Metaphors of consciousness and attention in the brain

Bernard J. Baars

Scientific metaphors have long provided heuristic tools for approaching novel problems. Today, the neurobiology of consciousness and attention is a central concern, presenting formidable conceptual and empirical challenges. Many current ideas fit the broad theme of a theater metaphor; this idea can be worked out in detail, resulting in relevant, testable hypotheses.

Trends Neurosci, (1998) 21, 58-62

METAPHORS AND ANALOGIES have a long history in scientific thought for example, the Butherford planetary analogy for atomic structure, the clockwork metaphor for the solar system, and Harvey's pump metaphor for the heart. A metaphor can be defined as 'the application of a word or phrase to an object or concept it does not literally denote, suggesting comparison to that object or concept." Heuristic metaphors are especially useful when the sciences encounter a topic that has no clear precedent, and this is the case with consciousness and attention. A classical metaphor for consciousness has been a 'bright spot' cast by a spotlight on the stage of a dark theater that represents the integration of multiple sensory inputs into a single conscious experience, followed by its dissemination to a vast unconscious audience. In cognitive theory, such a theater stage is called a 'global workspace's, and implies both convergence of input and divergent dissemination of the integrated content. In this century, features of the theater metaphor have been suggested by neurobiologists from Paylov to Crick. Indeed, nearly all current hypotheses about consciousness and selective attention can be viewed as variants of this fundamental idea" "; thus, its pros and cons are worth exploring.

The bright spot metaphor was extended in 1984 by Crick: he proposed a 'searchlight of attention' metaphor for thalamocortical interaction, specified in terms of testable hypotheses at the cellular level. As Crick wrote'.

What do we require of a searchlight? It should be able to sample activity in the cortex and/or the thalamus and decide "where the action is". It should then be able to intensify thalamic input to that region of the cortex, probably by making the active thalamic neurons in that region fire more rapidly than usual. It must then be able to turn off its beam, move to the next place demanding attention, and repeat the process. It seems remarkable, to say the least, that the nature of the reticular complex [of the thalamus] and the behavior of the thalamis neurons fit this requirement so neatly'.

Crick derived four testable hypotheses from this metaphor and, if this was its only use it could be discarded as having done its job. However, Crick suggested that 'there may be at least two searchlights: one for the first visual area and another for all the rest." Thalamocortical searchlights for auditory and somatosensory cortex could be included, perhaps interacting in a mutually inhibitory fashion, so that only one sensory searchlight could be turned on at any time. But humans can be aware of more than sensory inflow; inner speech and visual imagery can compete for access to consciousness. Indeed, recent evidence indicates that inner speech involves speechproduction cortex and speech-perception cortex, and that visual-peojection areas participate in visual imagery^{a, j}. However, humans also have conscious access to ideas that might involve prefrontal activation". Conscious contents also influence motor output, involving prefrontal, motor and anterior cingulate cortex. Because all these cortical regions interact with corresponding thalamic nuclei, the searchlight metaphor could generate testable hypotheses about the role of consciousness and attention in all these parts of the brain 100.

But that is not all: real searchlights are guided to their targets, suggesting executive control, and are useless without an audience to whom the contents in the illuminated spot are disseminated. In the brain, the 'audience' could consist of unconscious regions, such as cerebral cortex, hippocampus, basal ganglia and amygdala, that might be activated by conscious contents. The audience for a brain searchlight could also include executive or interpreter systems, such as Gazzaniga's 'narrative interpreter' of the left hemisphere', and other executive regions of prefrontal cortex might receive conscious information. Thus searchlight metaphors do not stand alone, but imply a larger framework: a surrounding 'theater'.

Cognitive models of memory have a similar set of implications: a working memory whose active items are conscious and reportable, under executive control, with an audience of memory systems to receive its contents.¹³. 'Cognitive architectures' are large-scale simulations that have been developed since the 1950s (Befs 13–16) and have been used to model a range of behavioral tasks from chess-playing to language comprehension, memory retrieval and decision-making. Cognitive architectures resemble theaters, typically receiving input into a narrow 'stage' of working memory, interacting with a large 'audience' of semantic networks, automatic routines and memory systems. This theoretical tradition has been qualitatively related to consciousness in a framework called 'global

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Metaphors Of Consciousness

Olga Lavrenova

Metaphors Of Consciousness:

Metaphors of Consciousness Ronald S. Valle, Rolf von Eckartsberg, 1989 Metaphors of Conciousness Ronald S. Valle, Rolf von Eckartsberg, 2012-12-06 As we move into the 1980s there is an increasing awareness that our civilization is going through a profound cultural transformation At the heart of this transformation lies what is often called a paradigm shift a dramatic change in the thoughts perceptions and values which form a particular vision of reality The paradigm that is now shifting comprises a large number of ideas and values that have dominated our society for several hundred years values that have been associated with various streams of Western culture among them the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century The Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution They include the belief in the scientific method as the only valid approach to knowledge the split between mind and matter the view of nature as a mechanical system the view of life in society as a competitive struggle for survival and the belief in unlimited material progress to be achieved through economic and technological growth All these ideas and values are now found to be severely limited and in need of radical revision

The Figure of Consciousness Jill M. Kress, 2013-08-21 Through analysis of metaphors of consciousness in the philosophy and fiction of William James Henry James and Edith Wharton this work traces the significance of representations of knowledge gender and social class revealing how writers conceived of the self in modern literature Science and Technology: Looking Back, Ahead B. Joerges, H. Nowotny, 2012-12-06 BERNW ARD JOERGES AND HELGA NOWOTNY YET ANOTHER TURN The thing that doesn t fit is the thing that s most interesting Richard Fcynman This volume was originally conceived as a contribution to yet another tum not cap tured by one of the many adjectives that have served to describe the collective meander ing of the scholarly community in search of direction It was meant to mark the millen nial turn a seemingly purely chronological event but one in search for great meanings and invested with loaded significances. The editors wanted to seize the opportunity of the moment in order to pause and reflect on the sociology and history of social studies of science and technology The moment came and went and the new millennium barely nine months later thrust its historical marker upon the world through a horrendous and cruel shock in an unforeseen and unforeseeable way Since then the world appears more vulnerable and volatile fragmented and fraught with uncertainty The universal values as bequeathed by the Enlightenment are either refused or appear refuted The dream of a universal civilization which has accompanied the unfolding of the existing multiple modernities in their historically unique trajectories has been discarded and its promises in Consciousness in Advaita Vedanta William M. Indich, 1995-01-01 The nature of consciouness or human tatters awareness is one of the problems of perennial concern to philosphers and psychologists alike Here is a systematic critical and comparative study the nature of human awareness according to the most influential school of classical Indian thought After introducing the Advaita Philosophical system and indicating the place of consciouness in this system the author presents a detailed discussion of the Advaitin's unique non dual understanding of man's basic intelligence. He continues with

and analysis of the Advaitin's hierarchical vision of waking dream and dreamless sleep experience and compares this analysi Metaphors in the History of Psychology David E. Leary, 1994-07-29 Arguing that psychologists and their predecessors have invariably relied on metaphors in articulation the contributors to this volume offer a new key to understanding a critically important area of human knowledge by specifying the major metaphors **How Consciousness Commands Matter** Larry Farwell,1999-10-01 This book will inspire you to question what you ve heard from the scientific experts about how the universe works and what role we play in it For centuries science has believed that matter is king and the job of scientist is to measure interactions of matter not consciousness Based on revolutionary new developments in physics and neuroscience including his own groundbreaking research Dr Farwell challenges this view Using impeccable scientific techniques he has proven in the laboratory that consciousness plays a commanding role in the universe Dr Larry Farwell Bio Dr Larry Farwell is a Harvard educated former Harvard faculty member who is currently chief scientist of the Human Brain Research Laboratory As a neuroscientist he has conducted and published pioneering research on the interaction of consciousness and matter at the quantum mechanical level The well known physicist Dr George Farwell his father collaborated in this research Dr Larry Farwell invented a direct brain to computer communication system using electrical brain activity He discovered the technique of Brain Fingerprinting to identify criminals and clear innocent suspects by measuring brain wave responses to relevant words or pictures presented on a computer screen CBS Evening News ABC World News CNN Headline News the Discovery Channel the New York Times the Washington Post US News and World Report and television radio newspapers and magazines throughout the world have featured Dr Farwell and his discoveries Dr Farwell's personal philosophy is that anything is possible He sees his scientific research as a process of discovering the unlimited possibilities available for human life He believes that the goal of life is the full development and complete integration of mind heart body and spirit In addition

Metaphors Dead and Alive, Sleeping and Waking Cornelia Müller, 2009-10-15 Traditional thinking on metaphors has divided them into two camps dead and alive Conventional expressions from everyday language are classified as dead while much rarer novel or poetic metaphors are alive In the 1980s new theories on the cognitive processes involved with the use of metaphor challenged these assumptions but with little empirical support Drawing on the latest research in linguistics semiotics philosophy and psychology Cornelia M ller here unveils a new approach that refutes the rigid dead alive dichotomy offering in its place a more dynamic model sleeping and waking To build this model M ller presents an overview of notions of metaphor from the classical period to the present studies in detail how metaphors function in speech text gesture and images and examines the way mixed metaphors sometimes make sense and sometimes do not This analysis leads her to conclude that metaphors may oscillate between various degrees of sleeping and waking as their status changes depending on context and intention Bridging the gap between conceptual metaphor theory and more traditional linguistic theories this book is a

to his BA MA and PhD in neuroscience he is a qualified Transcendental Meditation teacher and has a black belt in kung fu

major advance for the field and will be vital to novices and initiates alike The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind Julian Jaynes, 2000-08-15 National Book Award Finalist This man's ideas may be the most influential not to say controversial of the second half of the twentieth century Columbus Dispatch At the heart of this classic seminal book is Julian Jaynes s still controversial thesis that human consciousness did not begin far back in animal evolution but instead is a learned process that came about only three thousand years ago and is still developing The implications of this revolutionary scientific paradigm extend into virtually every aspect of our psychology our history and culture our religion and indeed our future Don t be put off by the academic title of Julian Jaynes s The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind Its prose is always lucid and often lyrical he unfolds his case with the utmost intellectual rigor The New York Times When Julian Jaynes speculates that until late in the twentieth millennium BC men had no consciousness but were automatically obeying the voices of the gods we are astounded but compelled to follow this remarkable thesis John Updike The New Yorker He is as startling as Freud was in The Interpretation of Dreams and Jaynes is equally as adept at forcing a new view of known human behavior American Journal of Psychiatry Tantric Visual Culture Sthaneshwar Timalsina, 2015-11-19 Indian culture relies greatly on visual expression and this book uses both classical Indian and contemporary Western philosophies and current studies on cognitive sciences and applies them to contextualize Tantric visual culture The work selects aspects of Tantric language and the practice of visualization with the central premise to engage cognitive theories while studying images It utilizes the contemporary theories of metaphor and cognitive blend the theory of metonymy and a holographic theory of epistemology with a focus on concept formation and its application to the study of myths and images In addition it applies the classical aesthetic theory of rasa to unravel the meaning of opaque images This philosophical and cognitive analysis allows materials from Indian culture to be understood in a new light while engaging contemporary theories of cognitive science and semantics The book demonstrates how the domains of meaning and philosophy can be addressed within any culture without reducing their intrinsic cultural significance By addressing these key aspects of Tantric traditions through this approach this book initiates a much needed dialogue between Indian and Western theories while encouraging introspection within the Indic traditions themselves It will be of interest to those studying and researching Religion Philosophy and South Asian Culture Spaces and Meanings Olga Lavrenova, 2019-03-25 This book examines the problem of relationships between culture and space Highlighting the use of semiotics of culture as a basic concept of research it describes the power of the cultural landscape in the context of culture philosophical research Opening with a discussion of the existence of culture in space it establishes basic concepts such as noosphere and pneumatosphere The author acknowledges the early contributions of thinkers like Vladimir Vernadsky and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who first observed that human activity has become a geological force Introducing time and space to the discussion the author then describes the nature of mythological time eternity versus timelessness and the semantics of

sacred landscapes space and ritual These concepts are further developed in discussions of the metaphorical nature of cultural landscape and the city as metaphor The book explores semiotics in the cultural landscape examining the genesis of concepts from geographical images to signs and the axiological dimension of geographical images. In her approach to the idea of cultural landscape as text she provides detailed examples including the Russian landscape as agent provocateur of the text and the culture philosophical aspects and semantics of travel It establishes the cultural landscape as a phenomenon of culture that is fixed in geographical space with the help of semiotic mechanisms a specific area of culture of life possessing functional and ontological self sufficiency. This book appeals readers and researchers interested in the philosophy of culture semiotics of space and the philosophical dimensions of culture and geography Psychological Bulletin ,1915 Vol 49 no 4 pt 2 July 1952 is the association s Publication manual **The Computational Brain** Pasquale De Marco, 2025-05-20 In this groundbreaking book we take a journey into the fascinating world of neuroscience to explore the incredible computational power of the human brain From the structure and function of neurons to the latest advances in artificial intelligence we will delve into the mysteries of the mind and discover the potential of the brain to revolutionize our understanding of ourselves and the world around us With its estimated 86 billion neurons and 100 trillion synapses the human brain is capable of performing trillions of calculations per second This astonishing computational power allows us to perceive the world around us learn from our experiences and make complex decisions In this book we will explore the different regions of the brain and their functions and we will investigate the different ways that the brain allows us to perceive think and feel We will also explore the latest advances in neuroscience research including the use of brain computer interfaces and the potential of gene therapy for brain disorders We will also discuss the ethical implications of neuroscience research such as the potential for mind control and the creation of artificial intelligence The Computational Brain is a comprehensive and accessible guide to the human brain and its incredible power By the end of this book you will have a deeper understanding of the mind and its potential to shape our future Inside this book you will discover The structure and function of the brain The different ways that the brain allows us to perceive think and feel The latest advances in neuroscience research The ethical implications of neuroscience research The potential of the brain to revolutionize our understanding of ourselves and the world around us Whether you are a student a researcher or simply someone who is fascinated by the human brain The Computational Brain is the perfect book for you Join us on this journey into the mind and beyond and discover the incredible power of the human brain If you like this book write a review on google books Metaphor and National Identity Orsolya Putz, 2019-12-15 Due to the Treaty of Trianon which was signed at the end of World War 1 in 1920 Hungary lost two thirds of its former territory as well as the inhabitants of these areas The book aims to reveal why the treaty still plays a role in Hungarian national identity construction by studying the alternative conceptualization of the treaty and its consequences The cognitive linguistic research explores Hungarian politicians conceptual system about Trianon with special interest on conceptual metaphors It

also analyzes the factors that may motivate the emergence of the conceptual system as well as its synchronic diversity and diachronic changes The monograph provides a niche insight into the conceptual basis of how contemporary citizens of Hungary interpret the treaty of Trianon and its consequences The book will be of interest to cognitive and cultural linguists cultural anthropologists or any professionals working on national identity construction Neural Nets and Surroundings Bruno Apolloni, Simone Bassis, Anna Esposito, Francesco Carlo Morabito, 2012-12-25 This volume collects a selection of contributions which has been presented at the 22nd Italian Workshop on Neural Networks the yearly meeting of the Italian Society for Neural Networks SIREN The conference was held in Italy Vietri sul Mare Salerno during May 17 19 2012 The annual meeting of SIREN is sponsored by International Neural Network Society INNS European Neural Network Society ENNS and IEEE Computational Intelligence Society CIS The book as well as the workshop is organized in three main components two special sessions and a group of regular sessions featuring different aspects and point of views of artificial neural networks and natural intelligence also including applications of present compelling interest **Companion to Consciousness** Tim Bayne, Axel Cleeremans, Patrick Wilken, 2009-06-04 Consciousness is undoubtedly one of the last remaining scientific mysteries and hence one of the greatest contemporary scientific challenges How does the brain s activity result in the rich phenomenology that characterizes our waking life Are animals conscious Why did consciousness evolve How does science proceed to answer such questions Can we define what consciousness is Can we measure it Can we use experimental results to further our understanding of disorders of consciousness such as those seen in schizophrenia delirium or altered states of consciousness These questions are at the heart of contemporary research in the domain Answering them requires a fundamentally interdisciplinary approach that engages not only philosophers but also neuroscientists and psychologists in a joint effort to develop novel approaches that reflect both the stunning recent advances in imaging methods as well as the continuing refinement of our concepts of consciousness In this light the Oxford Companion to Consciousness is the most complete authoritative survey of contemporary research on consciousness Five years in the making and including over 250 concise entries written by leaders in the field the volume covers both fundamental knowledge as well as more recent advances in this rapidly changing domain Structured as an easy to use dictionary and extensively cross referenced the Companion offers contributions from philosophy of mind to neuroscience from experimental psychology to clinical findings so reflecting the profoundly interdisciplinary nature of the domain Particular care has been taken to ensure that each of the entries is accessible to the general reader and that the overall volume represents a comprehensive snapshot of the contemporary study of consciousness The result is a unique compendium that will prove indispensable to anyone interested in consciousness from beginning students wishing to clarify a concept to professional consciousness researchers looking for the best characterization of a particular phenomenon Imagination and Experience Íngrid Vendrell Ferran, Christiana Werner, 2024-07-16 This volume brings together two philosophical research areas that have been subject

to increased attention work regarding the unique character of having an experience and studies on the nature and powers of imagination The importance of imagination seems to stand in tension with the assumed unique and irreplaceable role of experience in our lives However new arguments in various philosophical debates suggest that there is a need to examine how both areas of research interrelate and can enrich one another The chapters in this volume examine whether the traditional accounts of experience and imagination need to be challenged They are divided into thematic sections that discuss epistemological ontological normative phenomenological and intersubjective questions related to experience and imagination Imagination and Experience is an essential resource for scholars and advanced students working in philosophy of mind epistemology ethics aesthetics and philosophy of psychology **Evolutionary Metaphors** David J. Moore, 2019-05-31 Evolutionary Metaphors is an exploration of the many occult esoteric imaginative as well as creative speculations that have resonated around the UFO phenomenon Understanding the phenomena as an archetypal challenge to our cultural limitations the author David I Moore incorporates Colin Wilson's optimistic new existentialism with the recent studies in ufology The book presents a spiritual and philosophical foundation for the creative integration of our consciousness towards anomalous experience It is a call for what Carl Jung called active imagination and Coleridge's poetic imaginative access to the deeper streams of consciousness that which exists below the iceberg By presenting a fresh approach in the inter disciplinary spirit Moore offers a vision into human existence as well as the symbolical realities that aims to integrate our evolutionary minds with a new understanding of reality The Fourfold Path Magdalena Lovejoy, How Do We Become Free and Enter into the Mystery of Life The Fourfold Path takes us on a healing journey inspired by the philosopher Plato and his teachings on how to know yourself by transcending all limitations within the human space The model of transcendence leaves behind the metaphors we live by to pioneer humankind into the deepest and most powerful gnosis ever attained through the love of wisdom Through transcendence you can discover how to free yourself from the suffering that obstructs the complete vision of the soul You can heal from the unconscious processes and go beyond the limitations of the ego Once you have learned the Path you can attain enlightenment and become like God and attain the characteristics of divinity immortality and bliss Transcendence is basic to all human cultures who move through the limitless possibilities given to humankind to evolve using the wisdom of the mind and the wisdom of the heart This wisdom invites us to go deeper and move from self realization to knowledge of God Life itself inspires this change through the experiences of love birth death miracles blessings and family True enlightenment occurs when we process these life experiences as lessons on a soul journey that initiate a spiritual awakening It is as simple as arguing that there are two identities a true self and a false self Philosophy is the means to know the difference between the two while transcendence is the path that can lead humankind to know the truth When humankind comes to know their true selves they will be set free from suffering This is the ascent toward what Plato called The Good which many believe is also called God The Fourfold Path shows us how to leave behind the limitations of the human space to

discover a sacred place in communication and communion with Spirit so you can become one with God and find true happiness *Exploring Grammatical Metaphor* Zhong Yang,2025-06-30 This book explores the fascinating world of grammatical metaphor through the lens of systemic functional linguistics. It provides a valuable toolkit for understanding how grammatical metaphor can expand the potential for meaning and serve as a key resource for bridging linguistic and cultural gaps in different contexts Grammatical metaphor is presented not merely as a linguistic feature but as a powerful tool that transforms meaning across grammatical categories. This book examines how this phenomenon of transcategorisation works showing how it shifts and enriches the representation of meaning Using the framework of systemic functional linguistics the book emphasises the dynamic relationship between language systems and the texts they produce Combining theory and practice it investigates the wide ranging applications of grammatical metaphor in fields such as contrastive linguistics discourse analysis and translation studies Readers will discover how grammatical metaphor increases the flexibility and depth of language enabling speakers and writers to achieve more nuanced and effective communication. This book will be essential reading for linguists language learners translators and intercultural communicators. Whether you re a researcher or a practitioner this book will inspire new ways of thinking about language and communication.

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