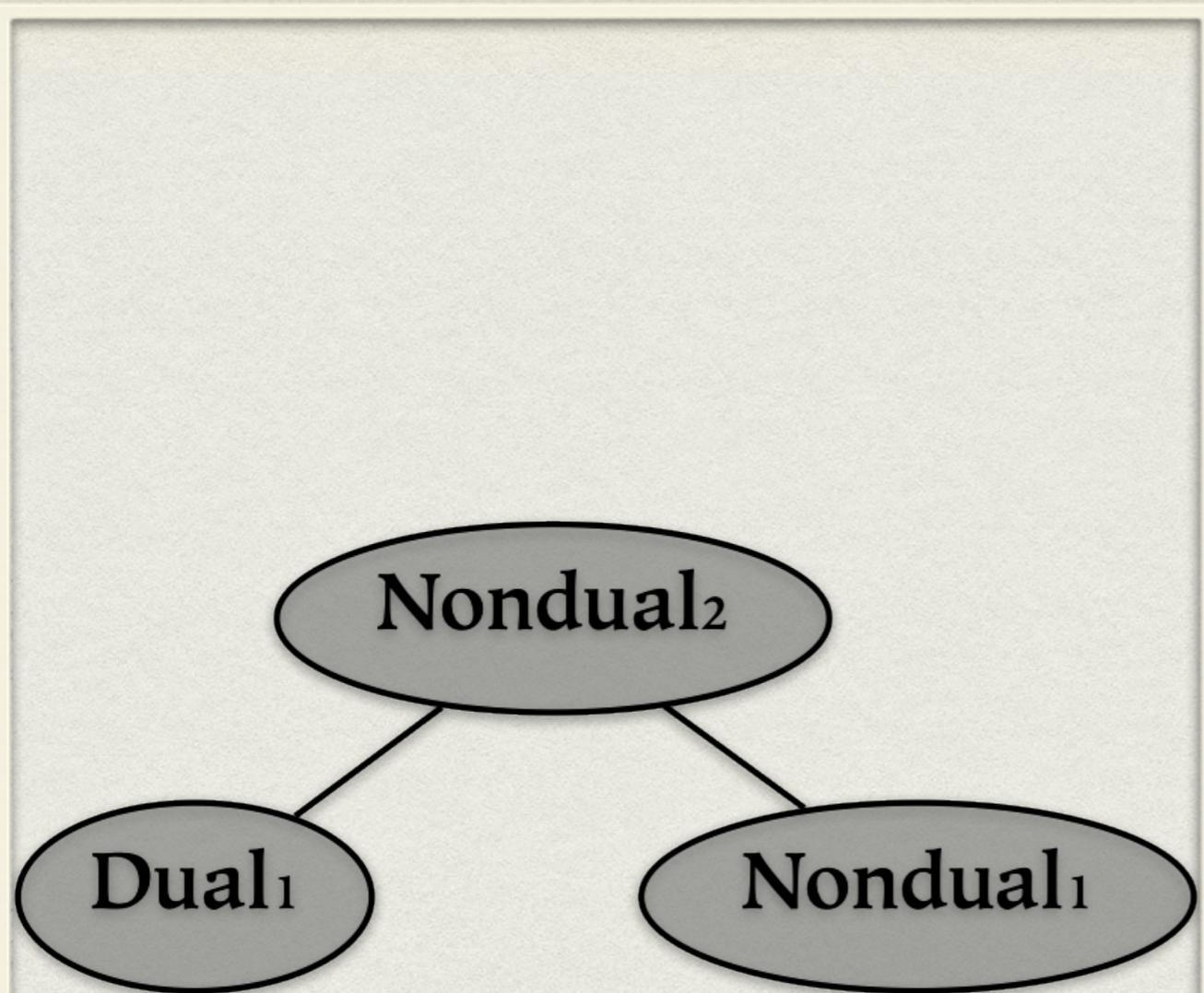
3. SUBJECT/OBJECT NONDUALITY



Subject/object (self/other) duality is the most prevalent.

- Buddhism says that there is no self.
- Hinduism says that there is no other.
- Many theistic traditions express that the self becomes a part of God.

4. NONDUALITY OF DUALITY AND NONDUALITY



- Dual and nondual can be viewed from two different perspectives:
 - From the relative perspective (1), the absolute is in opposition to the relative.
 - From the absolute perspective (2), they are not relative to one another.

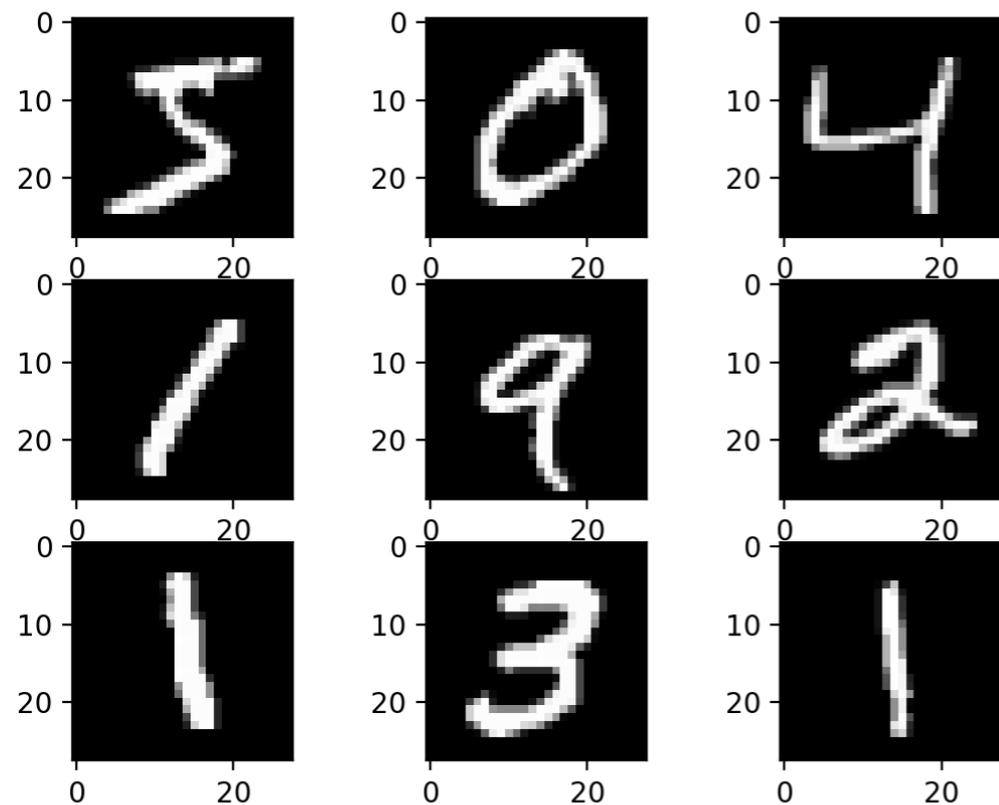
5. PERSONAL/DIVINE NONDUALITY



What does it mean to be in *unio mystica*, in union with God?

PSYCHOLOGICAL NONDUALITY:
CONCEPTUAL/NONCONCEPTUAL
AND SELF/OTHER

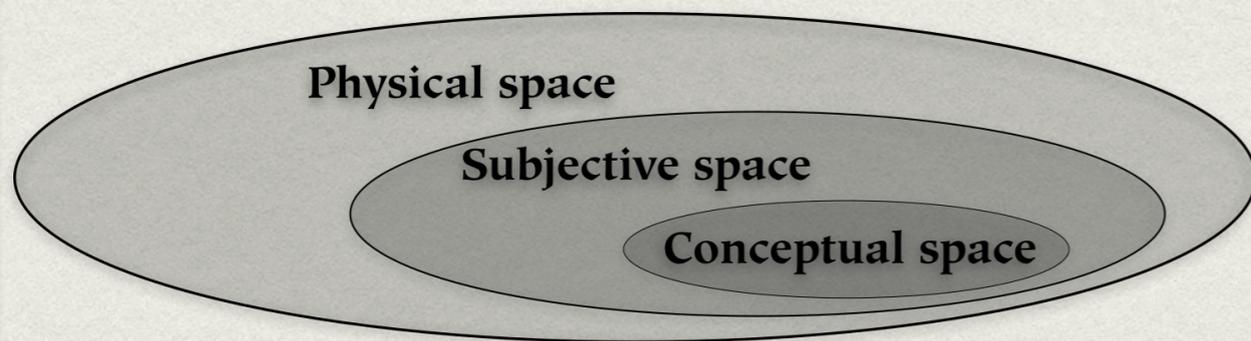
PSYCHOLOGICAL DUALISM



We will focus on two of Loy's five types:

- The subjective/objective distinction, in terms of representationalism.
- The conceptual/nonconceptual distinction, primarily as characterized by Dual Process Theory.

EPISTEMIC LEVELS

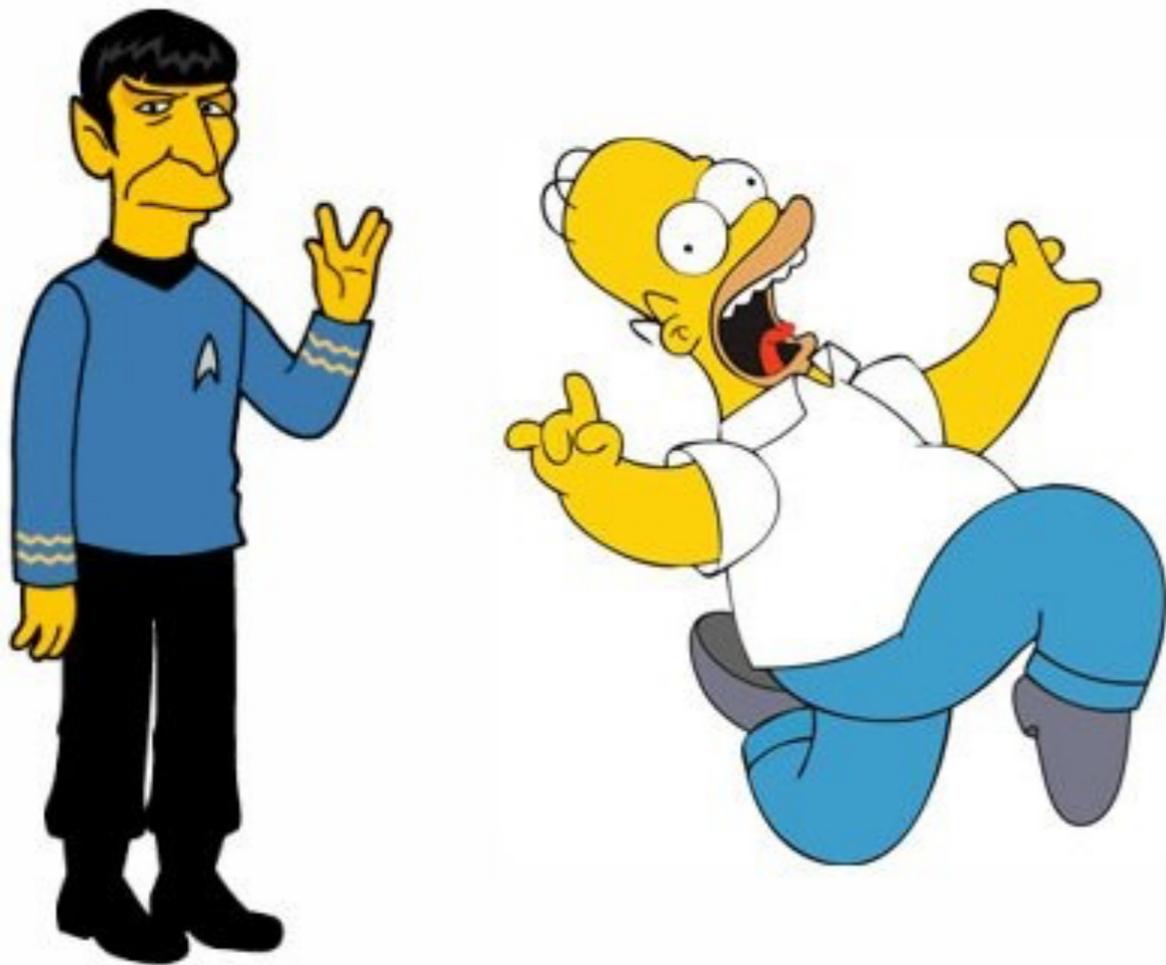


Self/other dualism and conceptual/nonconceptual dualism lead to the creation of three epistemic layers, or spaces:

1. Physical space.
2. Subjective space.
3. Conceptual space.

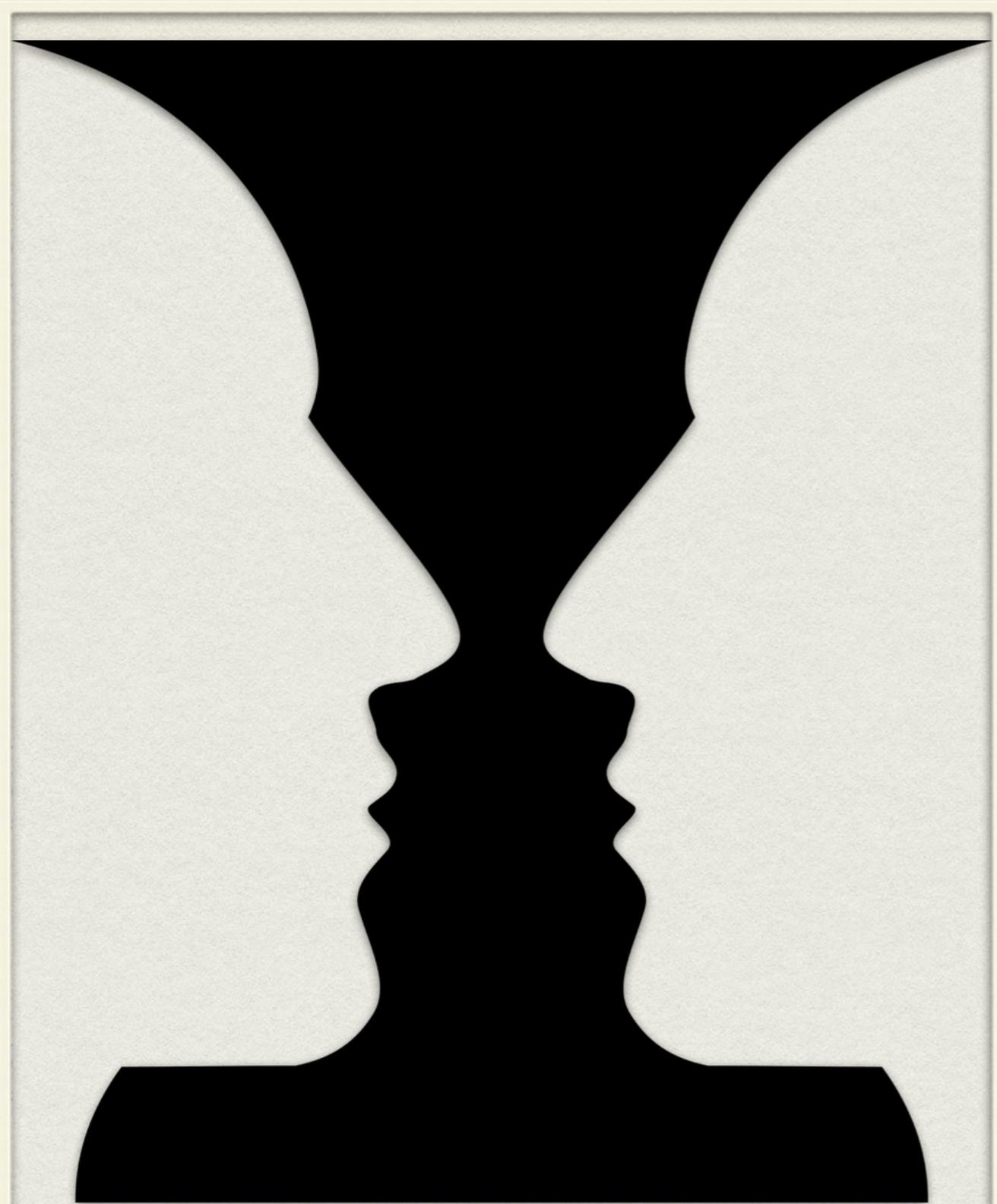
CONCEPTUAL/
NONCONCEPTUAL
NONDUALITY

DUAL PROCESS THEORY



- Dual Process Theory divides the mind into two different systems (Pessoa, 2015) :
 - System 1 (Type 1 thinking): bottom-up, emotional excitation.
 - System 2 (Type 2 thinking): top-down, conceptual inhibition.
- This distinction is similar to implicit/explicit and semantic/episodic distinctions.

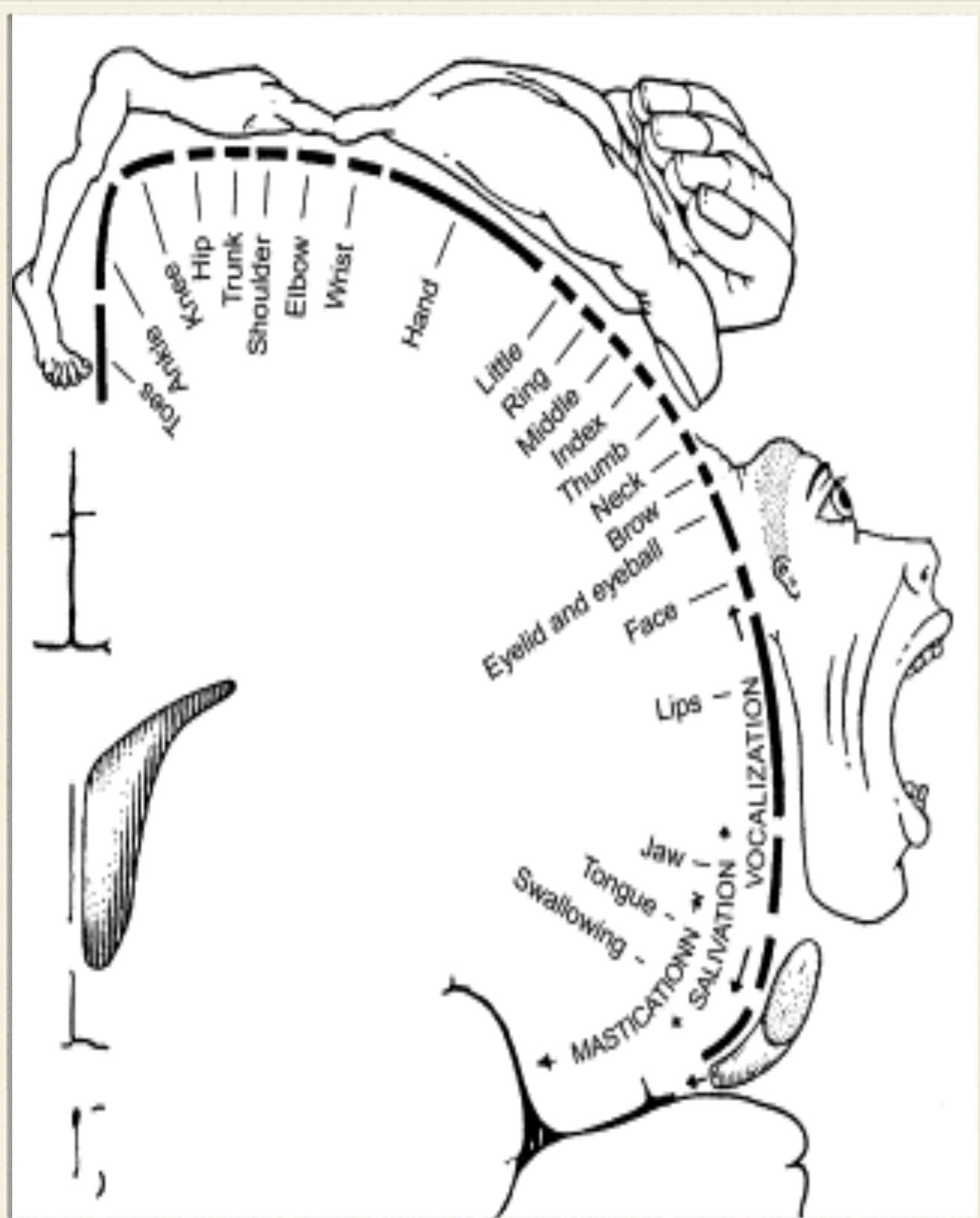
CONCEPTUAL AND NONCONCEPTUAL MENTAL CONTENT



- Dualistic experience = operation of System 2
- Nondual experience =
 - (A) operation of System 1
 - (B) cooperation of System 1 and System 2
- At the level of implementation, the conceptual/nonconceptual distinction corresponds to symbolic/subsymbolic architectures.

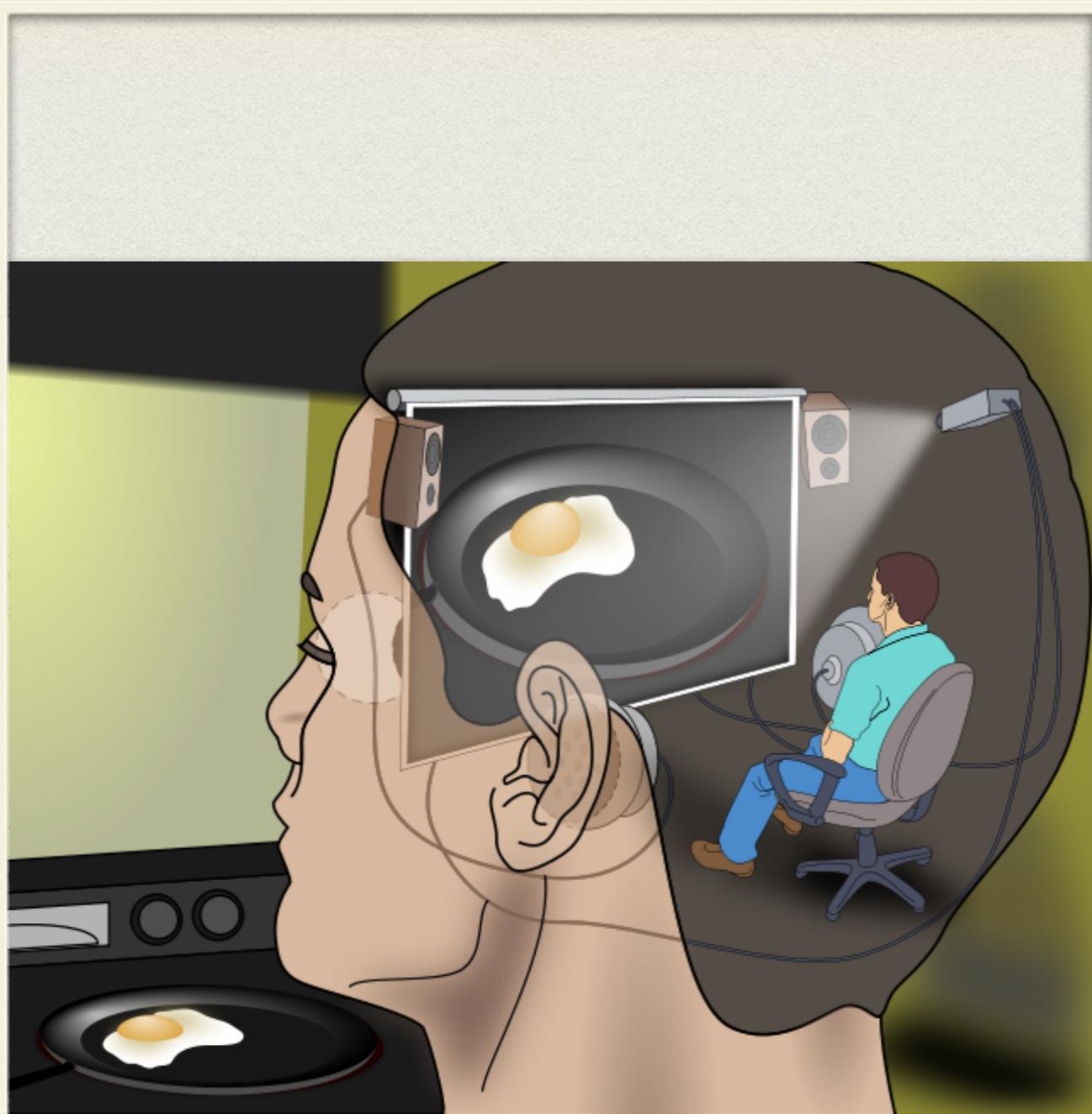
SUBJECT/OBJECT
NONDUALITY

THREE TYPES OF SUBJECT/OBJECT NONDUALISM



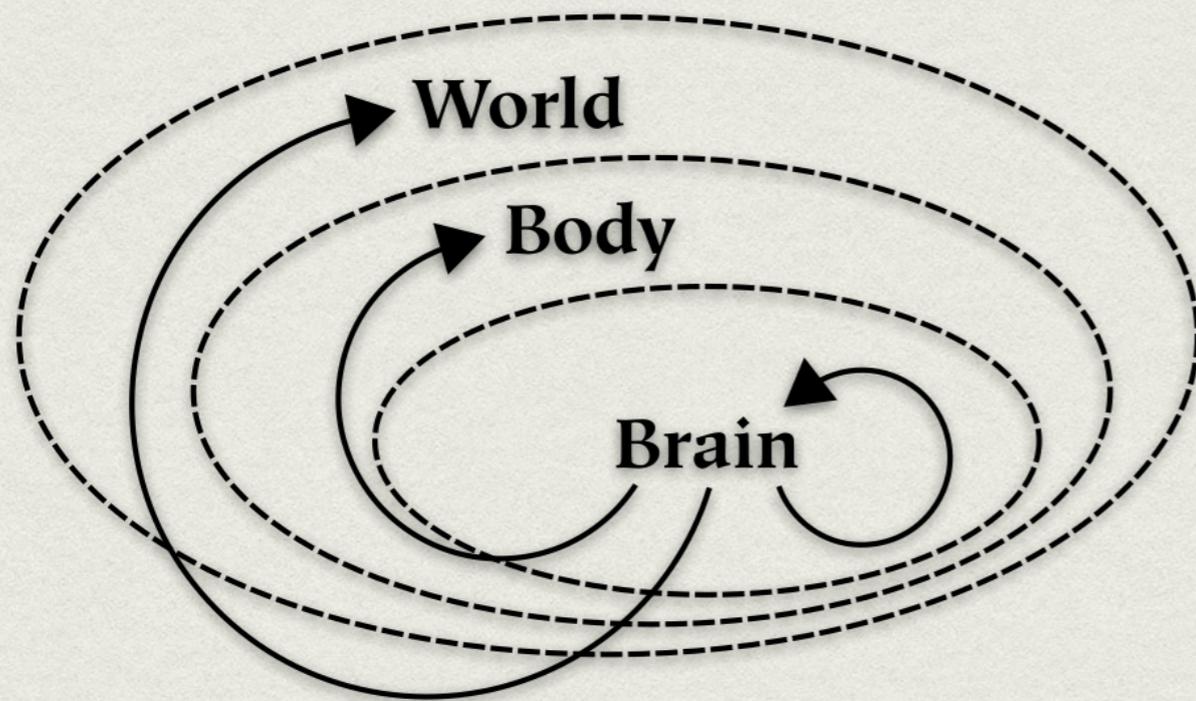
- Subject/object nonduality entails more than just conceptual nonduality.
- There are at least three types of subject/object dualism:
 - Indirect realism (epistemic nonduality in virtue of representations):
 - Nonduality of references.
 - Nonduality of referents.
 - Direct Realism:
 - Ontological nonduality.

SUBJECT/OBJECT NONDUALISM: NONDUALITY OF REFERENCES



- Representational subject/object nondualism is the thesis that self and other are both us in virtue of both being our representations.
- I.e., Our heads contain a map of the world, and our subjectivity covers both self and other in virtue of pervading the entire map.

SUBJECT/OBJECT NONDUALISM: NONDUALITY OF REFERENTS



- Alternatively, if we assume that mental references exist, should we identify with the references themselves (i.e. localized in our brain), or the referents of those referents (i.e. their referential content in the world)?
- If we identify with the referents, then subject/object duality is true at the level of the material self, but not true at the level of the perceptual self.
- This is a reformulation of a much older debate about the base of consciousness (*asraya*) as opposed to the place of consciousness (*adhara*) [see Ganeri, 2012].

SUBJECT/OBJECT NONDUALISM: ONTOLOGICAL NONDUALISM



- Ontological subject/object nondualism abandons representationalism entirely (in favor of direct realism):
 - Either our consciousness extends beyond our representations.
 - Or the representational thesis is somehow incorrect, and subjectively we are coextensive with the world.
- Ontological nondualism goes beyond most assumptions of cognitive science and modern psychology.

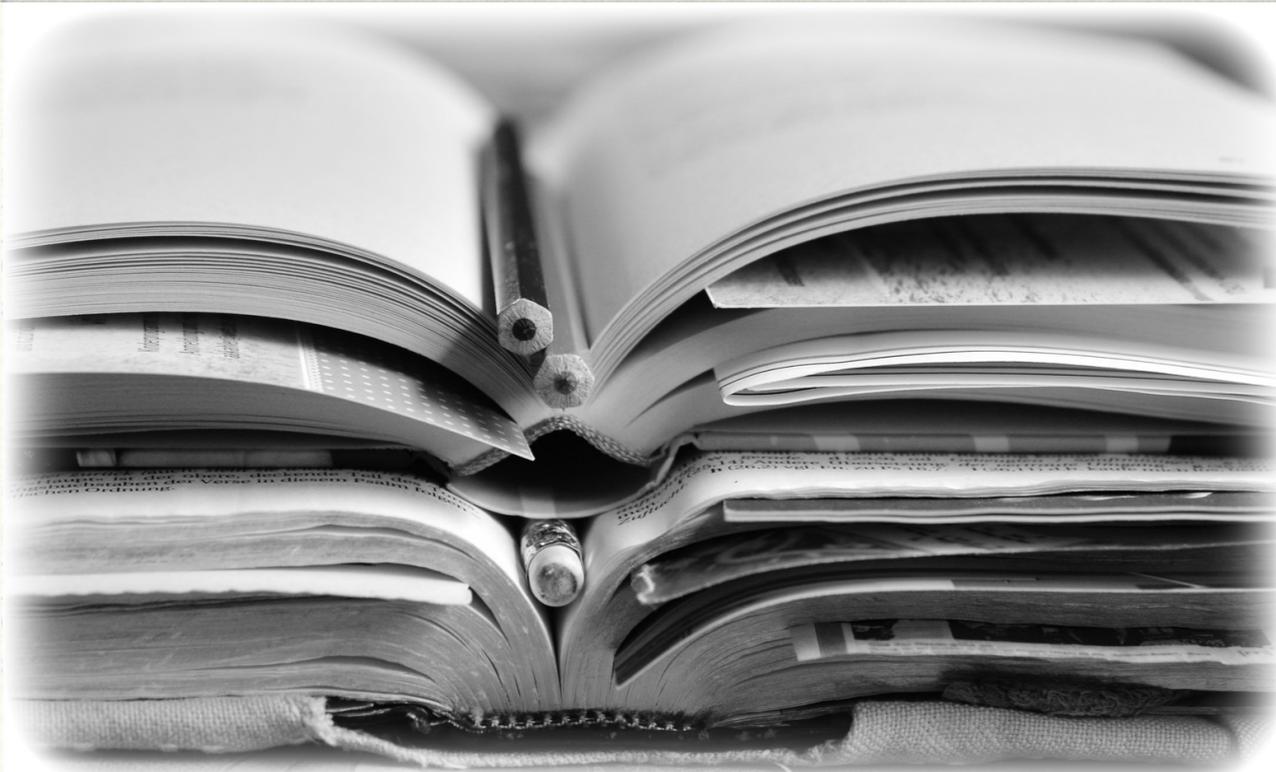
CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION



- The psychology of nondualism is an attempt to understand different forms of nondualism within a dualistic context.
- There is some risk that nonduality does not overcome the subject/object duality if it remains rooted in a psychological model.
- In either case, the theory of nondualism is not the experience of nondualism.
 - In Judaism, God is unnamed.
 - In Zen, one “just sits”.
 - In science, everything can be analyzed, but people criticize science precisely because it leaves no room for subjectivity.

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Nice online reads by multiple authors:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nondualism>

<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nondualism>

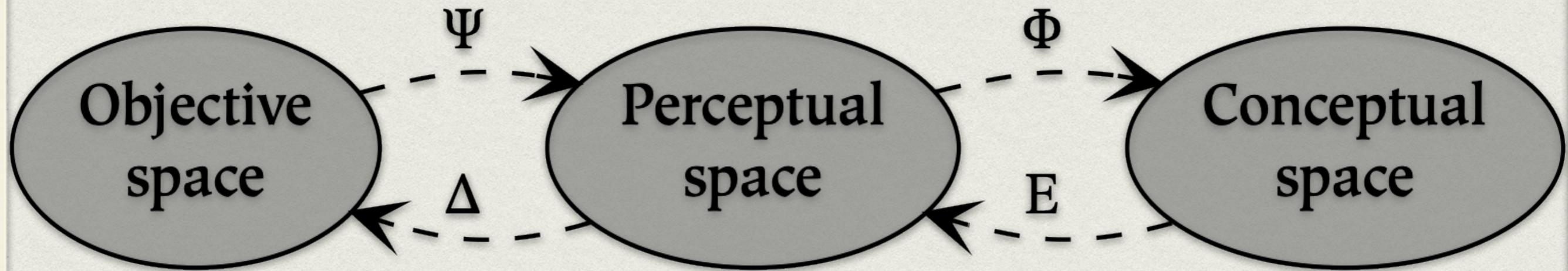
<https://psychology.wikia.org/wiki/Nondualism>

<http://www.headless.org/on-having-no-head.htm>

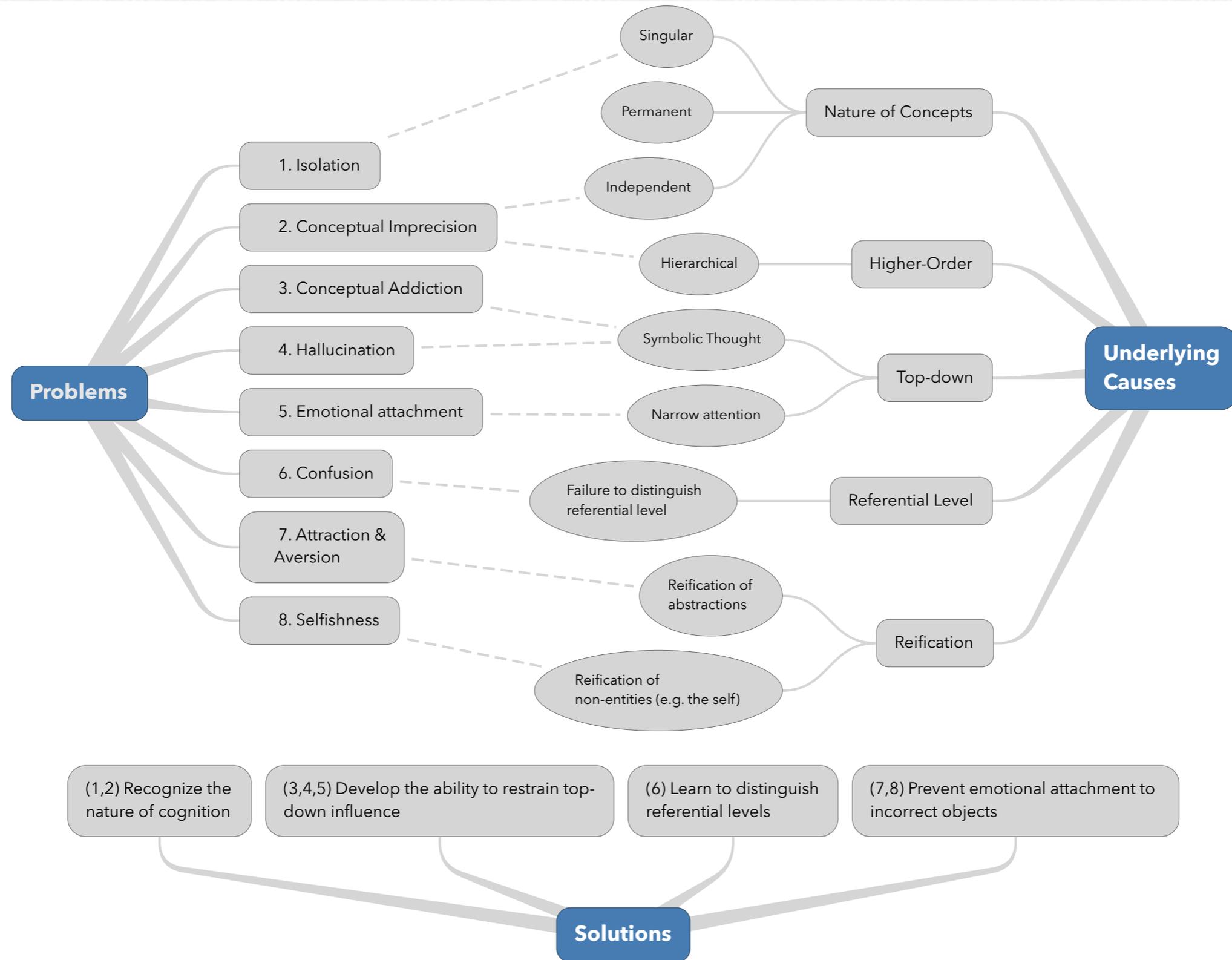
My own website (with a link to a forthcoming book, the Whole Part):

<https://ArborRhythms.com>

PLURALISM



COGNITIVE HEALTH

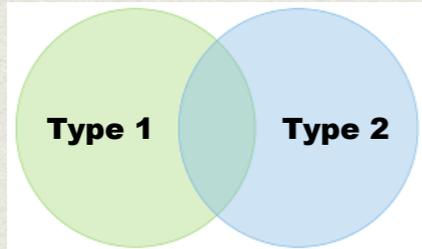


QUOTES

In Mahāyāna Buddhism śūnyatā refers first of all to the fact that all things come into being in “interdependent origination” (Sanskrit: pratītya-samutpāda; Japanese: engi), and they are therefore “empty” of any independent substantial self-nature or “own-being” (Sanskrit: svabhāva). This thought is closely tied to the basic Buddhist thesis of “no-self” or “non-ego” (Sanskrit: anātman; Japanese: muga).

Psychologically, śūnyatā refers also to the releasement from all attachment to beings, from all reification and willful appropriation of them. Such attachments are both based on and in turn support the primary attachment to the fabricated ego, since the ego both strives to possess and is unwittingly possessed by its reification of beings. To awaken to the emptiness of all things, to their lack of substantial own-being or egoity (Japanese: shogyōmuga), therefore, is to free oneself from both an ego-centered and reified view of things as well as from the illusion of the substantial ego itself.

How is this Useful?



✓ Type 1 is fast, but is subject to emotional and associative bias.

✓ Type 2 is slower and may also be subject to bias, but is subject to rational inspection and verification.

Coexistence of System 1 and System 2

- ▶ If we model Type 1 thinking as excitatory and Type 2 thinking as inhibitory, then they are compatible as long as Type 2 is not suppressing the activation of Type 1.
- ▶ The influence of Type 2 thinking on Type 1 learning will eventually create associations in System 1 that make it compatible with System 2.
- ▶ These considerations suggest that Type 2 thinking should be employed judiciously, since it reshapes the naturally-occurring associations of Type 1 thought.

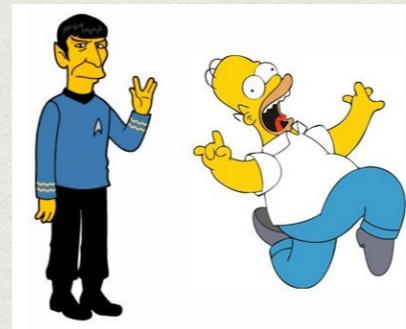
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Dual Process Theory

The distinction between two kinds of thinking, one fast and intuitive, the other slow and deliberative, is both ancient in origin and widespread in philosophical and psychological writing. Such a distinction has been made by many authors in many fields, often in ignorance of the related writing of others.

(Evans and Stanovich, 2013)

- ▶ Dual Process Theory posits two separate systems, System 1 and System 2, for two different types of thought: Type 1 and Type 2.
- ▶ Type 1 thinking existed first, and is considered to be fast, intuitive, and emotional.
- ▶ Type 2 thinking arose in humans, and is considered to be slow, rational, and conceptual. It has access to short-term memory.



Possible Implementation:

- System 1: bottom-up, emotional excitation.
 - System 2: top-down, conceptual inhibition.
- (Pessoa, 2015)

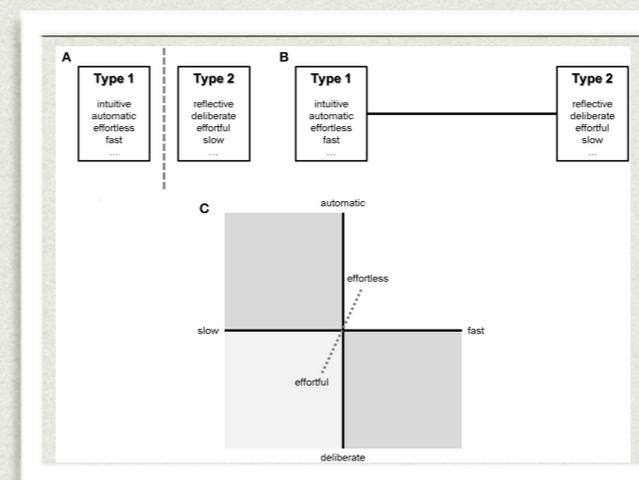
Attributes of Type 1 and Type 2 Thinking

Type 1 process (intuitive)	Type 2 process (reflective)
<i>Does not require working memory</i>	<i>Requires working memory</i>
<i>Autonomous</i>	<i>Cognitive decoupling; mental simulation</i>
Fast	Slow
High capacity	Capacity limited
Parallel	Serial
Nonconscious	Conscious
Biased responses	Normative responses
Contextualized	Abstract
Automatic	Controlled
Associative	Rule-based
Experience-based decision making	Consequential decision making
Independent of cognitive ability	Correlated with cognitive ability
<u>System 1 (old mind)</u>	<u>System 2 (new mind)</u>
Evolved early	Evolved late
Similar to animal cognition	Distinctively human
Implicit knowledge	Explicit knowledge
Basic emotions	Complex emotions

(Evans and Stanovich, 2013)

Are there really two processes?

“We propose that the different two-system theories lack conceptual clarity, that they are based upon methodological methods that are questionable, and that they rely on insufficient (and often inadequate) empirical evidence.” (Keren and Schul, 2009)



Three Theories

- A) Binary division
- B) Continuum
- C) Multiple Dimensions

(Varga and Hamburger, 2009)

Breaking down the mind into two separate systems may itself be the result of the overuse of the conceptual part of the mind.

In other words, if we use our intuition, these two types of thought may appear to be a continuum.