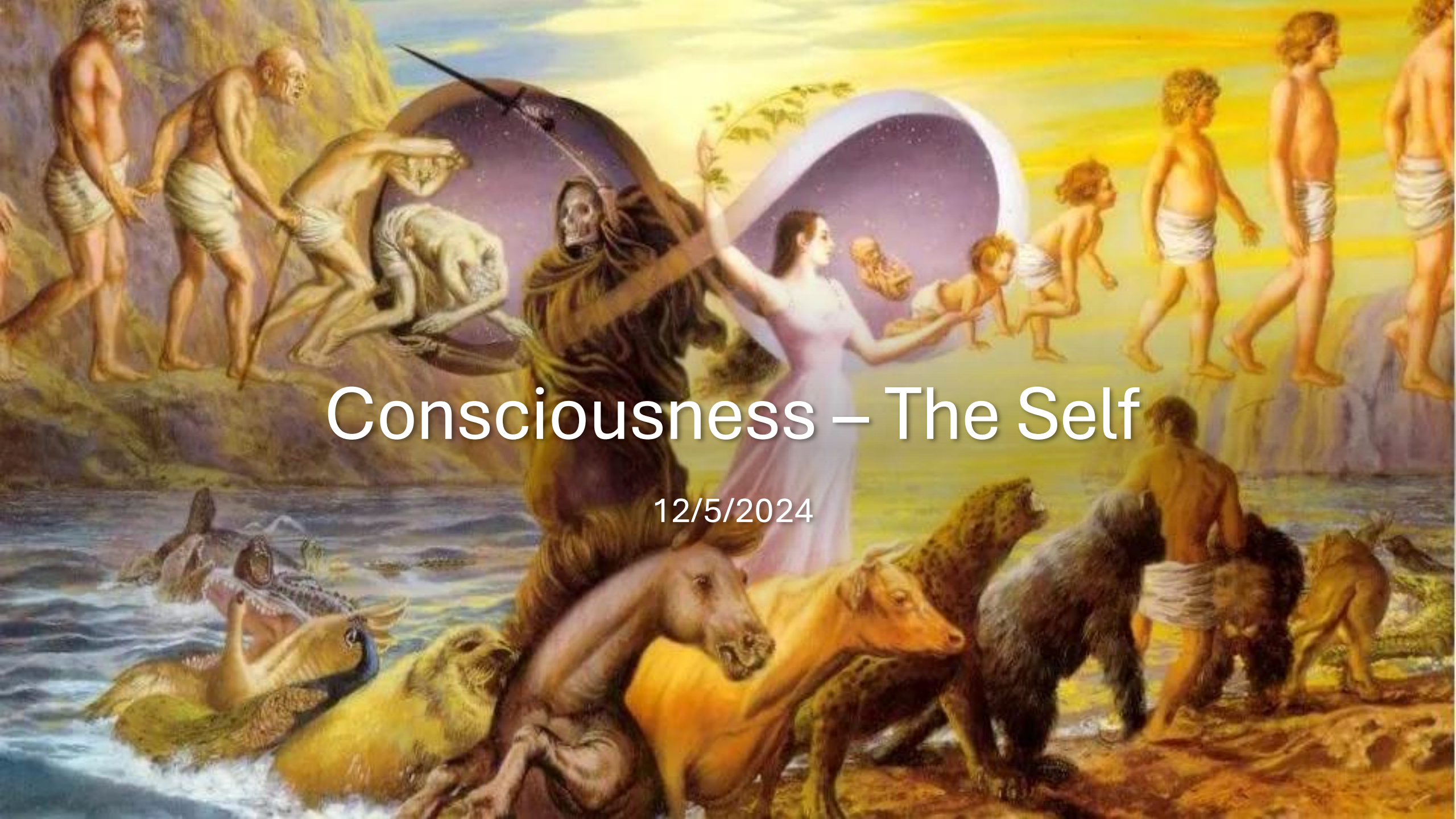




Consciousness – The Self

12/5/2024

What is the Self?

- An immaterial substance that temporarily inhabits the body, and it leaves the body upon death
- Self and Other dynamically emerge out of each other socially and historically
- The self emerges out of its relationship with the passage of time
- The self is the whole of conscious and unconscious processes that is mediated by the ego
- The experience of the self is the result of nervous system processes that are regulating the organism
- The idea of the self is an empty construct with no permanence, a dream-like illusion or manifestation of craving and aversion
- The true nature of the self reveals the true nature of the universe
- The self is created out of power relationships and societal norms
- The self is defined by its preferences and aversions, or its pain
- There is no one self, there are many contingent and related selves



THE RISE AND FALL OF SOUL AND SELF

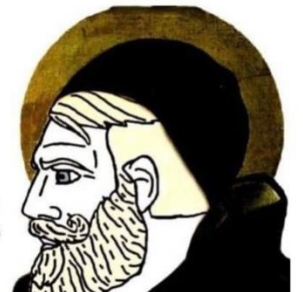


AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY
OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

RAYMOND MARTIN & JOHN BARRESI



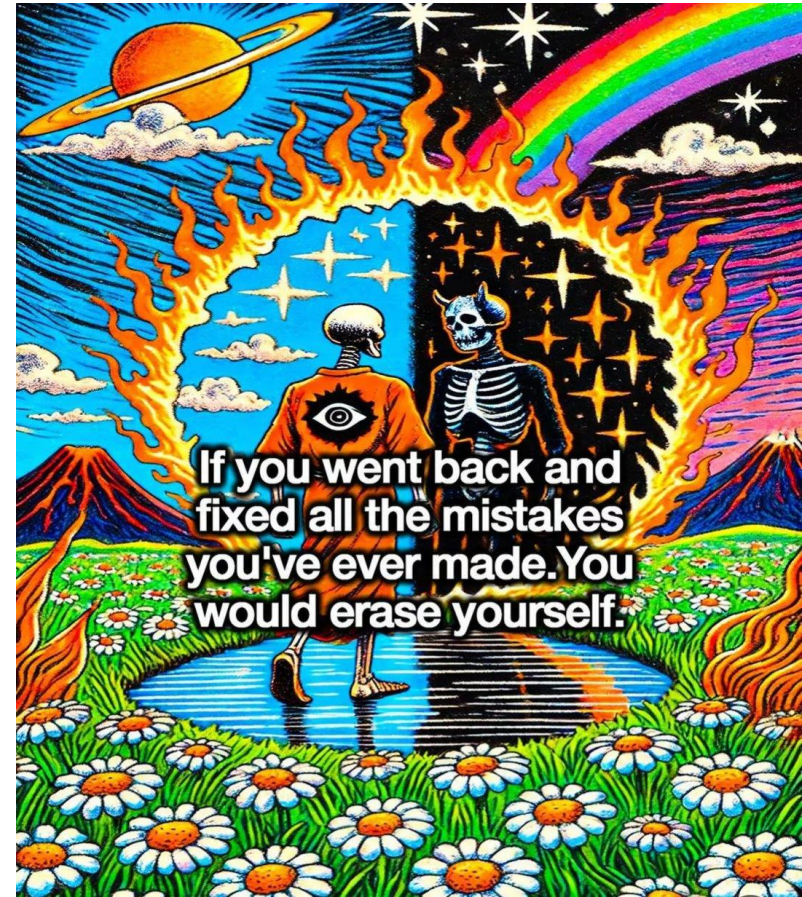
**Babe please stop
you're not a german
neoplatonic mystic**



**The eye with which I
see God is the same
with which God sees
me. My eye and God's
eye is one eye.**

Themes

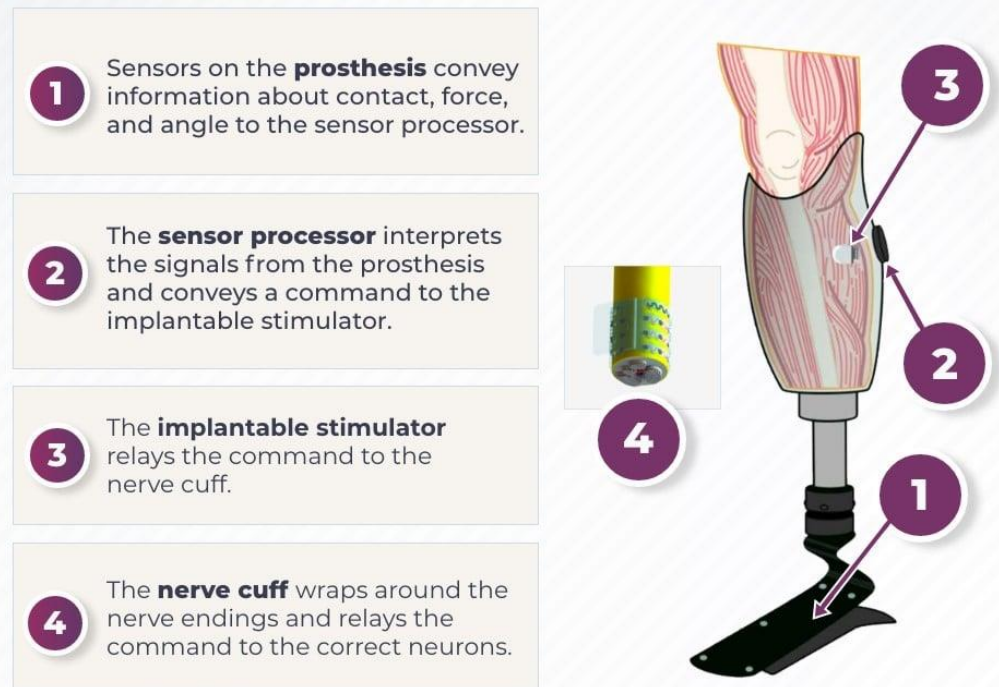
- **Continuity:** How or why does the self seem to persist over time, despite changes to thoughts, emotions, the body, the world?
- **Individual:** To what degree is a self a unique individual? What allows us to distinguish one self from another?
- **Unity:** Is the self a single, unified entity? Or is it fragmented, or layered, or composed of multiple selves?
- **Others:** How does the self relate to others? How do these relationships shape the self?
- **Expression:** How does the self express itself? What stories does it tell about itself?
- **Body:** What is the relationship between the body and the self? How does the body reveal the self, and the self the body?
- **Choice:** How is the self affected by or defined by the choices it makes?



The Biological Self

- The question of “what am I?” and “what am I not?” is a problem that your nervous and immune system have to regularly solve.
 - **Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI)** is a field of psychosomatic medicine that studies the relationship between mental health and nervous and immune systems
 - This interaction relates to how psychological events can influence illness
- The brain integrates many signals to create a feeling space of the body
 - **Phantom limb** occurs when the physical state of the body no longer matches the map (such as in amputation)

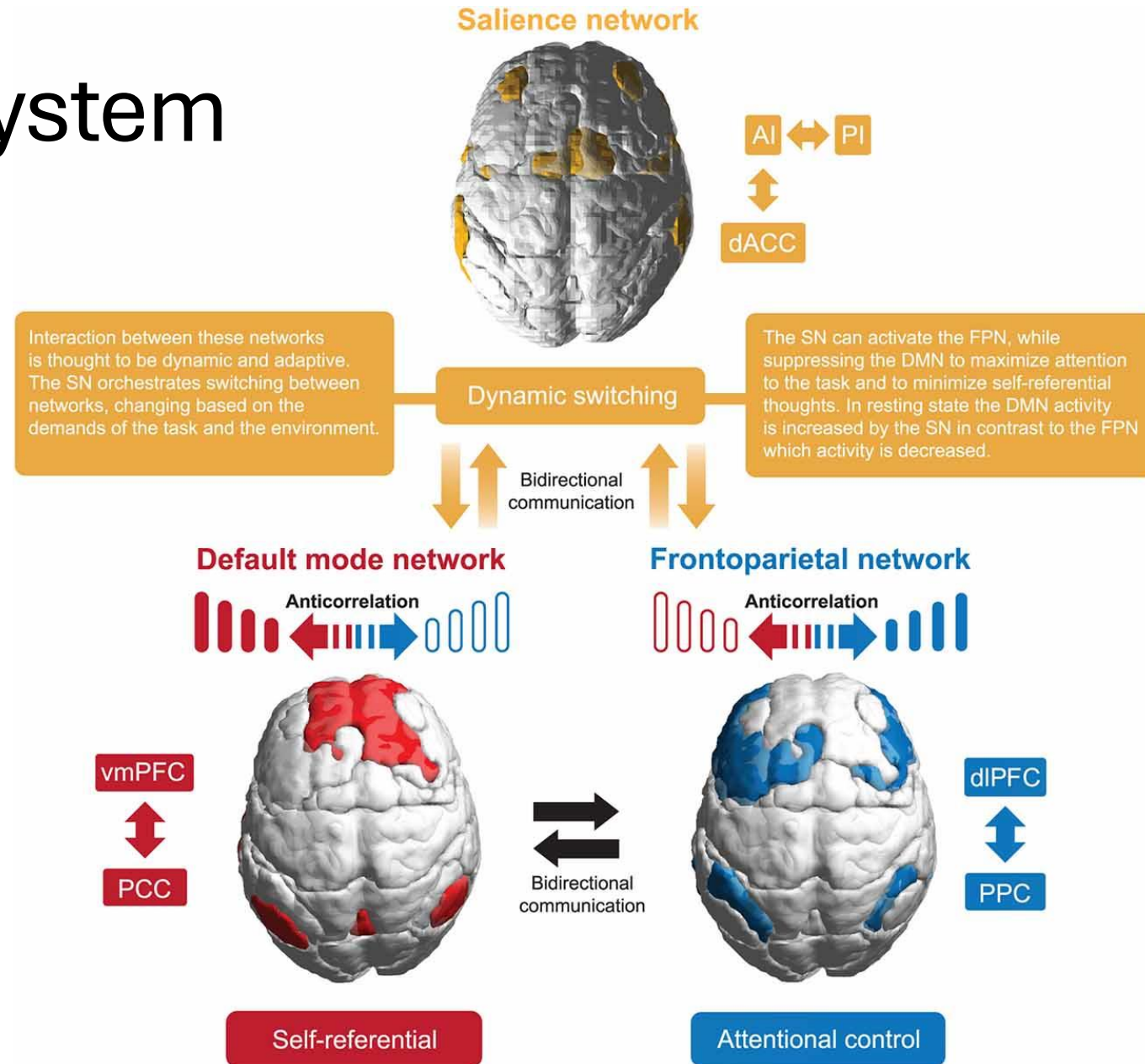
PERIPHERAL NERVE STIMULATOR SYSTEM: HOW IT WORKS



Credit: Ripple, LLC

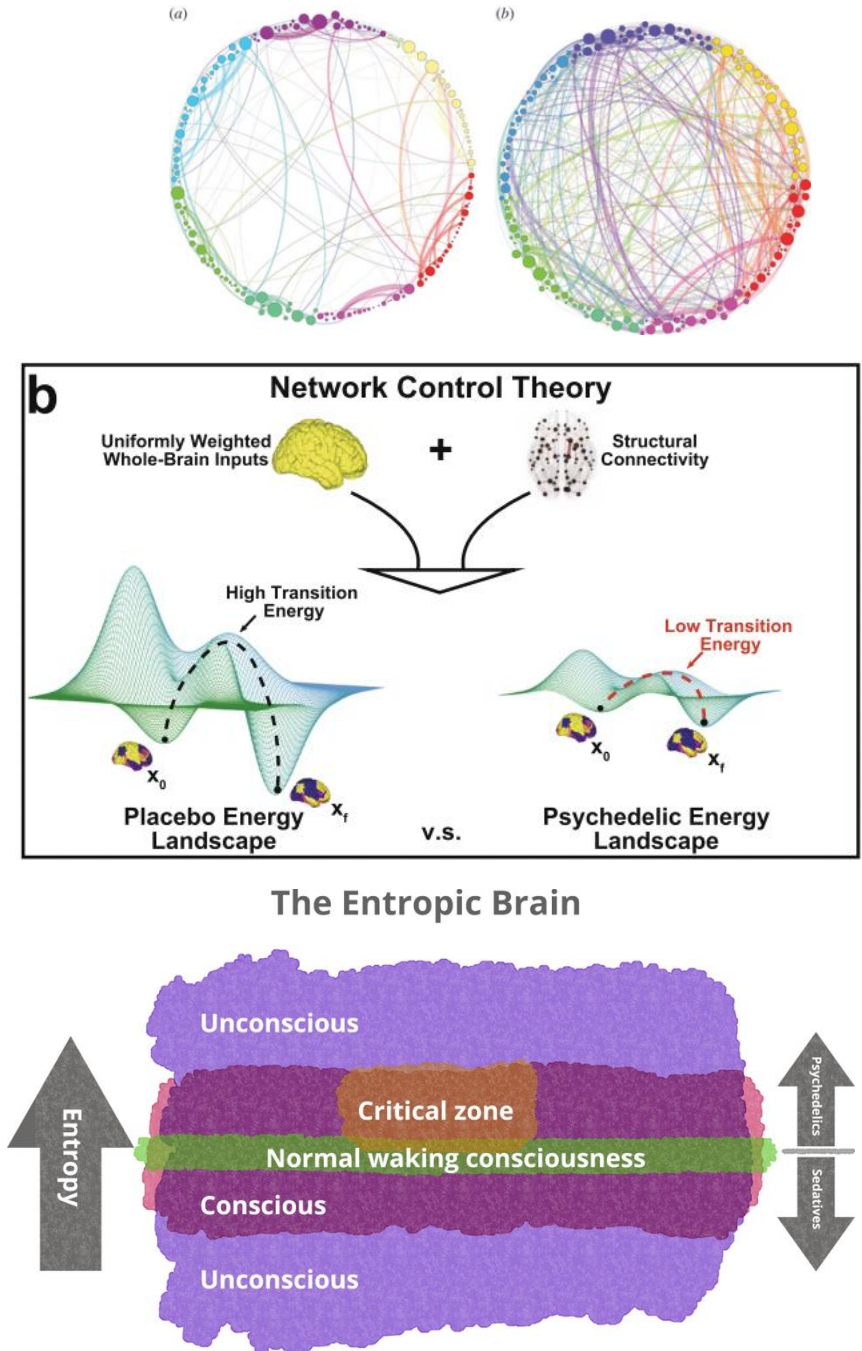
The Triple Network System

- **DMN:** self-referential thought, mind-wandering, mental time travel, social cognition, introspection
- **SN:** integration of salient stimuli, switching between DMN and CEN
- **FPN/CEN:** goal-directed decision-making, attention regulation, working memory



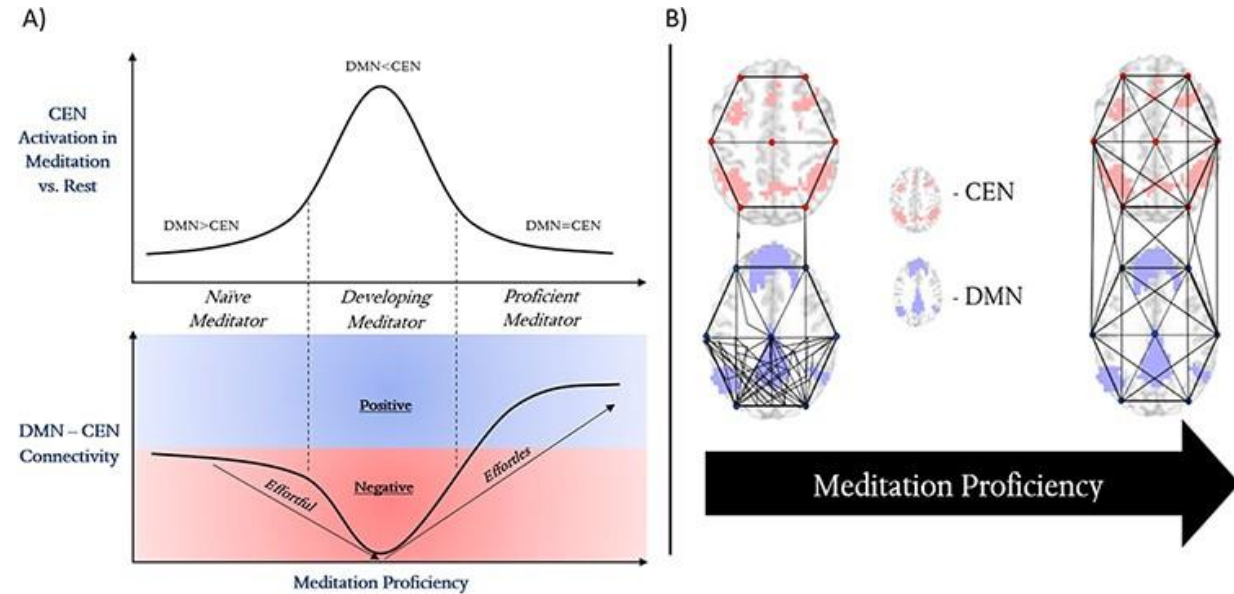
Effects of psychedelics

- General loosening of all functional networks, so that they are no longer as distinct
- Triple network system-
 - **CEN**: loosening of goal-directed focus, reducing ability to stay focused but enabling a freer, more creative decision process
 - **DMN**: loosening of rigid thought patterns, disrupting habitual self-referential and ruminative thought patterns
 - **SN**: loosening of sensory filtering, allowing for more sensory input and emotional salience to emerge
- Which can lead to a sense of “ego dissolution” where boundaries between self and environment blur



Meditation on the Brain

- Meditation retrains the way you experience sensory input and self-related processing
- This allows you to notice and then release tensions in your mind and body that you were holding
- Initially, effortful CEN engagement inhibits DMN
- With more practice, this becomes effortless, and the anticorrelation between CEN and DMN reduces
- Another way to think about this is that the idea of the Self is one of the brain's predictive models, and meditation softens the rigidity of that model



Nondual awareness: a prereflective layer of experience, in which self and other are not distinct, that is revealed through a loosening of self-related processes. Self and Other emerge out of this more fundamental awareness.

Extremes of Meditation Practice

- **Jhanas**: meditative states of deep absorption characterized by increasing refinement and serenity
- The first four jhanas (form)
 - Focused well-being and happiness, leading to effortless clarity and equanimity
- The second four jhanas (formless)
 - Abstract, infinite space of consciousness, leading to perception of emptiness, going past perception itself

Ancient Spirituality



systematic practices to
achieve infinite bliss

Modern Psychology



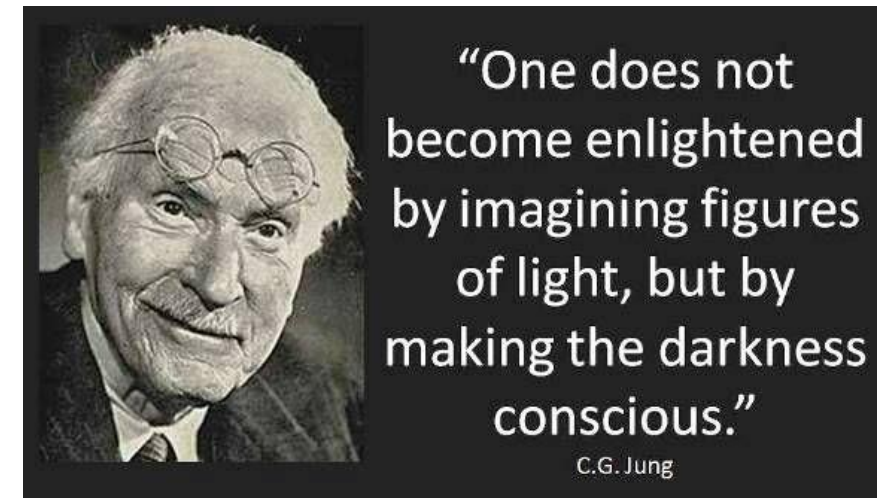
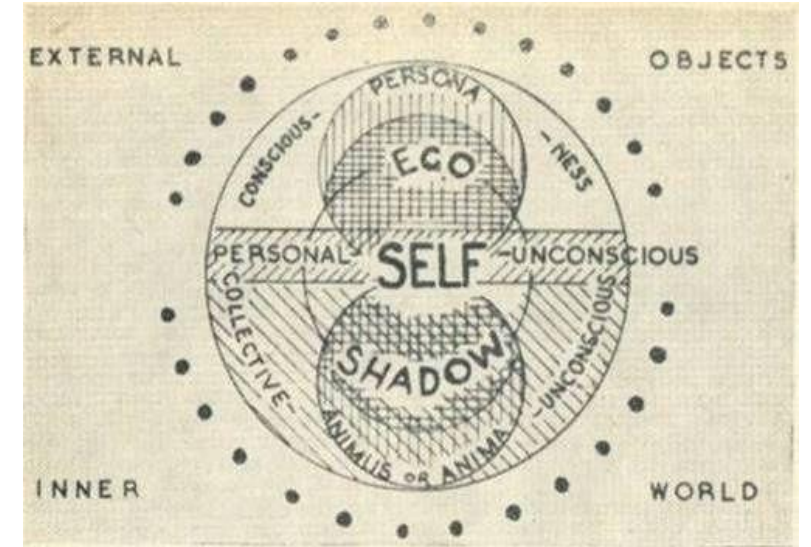
Can't cure anxiety

Toward a Unified Account of Advanced Concentrative Absorption
Meditation: A Systematic Definition and Classification of Jhāna

Terje Sparby^{1,2} · Matthew D. Sacchet³

What are you conscious of in your self?

- The chief insight of depth psychology (Freud and Jung) is that you are aware of only a tiny fraction of your psyche
- The “I” (ego) is a conscious actor embedded in a much larger psychological self, which it only has limited access to
- Conscious effort can be expended to explore the depths of the unconscious. Psychoanalysis endeavors to do this to heal neuroses
- Your shadow is that which you have not integrated into your self. It is often understood as your very real capacity for evil, beyond mere weakness. If you do not integrate this evil, you will project it onto the world and be at odds with it.



Memories in the body

Personality changes following heart transplantation: The role of cellular memory

Mitchell B. Liester

Department of Psychiatry, University of Colorado School of Medicine, PO Box 302, Monument, CO 80132, United States



- Memories may actually be distributed throughout the entire body, not just the nervous system
- Patients who receive organ transplants will sometimes report changes in preferences, temperament, personal identity, or memory transfer as a result of their transplant
 - *“The new heart has changed me... the person whose heart I got was a calm person, not hectic, and his feelings have been passed on to me now”*
 - *“When I got my new heart... almost every night and still sometimes now, I actually feel the accident my donor had. I can feel the impact in my chest. It slams into me, but my doctor said everything looks fine”*

Near-death studies

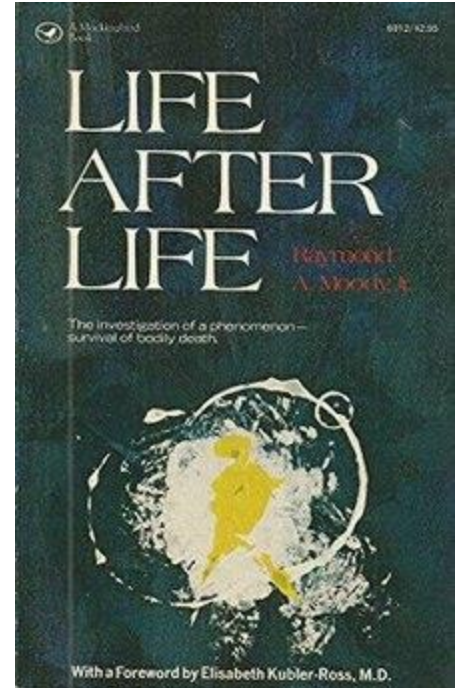
- 10-20% of people who have come close to death have experienced some form of near-death experience (NDE)
- It often permanently changes a person for the better
- Some anecdotes:
 - Many cases in which the person accurately describes their resuscitation with details there is no conventional explanation for
 - One person viewed his future. He wrote down significant life events and predicted them accurately, down to the color of the dress his wife died in
 - One person, upon leaving their body, met a relative who was also dying in another wing at the same hospital. No conventional explanation for how they were able to learn of this



Near-death experiences

Raymond Moody charted 9 steps to NDEs:

1. Sudden peace and relief
2. Perception of other-worldly sound or music
3. Consciousness leaves your body, often “looking down” on it
4. Go through a tunnel of light
5. Arrive at a “heavenly place” bathed in light
6. Reunite with deceased loved ones
7. Meet a divine being (perceived according to your religious culture)
8. Life review – see every moment of your life from an omniscient point of view, understand the impact on others of all your choices
9. Reach a point where you are told to go back or you choose to go back



Becoming a delog

Meditation-Induced Near-Death Experiences: a 3-Year Longitudinal Study

William Van Gordon^{1,2}  · Edo Shonin² · Thomas J. Dunn³ · David Sheffield¹ · Javier Garcia-Campayo⁴ · Mark D. Griffiths⁵

- In Buddhism, a delog (or delok) is someone who traverses the world of death to return with wisdom and guidance for the living
- A 2018 paper studied practitioners who could do this voluntarily with their practice
- Participant 8: *“The mind has unlimited potential. But it gets stuck in one way of seeing things ... But when you die the mind kind of goes through a process of unfolding. Its potential is unlocked. If you’ve trained enough you can harness this [potential] – you can harness it before you die as well. But if you’re not trained – and most people aren’t – then [death] is a frightening experience and there’s no way of controlling it. But it’s all just a projection of the mind.”*

Table 2 Summary of master and subordinate themes

Master theme	Subordinate themes
1. Phasic and multi-faceted NDE	1.1 Identification with the elements 1.2 Altered perception of time and space 1.3 Non-worldly encounters 1.4 Emptiness
2. Awareness during the MI-NDE	2.1 Awareness of physical worldly body 2.2 Awareness of NDE and non-corporeal form
3. Volitional control	N/A
4. Spiritually meaningful insights	N/A

Survival?

- **Crisis apparition** or **crisis telepathy**: when a person sees or senses a loved one at the moment of their crisis
- In some cases, they are able to help. In other cases, it seems the loved one is saying goodbye
- Ian Stevenson studied “cases of the reincarnation type” in which children claimed to remember past lives, documenting over 2500 cases
 - Memories usually lost by age 7
 - Sometimes there were birthmarks or other anomalies that corresponded to injuries from the past life
 - Sometimes the previous individual life could be identified; it was often from the same community or larger culture
 - Cases existed even in cultures that did not believe in reincarnation



Titu Singh

- At ~18 months old, he began identifying himself as “Suresh”, a radio shop owner in Agra
- Provided detailed information about the names and habits of his previous family, including details about how he used to be a criminal
- Exhibited similar temperament as Suresh
- Suresh Verma was murdered in 1983 by a gunshot to the head. Titu had birthmarks on the entry and exit wounds of his head



James Leininger

Item	Source of Information	Verification of Match with Huston	Comments
"Mama, before I was born, I was a pilot, and my airplane got shot in the engine, and it crashed in the water, and that's how I died."	James's mother	Memoir of veteran who saw Huston's plane get hit. James's father also talked to three eye witnesses. One later told a television interviewer, "I saw the hit. I would say he was hit head on, yeah, right on the middle of the engine."	
Died in the Battle of Iwo Jima	Narration states that James may have been one of the pilots who died in the Battle of Iwo Jima	History of Composite Squadron Eighty One (VC-81) and aircraft action report	Huston was the one pilot from USS <i>Natoma Bay</i> killed during the Iwo Jima operation. His plane was shot down as he took part in a strike against transport vessels in a harbor on nearby Chichi-jima
Nightmares of plane crashing on fire and sinking and being unable to get out	James's father	Aircraft action report states no wreckage of the plane was left afloat	
Flew a Corsair	James's mother	Pictures of Huston with Corsairs and squadron VF-301; interviews by James's father with veteran and son of veteran who served with Huston in the squadron	James seemed to say that he was flying a Corsair when he crashed. This was incorrect for Huston, who was flying an FM-2 when he died, but Huston had flown Corsairs earlier when he made test flights with VF-301
Plane flew off of a boat	James's mother	Numerous military records document that James Huston was a pilot on USS <i>Natoma Bay</i>	
His plane was shot down by the Japanese	James's mother	History of Composite Squadron Eighty One (VC-81) and aircraft action report	
Corsairs got flat tires when they landed	James	Air Force historian interviewed in the segment stated Corsairs bounced when they landed, leading to flat tires	

^aInterview conducted when James was four years old, before Huston was identified.



Case Report

The Case of James Leininger: An American Case of the Reincarnation Type

Jim B. Tucker MD 

