

Subject: Re: The Study

Authored By: DAVID SCHARF (Oct 7, 2007 12:58 PM)

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Fred Travis and his group have done some nice research on the effects on EEG both during TM meditation and during out-of-meditation activity, for long-term meditators. During TM practice there is enhanced alpha power and coherence, and during out-of-meditation tasks there are significant differences in contingent negative variation patterns. The researchers suggest that continued practice develops a more efficient style of neurological functioning in activity (i.e. out-of-meditation). They correlated these distinctive EEG patterns with 1P reports on experiences of higher states. The most important 1P experience is the increasing ability to maintain pure consciousness in activity. Here is a reference:

Travis, Fred, Tecce, Joe, Arenander, Alarik & Wallace, Keith (2002). "Patterns of EEG coherence, power, and contingent negative variation characterize the integration of transcendental and waking states." In *Biological Psychology* 61 293-319.

Also, Russell Hebert has published observations of significantly enhanced global alpha synchrony correlated with 1P experiences of pure consciousness:

Hebert, R., Lehmann, D., Tan, G., Travis, F. & Arenander, A. (2005), "Enhanced EEG alpha time-domain phase synchrony during Transcendental Meditation: Implications for cortical integration theory." In *Signal Processing* (Elsevier).

<<< Replied to message below >>>

Authored by: Bernard Baars

Authored on: Oct 7, 2007 12:40:11 PM
Subject: Re: The Study

I like the traditional story, where meditation evokes experiences of "pure" (content-free) consciousness, which then becomes increasingly part of ordinary experience as you gain more practice with meditation. That's an elegant theory, and it is testable.

I wish somebody would go out and test it...

Dr B

<<< Replied to message below >>>
Authored by: JORGE GONCALVES
Authored on: Oct 7, 2007 12:29:04 PM
Subject: Re: The Study

we could have the same fact and various interpretations. for example, what happens in meditation? we return to uterus like freud said or we have a contact with a superior reality? (i'm simplifying)

<<< Replied to message below >>>
Authored by: Bernard Baars
Authored on: Oct 7, 2007 12:22:08 PM
Subject: Re: The Study

Yes, that is quite right. The world is an interpreted place. Fortunately, when it comes to the PERCEPTUAL world, people with intact brains tend to see the same thing. There are some qualifications to that statement, but it works very successfully in the history of science. We just keep getting excellent agreement on the basic evidence. That's why Science Magazine called "the biological basis of consciousness" one of the top unsolved problems in science (in 2005). It's because good researchers have simply found lots of very reliable observations bearing directly on consciousness.

Now you point out that all observations are theory-laden, beyond our shared perceptual world. That's true. What happens is that theory emerges **INDUCTIVELY**, starting from the evidence, and then of course we keep generating hypotheses from various sources, and test them to see which ones survive. After a while, we build confidence that a certain inductive generalization works. I'm personally more interested in a deeper theoretical level, where we do a lot of **DEDUCTIVE** inferences as well, based on a wider body of findings. But that's sort of a matter of personal taste. I happen to like fact-based theory. A lot of scientists like to do a more inductive style of work.

Dr B

<<< Replied to message below >>>
Authored by: DAVID SCHARF
Authored on: Oct 7, 2007 12:16:10 PM
Subject: Re: The Study

And is there an absolute distinction or only a pragmatic distinction? Philosophers talk about the "theory ladenness of observation" where the suggestion is that all scientific observations come with a load of theoretical presuppositions. For one thing, even selecting what is important to report and what we overlook is theory-dependent. But more fundamentally, all seeing may be "seeing as". Meaning that we, as human perceivers, don't just perceive a "bloomin' buzzin' confusion," we perceive objects and events in a world that makes at least some sense.

<<< Replied to message below >>>
Authored by: JOHN YATES
Authored on: Oct 7, 2007 12:06:51 PM
Subject: The Study

Since I seem to be the first one on, I'll toss out a couple of comments. First, I would agree with Searle in the other reading for this week, that this is not so much a study of consciousness, because the subjects are already conscious, as it is a study of the NC of a specific content. Second comment, what thought is given in these study designs to the distinction between becoming conscious of a sensory percept, i.e. the word on the screen simply as an image in this case, and becoming conscious of a mental percept in the sense of the meaning of the word?

<<< Replied to message below >>>

Authored by: Bernard Baars

Authored on: Oct 7, 2007 12:01:35 PM

Subject: Hello, Everybody --- ready to start?