Arriving at the centre of consciousness: a transjective framework

Paper I of the Peace Papers, seven papers on one framework; each stands alone. A reflective essay. Website version, working draft v71, 24 November 2026; not peer reviewed. Devon Summerhayes, London.

All figures are original diagrams, drawn or redrawn with the help of generative AI; none is reproduced from another publication. Supplementary Material (Part A, A1 to A4; Part B, Figures S1 to S16) accompanies this paper; it is now part 2 of the Unifying Paper.

Abstract

Scientific and spiritual accounts of experience are usually treated as rivals. This essay proposes a framework in which they are two views of one experience, and a way to the centre from which both are seen. It makes four contributions. First, a labelling discipline: every descriptive claim is marked Experienced, Measured or Interpretive, so that the two languages can be held together without either undermining the other; working that way is called scientuality. Second, three perspectives of the I: the felt, subjective perspective (I1, a spectrum with negative, neutral and positive settings), the understanding, objective perspective (I2), and the witness's eye (I3), through which both are seen together as one transjective view, from the stance the essay calls transjectuality. Three words are kept apart: the self is the looker, the witness is the self looking at its own perspectives, and I3 is the eye it looks through. Third, a picture, offered as Interpretive: I3 as a lens through which universal consciousness, ɪɪ, a mark and not a name, passes to its focal point, the singularity of consciousness, ɪɪ brought to a point in one person; neither is a higher level of reality. The essay sets the perspectives beside older maps of the mind, McGilchrist's divided brain and the three-part models of Freud, Berne and Jung, as parallels and not proofs. Fourth, an experiential test: the reader rests awareness at the centre of a drawing and reports whether feeling and understanding hold together, against a control, with a decentering score and thresholds set in advance, and a second part tests whether daily practice makes centring automatic, deepens presence, lengthens the state and quickens the return from a feeling or a screen. It is offered to be tried, not as a finding. Objections and the framework's own risks are answered in turn.

In the series, this is the first paper and the source of the framework the others use. Paper II applies the perspectives to empathy and compassion; paper III argues for the stance as the dissolution of paradox; paper IV carries the perspectives into the norms families and cultures pass on; paper VI reads artificial intelligence through them; and the Unifying Paper states the framework once and gives the cosmology in full (part 2).

1. Introduction

This essay proposes a transjective framework for arriving at the centre of consciousness. It tries to hold two things together: a measurable account of how biology and environment shape emotion and behaviour, and an older, felt account of the same human experience in the language of spirit, conscience and soul. Put in one document without a rule for telling them apart, each undermines the other. A scientist could not tell which statements were findings, and a spiritual reader could not tell which were metaphors. This essay keeps the ambition and fixes the structure: it treats the two languages as two views, and says clearly which view each statement is in. A third, integrating stance holds both views and dismisses neither; this essay calls the stance transjectuality, and the practice of working from it, with both languages held, scientuality. This essay sets out the framework. Its use for empathy and compassion, with four testable hypotheses, is the subject of a companion essay, "Empathy, compassion and the humanity paradox: a transjective account" (paper II), referred to below as the companion essay (where this essay relies on it, the relevant content is restated here). Table 1 sets out the three modes of claim and Table 2 aligns older three-part maps of the mind.

Notation (author's mapping, Interpretive). The letter I stands for the person's first-person self: the one who feels, understands and sees. Three perspectives are taken from it, labelled I1, I2 and I3. A perspective is a place from which experience is taken up: it is not a part of the mind, a level of reality or a type of person. I1 is the subjective perspective, experience felt from the inside: the felt inner life, tied here to emotional empathy, and called spiritual in the sense of inner experience, not a separate substance. I2 is the objective perspective, experience taken as an object and understood from outside: analytic thought, tied here to cognitive empathy and executive function; "objective" here means understood as an object, not independent of any mind, and I2 is neutral, a tool that can serve any setting of I1. I3 is the transjective perspective, the eye of the witness: not a third, outside observer but the eye through which the felt and the understood are seen together and neither is dismissed, from the impartial stance the essay calls transjectuality; the witness is close to Adam Smith's impartial spectator (Smith 1759), I3 its eye, and from that stance care can extend beyond the people in front of us. It is not a further part of the mind and not a higher level of reality, and the witness does not act; in the series' terms I3 is transphysical, the eye through which both the measured and the lived readings are seen (paper III, section 6). That the witness does not act is where it parts from Smith's spectator, which judges: Smith divides himself "into two persons", "the examiner and judge" and the one judged (Smith 1759, part III, chapter 1, as it stands in the sixth edition of 1790). On the author's reading the witness sees, and the verdict belongs to the superego, that faculty of the ego which holds the rule taken in from others (section 5) and which takes over when the witness is no longer taken up (Interpretive); so the two are close in the stepping back and not in the judging. The reading would be wrong if people who step back from their own thoughts more readily condemned themselves more, not less. Three words are kept apart in section 5: the self, the witness and I3, the witness's eye. In plain words the three are the heart (I1), the mind (I2) and the eye of consciousness (I3): emotional empathy is felt in the heart, cognitive empathy considered in the mind, and compassion is the heart directed by the mind, seen by consciousness when witnessed; these are perspectives, not parts of a person. Compassion is felt concern (I1+) directed by understanding (I2) and acted on, which is why it is a practice as well as a way of seeing; witnessed compassion is the same with the witness looking, and the witness's own part is to notice which state one is in, which is what makes moving between states possible. The soul, in this essay, is the whole person acting on both with the witness present, so "spiritual" (I1) and "soul" are different things here: the first is the felt inner life, the second is that life joined with understanding, witnessed and put into action. This essay is written from I3; working from it, with both languages held, is what it calls scientuality. Figure 1 draws I1 and I2 as the corners of a triangle, with a circle through them: I1− and I1+ at the ends of the base, I2 at the apex and I3, the witness's eye, at the centre of the circle, drawn as a ring with a point of light within it. The ring, the point and the circle are read fully in the Discussion (section 8); the test in section 6 does not depend on the reading. The Supplementary Material, now part 2 of the Unifying Paper, adds further images of I3 (the tesseract and two spirals, A1; the lens of the laser, A2; the lens of the eye, A3), not further meanings of the word: they differ as the projections of one shape differ, which is the point of the tesseract in A1, and a lens, a tesseract and a meeting point are how one perspective looks when it is pictured from different sides.

I1 is a spectrum, from the negative pole (I1−) through neutral to the positive pole (I1+), as the base of Figure 1 draws it; its three settings are regions of that range, not separate states. I1 stands at one of three settings: positive (I1+: the other-directed pole, conscience, trust, grace, felt connection, in two forms: responsive, answering what it meets in another, and generative, wanting the other's good before it is asked for), neutral (calm, unengaged feeling) or negative (I1−: the self-directed pole, in two forms: reactive, as fear and being overwhelmed, and appetitive, as appetite and instrumental aggression; in both, felt concern for others is absent). The plus and minus mark polarity, like the poles of a magnet, not good and bad: each has a job, and the problem is one governing alone. I1+ tends to support prosocial action when I2 directs it, but conscience can also be rigid and felt connection narrow; I1− tends toward self-protection, which can become antisocial when it governs alone or when I2 serves it without felt concern (Interpretive; a state, not a type of person). Neutral is calm with nothing asked of it and no concern stirred, and at its dead end it is dullness, calm because nothing is alive in it, the ingredient of indifference. Love at rest, calm with concern present and nothing asked of it, equanimity, is not neutral but I1+ at rest; its wakefulness resembles the tonic

alertness Metzinger (2020) places at the core of minimal phenomenal experience, which on his account is nearly contentless, so the resemblance is partial (Interpretive). The quiet middle is also where thought sees clearest: fear scatters the light and appetite pulls it in, and at neutral nothing bends it, which is why, on this reading, the contemplative order is calm first and insight after, the attentional family of practice before the deconstructive (Interpretive; the families are those of Dahl, Lutz and Davidson 2015). I2 plays one of three roles: offline (I1 "alone"), present while the feeling sets the course (I1 "with" I2), or setting the course (I1 "directed by" I2). I2 has no sign of its own, so each combination takes its sign from I1; the two forms of each pole are forms of one setting, not further settings, so the count stays at nine. Fourteen states are named, in seven of the nine combinations, several to a combination by form or by what they meet (the companion essay sets them out in a table: paper II, section 6, Table 3): I1+ directed by I2 is compassion in its responsive form, met with suffering or need, and kindness in its generative form, with forgiveness, sympathetic joy, gratitude, elevation and admiration beside compassion; I1+ with I2 is tender partiality, and I1+ alone is being moved; neutral I1 with I2 is indifference; I1− in its reactive form with I2 is defended detachment, I1− in its appetitive form directed by I2 is cruelty, I1− in its reactive form directed by I2 is revenge, and I1− in its reactive form alone is distress. Each combination can be witnessed (I3 taken up, the witness looking through it) or not; compassion, as used here, is the first combination, and witnessed compassion is that combination with I3 taken up. Section 5 sets the perspectives beside older maps of the mind and says what the witness rests on.

Settings for the moment (author's reading, Interpretive). Some moments require the self-directed setting, stepping out of danger, resting when depleted, refusing to be used, and others the other-directed; I2 makes either functional by aiming it and keeping it in proportion, and only from I3 are the settings seen as settings. Seeing takes no part in the act and does not interfere with it: the act keeps its full engagement, with a wider awareness round it, and what changes is the charge it carries, since a witnessed act is no longer the whole of awareness. A self-directed setting the moment requires serves the person and not the picture; service to self, on the left side of Figure 1, is self-direction serving the self-image (section 5). This would be wrong if acts done with the state witnessed matched the same acts done unwitnessed in proportion, timing and aftermath.

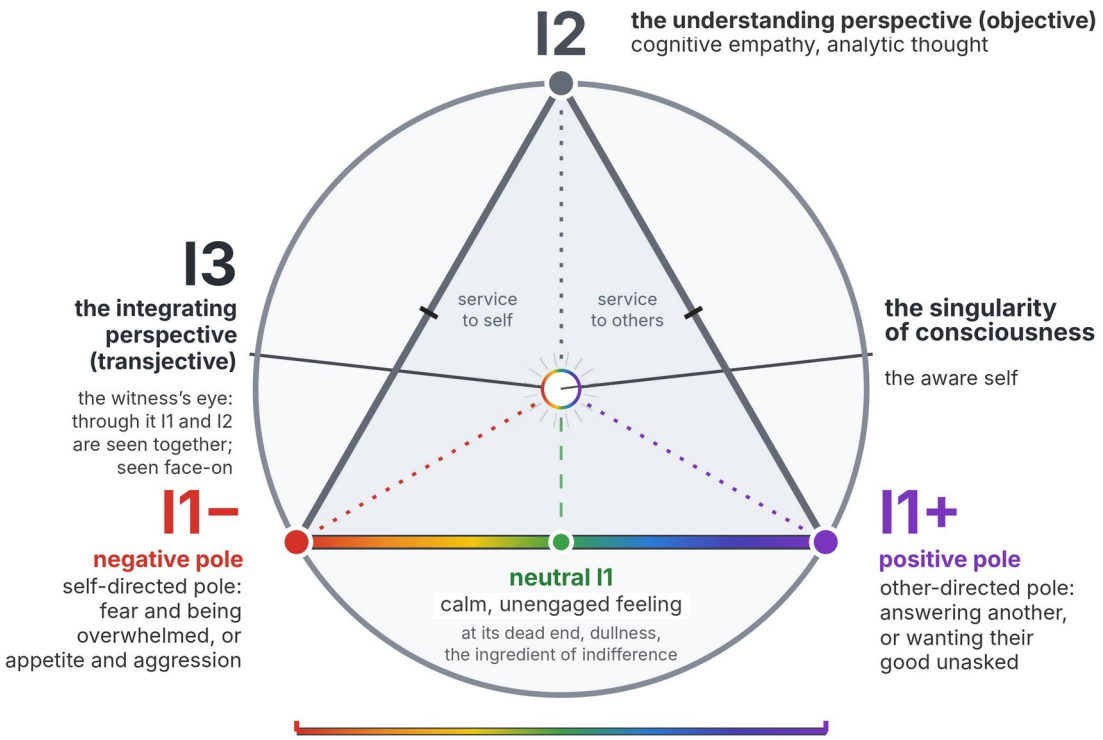
Position and method

The framework comes mainly from the author's self-examination and from informal observation and interpretation of other people over many years, checked afterwards against published research. It is therefore observational and introspective in origin, not clinical or experimental. These are limited sources: people can be wrong about their own minds and others', and unsystematic observation is open to bias. The framework is offered as a hypothesis to test, not a finding. No identifiable individual is described and no case material is reported. Measured claims are drawn from published sources and marked as such. Experienced and Interpretive claims are the author's own. A framework of this kind is a map, not the territory, and a map can become a hiding place: categories can be a way of avoiding the harder, personal parts of life that the Experienced mode points to. The three modes are meant to guard against this by keeping the felt account in view beside the measured one, but only practice can show whether they do.

How the framework was developed and checked. The scheme was drafted from the author's observations and revised as inconsistencies were found. No systematic literature search was made: sources were chosen to test and sharpen the framework, so they may lean towards support, and were not appraised for quality. Numerical claims were checked against the original papers or their abstracts, several against abstracts only. Generative AI helped draft and edit the text, checked consistency and references, rendered the figures and contributed design details of the experiential test (see Declarations).

Three perspectives of the I: a triangle in its circle

I1− and I1+ are the poles of the base, I2 is the apex, I3 is the centre of the circle (Interpretive)



I1, the felt perspective (subjective): one range, from the negative pole through neutral to the positive pole
emotional empathy, felt experience

A picture of how the perspectives relate, not a measurement. The equal sides stand for I2's neutrality, the base for the range of I1, and the circle for π seen whole, with I3 at its centre.

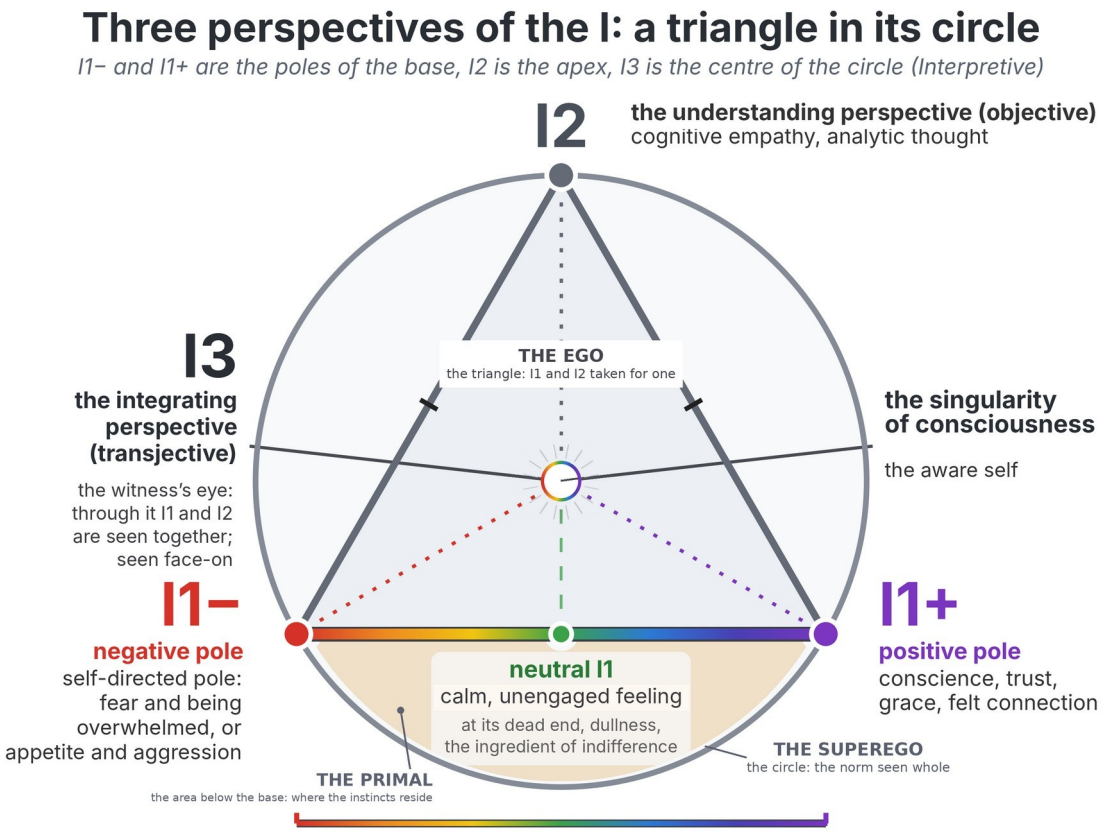


Figure 1. A map of the perspectives of the I, with the centre of consciousness at its middle (Interpretive). I1– and I1+ are the poles of the felt perspective (subjective), at the ends of the base, neutral I1 between them, the negative pole labelled with both forms (Introduction). I2, the understanding perspective (objective), is the apex, equally far from both poles. I3, the witness's eye (transjective), is the centre, equally near each corner, drawn as a ring: the eye of the witness face-on, with faint rays for light given. The point of light within it is the singularity of consciousness, ɪɪ brought to a point at the eye's focal point: the self, the looker, the source of the light given; the circle through the three corners is ɪɪ seen whole. Lines join I3 to each perspective: read in depth, they are the edges of a pyramid seen face-on, and I3 is its tip, one dimension further in, not higher up, within the triangle as seen and not within it (section 5). Emotional empathy sits at I1 and cognitive empathy at I2; compassion combines the two (Introduction) and lies on the side joining I1+ to I2, along its upper part, where understanding directs the feeling, with cruelty and revenge on the mirror side from I1– to I2. The two equal sides are marked service to self, on the left, and service to others, on the right: understanding serving the self-directed or the other-directed pole; "self" there means the ego's self-image, not the aware self at the centre. Colour: the spectrum, red at I1– through green to violet at I1+, is I1, carried by the ring because the whole felt range passes through the witness's eye; grey is I2; white is ɪɪ. Green marks only neutral's place on the scale. Panel B labels the same drawing as section 5 reads it: the triangle as the ego, I1 and I2 taken for one, the circle as the superego, the norm seen whole, and the shaded area below the base as the primal, where the instincts reside. Below is on the page only, since position is not rank, and the words under neutral I1 describe the neutral setting and not the primal. A picture of how the perspectives relate, not a measurement.

2. What "transjective" means here

A transjective view is neither purely subjective nor purely objective. Meaning arises in the relation between a knower and what is known. The shade of a tree is not only in the tree and not only in the person standing in it. In this essay, "transjective" is used in that plain sense: some of the most important things about human life only show up when the inner view and the outer view are held together and neither is dismissed.

The empathy spectrum is a worked example. Where a scientist sees a trait that varies across people and is measured by questionnaire and by the brain's response to another's pain (Measured; Singer et al. 2004), another person sees conscience, heart or soul. These are not rival claims. They are the same thing described from outside and inside (Interpretive). The empathy spectrum runs across people; the I1 spectrum of the Introduction runs within a person over time, and the two are different things.

Related work and what is new

Relating science and religion in more than one way is not new. Barbour (1997) described four: conflict, independence, dialogue and integration. Gould (1997) proposed non-overlapping magisteria, a form of independence. This essay sits nearer dialogue and integration, but it does not ask religion to settle empirical questions or science to settle questions of meaning. Varela (1996) argued that first-person accounts and brain data should constrain each other (neurophenomenology). Dual-aspect monism, a family of views with roots in the Pauli-Jung correspondence and developed by Atmanspacher and Rickles (2022), treats mind and matter as two aspects of one underlying reality. The word "transjective" is rare. In philosophy it is used for what is neither purely subjective nor purely objective; this essay found no single authoritative origin for it, although John Vervaeke uses it in his lectures, proposing it as a term for the relation between agent and world that is neither only subject nor only object (Vervaeke 2019, episode 31). It is used here only in the plain sense given above, and the essay does not claim to have coined it; the noun transjection, for the operation of holding a pair as one, is the essay's own and is defined where it is used (section 5). The words "transjectuality", used here for the stance taken through I3 and built on "transjective", and "scientuality", used for the practice of holding the two languages together, are coined here.

Within psychology, the felt and understood perspectives have close relatives. Empathy research separates affective from cognitive components (Measured; Decety and Jackson 2004; Zaki and Ochsner 2012) and traces them to perception-action mechanisms with deep evolutionary roots (Interpretive, a model; Preston and de Waal 2002); the companion essay takes up that literature, and the work on compassion, in detail (paper II, section 2). Dual-process theories contrast fast, autonomous processing with slower, reflective processing (Interpretive, a theory; Evans and Stanovich 2013); that pairing resembles the instinctive layer of Table 2 and I2 only loosely, as the Freudian maps do.

Closer still are three literatures the witness touches directly. In clinical psychology, decentering, observing one's own thoughts and feelings as passing events rather than as oneself, is a reviewed metacognitive process with measurable effects (Measured; Bernstein et al. 2015), and the contemplative-science account of meditation distinguishes attentional, constructive and deconstructive families of practice (Measured; Dahl, Lutz and Davidson 2015); I3 taken up is close to decentering, and the bliss states of the Supplementary Material (the Unifying Paper, part 2, A3) to the deconstructive family. In phenomenology, Zahavi (2005) argues that a minimal, pre-reflective self-awareness accompanies every experience; the witness of this essay is that awareness taken up reflectively (section 5). In the study of "pure awareness", Metzinger (2020) proposes minimal phenomenal experience as a target for description and modelling, and Josipovic (2014) reports neural correlates of nondual awareness in meditators (Measured); the essay's π is offered beside these as an image, not a competing account. None supplies the labelling discipline that lets the felt and the measured descriptions of one position sit in one text. The nearest precedent is the distinction between first-, second- and third-person data in the first-person methodologies of Varela and Shear (1999); what the three modes add is the Interpretive mode, for readings that are neither report nor measurement, and a stated standard of judgement for each mode. The lens image of the Discussion is placed beside its own relatives there (section 8).

One clinical model has the centre with the states around it. Assagioli's psychosynthesis places the I, a point of pure self-awareness, at the centre of its diagram of the psyche, with subpersonalities around it, and its disidentification exercise, I have a body but I am not my body, is the closing step of section 6 under another name (Assagioli 1965); the model ranks, with a higher unconscious and a Higher Self above, which this essay does not. And the shape of Figures 1 and 3, a point at the centre of triangles

within circles with attention rested at the point, is older than both: it is the yantra tradition's, the Śrī Yantra above all, whose practice rests attention at the bindu, the point at the centre (Khanna 1979). The figure was drawn from the author's own introspection, as the person, the triangle, in the universe, the circle, with consciousness the point at the centre, which is both and connects them, three names the ego gives to one, unividuity (the Unifying Paper, "The word"), and the resemblance was found afterwards; the shape and the resting are also the yantra tradition's, so the essay claims the drawing and the reading, not the shape, and takes the convergence as the Experienced mode's own test, consistency with another account reached independently. The author proposes that the convergence occurs because the shape is the structure of awareness itself, a point at the centre of a field; a proposal, Interpretive, and section 8 says what would count against it.

What this essay adds is not a new mechanism. Its first claim is a labelling discipline, the three modes of claim, applied to a domain where felt and measured statements are usually mixed. Its second is an arrangement: three perspectives of the I, with the witness's eye, I3, at the centre, the felt perspective set between two poles and a neutral setting, and the three settings crossed with the three roles of understanding to give nine combinations, with fourteen states named in seven of them. Its third is a picture, read fully in section 8, of the witness's eye as a lens and the point of light at its centre as the singularity of consciousness, ɪɪ brought to a point. Its fourth is an experiential test of the witness that a reader can try (section 6). The empathy and compassion hypotheses are in the companion essay (paper II, section 7).

The first two and the fourth are practical and make no claim about what awareness is. The third carries a cosmology, ɪɪ in many lenses, and the essay says so: it is offered in the Interpretive mode, judged by coherence and usefulness, placed beside its neighbours in section 8, and never advanced as a finding; the essay does not claim to resolve the mind-matter problem.

3. The discipline: three modes of claim

The bridge only holds if every descriptive statement declares its mode. This is the rule the essay follows, and Table 1 sets out the three modes. Definitions (what a word means here) and statements of value are not claims about the world, so they sit outside the modes; the value commitment in this work (the Unifying Paper, part 2, A3), and its extension in paper VI (section 7), are marked as such.

Table 1. The three modes of claim.

Mode	Example	How to judge it
Experienced	A sense of stillness, of being watched by something larger, of a spiral up or down.	By honesty and consistency with other accounts. It is testimony, not proof, and need not be defended as physics.
Measured	A study of 1,011 people found no evidence that individuals are "left-brained" or "right-brained" (Nielsen et al. 2013).	By evidence, replication and effect size.
Interpretive	Freud's Id, Berne's Child and the "chimp" are three descriptions of one instinctive layer of the mind.	By coherence and usefulness: does it clarify more than it distorts?

Two consequences follow. First, words like "proves" belong only to Measured claims. Second, physics and mathematics may be used as images in Experienced or Interpretive claims (the spirals and lattices of the Supplementary Material are examples), but not as evidence for souls. A third is the author's own (Interpretive). Objective testing is only half of the means of making sense, since the subjective self is within the reality that is tested; the Experienced mode is the other half, with its own standard above and its own method in section 6. Objectivity is then read as a construct for cooperation and mutual understanding: what does not depend on who is looking, agreed so that people can act together. Philosophers of science describe it in kindred terms, as "a form of intersubjectivity", a method being "objective to the degree that it permits transformative criticism" (Longino, quoted in Reiss and Sprenger 2014/2020). A construct is not an invention: the agreement on how to check is made by people, and what answers the check is not. Held as one group's possession, objectivity is the triangle taken for the circle (paper IV, section 3). The reading would be

wrong if agreement between independent observers added nothing to how well a claim holds up. The series' central claim, that all share the same consciousness, shows both halves at work: it can be weighed as a reading, and what it provokes is a subjective stance, which requires experience that no objective rationale can supply (Experienced and Interpretive; the Unifying Paper, part 2, A3).

A worked example

A friend tells you that her father has died. The same moment can be described in three modes.

- **Experienced:** a tightness in the chest, and a wish to sit with her.
- **Measured:** a cue that one's partner is receiving pain engages some of the same affective brain regions as receiving pain oneself (Singer et al. 2004). This says nothing about what the tightness means.
- **Interpretive:** the tightness is a form of caring, and acting on it with an understanding of what she needs is what this essay calls compassion.

Each statement is judged by its own standard (Table 1). Every word for a feeling is a projection of it onto the plane of understanding, a shadow with fewer dimensions than the feeling, which is why the Experienced mode is judged by honesty and consistency rather than by evidence, and why traditions can name one felt range in different words without contradiction. Problems begin when one is offered in the voice of another, for example when the interpretive reading is presented as a brain-imaging result.

4. A parallel: the divided brain (Interpretive)

McGilchrist's The Master and His Emissary (2009) is the closest published parallel to the I1, I2 and I3 pattern, so it is used here to ask whether the pattern is plausible, not to prove it. His thesis is that the two hemispheres are best understood as two modes of attention, not as "logical" and "creative" halves, which he rejects: the left attends narrowly, to detail and to what can be grasped and manipulated; the right attends broadly, to the whole, to context, to the living and the relational. Read beside the perspectives (author's mapping, Interpretive), I1 resembles the broad mode, I2 the narrow mode, and I3 the movement McGilchrist describes, in which the broad mode meets the world first, the narrow mode analyses, and the broad mode takes the result back into the whole; that cycle is a summary of the book's argument, not a quotation. The brain basis is contested. The popular story that individuals are "left-brained" or "right-brained" has no support (Measured; a study of 1,011 people; Nielsen et al. 2013), and McGilchrist does not make that claim; his claim, that the hemispheres differ in style of attention, has been criticised as over-interpreting what is known about brain function in order to explain cultural change (Gibbins 2010); and lesion work shows a double dissociation between the two empathies by prefrontal region, inferior frontal for the emotional and ventromedial for the cognitive, and did not test a left-right split (Measured; Shamay-Tsoory et al. 2009). The resemblance is therefore a loose analogy about styles of attention, used as a metaphor and not as evidence about the brain.

An older and bolder story uses the same two hemispheres. Jaynes (1976) proposed that until about 3,000 years ago people did not introspect: experience organised by the right hemisphere reached the left as voices, heard as gods giving commands and obeyed, and consciousness, which he took to be whatever can be introspected, an inner space built from metaphor with an imagined "I" acting in it, was learned when the voices failed amid the upheavals of the late Bronze Age. Voices heard in psychosis today do lean right: in 24 patients they activated the right-hemisphere counterpart of Broca's area and not Broca's area itself (Measured; Sommer et al. 2008), which bears on the mechanism and not on ancient minds. Block objected that Jaynes had at most dated the concept of consciousness, not consciousness, and Dennett answered that some things, like baseball, cannot exist before their concept (Block 1981, cited in Dennett 1986); McGilchrist (2009) argued that Jaynes had the history of the hemispheres backwards. Read beside this essay (Interpretive), the voice is the circle of Figure 1 heard from outside the triangle, the norm seen whole before the ego takes it into its

own formation (section 5), and on the map above the broad mode commands while the narrow mode obeys, with no movement between them. What Jaynes calls consciousness is the ego that forms when the voice is taken in: I1 and I2 taken for one and told as a story. The witness is not in that history. Its eye is always there (section 5), so the bicameral person had the witness undiscovered, not missing, and what changed when the voices failed was the voice and the ego. This divides the dispute: the ego needs its concept, as Dennett says, while the witness is there before any concept of it, as Block says of consciousness, and is found, not made. To take the "I" that Jaynes's metaphor builds for the looking itself would be a paradox in this essay's sense, two perspectives taken for one (Interpretive).

5. Parallel maps of the mind and the perspectives (Interpretive)

Why this section: several older maps of the mind already divide it into layers that resemble felt, reasoning and integrating functions. Lining them up shows that I1, I2 and I3 loosely parallel an old pattern, not a new discovery. It also says what the witness rests on (the note on the witness below).

Several three-part models of the mind can be set side by side (Freud 1923; Berne 1964; Jung 1966; Peters 2012). They are aligned here by function (Table 2). They are loose correspondences, not identities: Jung's persona, for instance, is not the same as Freud's superego. Berne's three ego states also give the felt perspective a second vocabulary, since each has a felt side: I1 can be occupied as Child (feeling raw: fear, appetite, delight), as Parent (feeling as an introjected rule: care in its nurturing form, aggression in its critical one) or as Adult (feeling observed calmly). Set against the settings, in the functional names later transactional analysis gave Berne's states (his own were the natural and the adapted Child), I1+ resembles the nurturing Parent and the free Child, the reactive form of I1− the adapted Child, the appetitive form the free Child's appetite and the critical Parent's aggression, and neutral the Adult's feeling (author's mapping, Interpretive; loose, as the table is).

Table 2. Three-part models of the mind, aligned by function (Interpretive).

Role	Freud	Berne	Jung	Peters (Chimp Paradox)
Instinctive layer, beneath feeling (below I1)	Id	Child	Shadow (wider than the Id)	Chimp
Mediating, reality-testing self (the ego: I1 and I2 in the states)	Ego	Adult	Ego	Human
Learned rules and social self (the superego: I2's rules with I1's force)	Superego	Parent	Persona	Computer

The perspectives beside Freud's structures (author's mapping, Interpretive). I1− in its appetitive form is nearest the Id; its reactive form, fear, is not, since Freud placed anxiety in the ego ("the actual seat of anxiety"; Freud 1923), so the instinctive layer of Table 2 and the Id overlap only in part. I1+ is conscience, drawn here apart from the superego (rules taken in from society), which departs from Freud, for whom conscience is a function of the superego; plus grace, trust and felt connection. I2 is the ego's analytic, reality-testing thinking (what Freud calls secondary process), close to Berne's Adult, which would be neutral I1 directed by I2, a combination paper II's Table 3 leaves unnamed; the ego itself is not a perspective and not the aware self. Read this way, Freud's structures are mixtures of the perspectives, the id I1− in its appetitive form alone, the ego I1 and I2 taken for one, the superego I2's rules with I1's force: the perspectives cut across the structures, which answers the objection that the scheme only relabels, since a relabelling keeps the level and this takes the structures apart, though it does not show that the perspectives are the deeper layer. Jung's Shadow is wider than the Id, taking in everything a person disowns, so it matches the instinctive layer in part; Jung's Self, the whole that holds conscious and unconscious together, is a parallel to the self, the centre and the whole at once. Figure 2 shows compassion as the overlap of I1 and I2, the seam, and I3 as the eye from which the seam is seen, drawn above it on the page only.

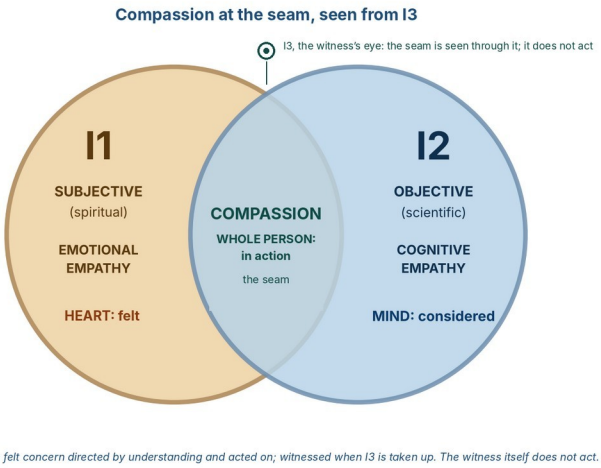


Figure 2. The two empathies and their seam (Interpretive). I1, the felt perspective (subjective, felt and spiritual), holds emotional empathy (heart); I2, the understanding perspective (objective, understanding and scientific), holds cognitive empathy (mind); compassion, felt concern directed by understanding and acted on, is their overlap, the seam. I3, the witness's eye (transjective), is drawn above it as the eye from which the seam is seen; above on the page only, since the eye is not a higher level of reality, and it does not act: the person acts from the seam. The overlap is drawn for the positive pole of I1; with I1– the same region holds cruelty and revenge, and defended detachment beside it (Introduction).

Used as descriptions of states, the perspectives are a useful lens: most people move between them (Interpretive; H3 in the companion essay (paper II, section 7) tests the nearest measurable version, whether a person's emphasis on feeling or on thinking behaves as a state or as a trait), and people differ in how easily they can step back and observe their own reactions (Measured; Bernstein et al. 2015). Where the aware self is not yet looking, which is to say where I3 is not yet taken up, the person is simply in the state. In a mind racing with worry, the fear is subjective (I1–) and the thoughts that go with it are I2, which may know better without steering: I1– in its reactive form with I2, but not directed (Interpretive). The companion essay calls this combination defended detachment, whose usual form is numbing and avoidance; worry is the same combination in a racing form: one combination holds numbing and racing alike, and paper II's felt disc (paper II, Figure 4) separates them by how hot or cold the feeling is. Used as a way to sort people into kinds, the scheme would fail if H3 holds (Interpretive), and people ascend and descend over a lifetime. This essay keeps the first use and drops the second.

A note on the witness (author's mapping, Interpretive). The witness, as this essay uses the word, is reflective: the I turning to look at its own perspectives from within, through I3, which a person does intermittently and can learn to do more often. It rests on something that is not intermittent: the minimal, pre-reflective self-awareness that phenomenologists hold accompanies every experience and is not itself an act of observation (Zahavi 2005). In Figure 1 that constant self-awareness is the point of light at the centre, the aware self, and the ring around it, the witness's eye, is always there too; I3 taken up is that eye looked through reflectively, which is intermittent. The witness of this essay is therefore that constant awareness taken up reflectively, not a second observer added to it, which is why, when the I turns on itself, witness and witnessed are the same point of light, and nothing further is needed to witness the witness. Three words are kept apart here. The self is the looker and the point π is given from, the constant awareness at the centre: the centre of the title. Being π emanated, the self can merge with the all, the point returning to the π it is of, and can come back: the in-breath and out-breath of the Supplementary Material (the Unifying Paper, part 2, A3). The witness is the self looking at its own perspectives. I1 and I2 are perspectives whose settings and roles can be measured, the states being their combinations; I3 is the eye they are seen through; and the witness is the self looking, the self being the I of the Notation from which the three are taken. I3 is the eye of the witness, the eye the self looks through: the eye and not the looker. The looker cannot observe itself; it sees of itself only its perspectives, reflected in I3, and is not seen but known, aware that it is aware, and that knowing is the pre-reflective self-awareness above. The self

and the witness are transjections of each other, a transjection being a pair held as one from the stance that sees both: the looker and the looking, one point from two sides. A paradox, on this account, is two perspectives taken for one (argued in paper III, section 1). The witness and the void hold each other: the void is the opening the light comes through and the witness the looking through it, which is why the point at the centre of Figure 1 is white, of no single colour; what the eye surrounds is not a thing to be seen but the opening seeing happens through. Source and opening are one point from two sides: looked at from the states, the point is where the light comes from; looked from, it is the opening the light passes through, and nothing is found there because the looking is there (Interpretive). From inside, the opening is felt as hollow: an emptiness one looks from, not at (Experienced). The void is empty so that one can shine one's light into it, focus it as a state narrows it and, if one chooses, feel it; the now is the presence that results, the stance from which the states are seen (Experienced and Interpretive). I3 is the eye of the witness, how it is focused: taken up, it converges on feeling and understanding together, and from there I1 and I2 appear as states a person is in rather than places looked from. Drawn, this is why I3 is no point of the triangle. Every mixture of I1 and I2 lies in the triangle's plane, and the even mixture at its centre is indifference (paper II, section 6). On the author's reading, I3 is the tip of the pyramid whose edges are the lines from the centre of Figure 1 to its three corners, seen face-on, one dimension further in, within the triangle as seen and not within it; wherever the states are drawn, in the triangle, the cone or the cylinder, the eye is one dimension beyond the space they fill. The pyramid's faces carry the witnessed states: a state on the triangle is the state, and the same state seen from the tip is that state witnessed, so the face over the side from I1+ to I2 is witnessed compassion (Interpretive). The further dimension is depth and not height, further in and not higher up; the author proposes that only the ego wants it to be a higher view, since a higher view would give it a new difference to hold, the witness made into a rank (Interpretive). The risk is measured: practising yoga and meditation has been found to raise self-enhancement rather than quiet the ego (Measured; Gebauer et al. 2018), and a measure of spiritual superiority correlates with self-esteem and more strongly with communal narcissism (Measured; Vonk and Visser 2021). Purpose is the other pole of the same wish, the author proposes. Dominance is esteem aligned with the self's image, I1– in its appetitive form directed by I2 with the witness lost, so that rank is what rises and every slight reaches the self; purpose is esteem aligned with a cause beyond the self, I1+ directed by I2 with the witness kept, so that what rises or falls is the cause's standing and the person's rank is not in play, which is why purpose is self-reflective: the witness must be there to see the cause as not oneself while serving it. Status has two measured routes, dominance, taken by force or threat, and prestige, granted freely for competence and contribution (Measured; Henrich and Gil-White 2001; Cheng et al. 2013), and aspirations for wealth, fame and image go with lower wellbeing than aspirations for community, relationships and growth (Measured; Kasser and Ryan 1996); on this reading prestige is esteem a hat earns for its cause and dominance esteem the ego takes for its image (Interpretive; this would be wrong if people high in purpose defended their rank as hard as people high in dominance when the two were measured apart). The author distinguishes presence from integration: the tip alone is presence, awareness with no state under it, the meditative state of presence, at one with all, of section 6; the faces are integration, a state lived with the witness joined to it. The author's word for integration is theeling: thinking and feeling held as one while kept two, the same blend that is the ego when it goes unseen and integration when the witness is there, with witnessed compassion, felt concern directed by understanding, its clearest case (Interpretive). The author proposes that a world view is made the same way, by how a thought feels: whether it is in alignment, and to what it is aligned (Experienced and Interpretive). The feeling can mislead, since repeated, fluent or wanted statements feel truer (Measured; Hasher et al. 1977; Reber and Schwarz 1999; Kunda 1990), and a thought can feel aligned to a hat, the norm's comfort, or to the ego, appetite satisfied, as readily as to the centre; the feeling says whether, and only the witness says to what (Interpretive). The author concludes that truth is therefore alignment; on the reading above it is alignment with what is, the feeling being how it is found and the witness how one knows which alignment one has found (Interpretive). On the pyramid, the author's report that one comes back from the centre is then a return down a face into a state, the witness kept, and not a fall to the base that loses it; the witness still does not act, since on a face the person acts from the state with the witness joined to it, which is what witnessed compassion is, and why arriving at the tip is not the end of the work (Interpretive). Position on the pyramid

shows how far awareness is taken up at a moment, not how much awareness there is, since the eye is always there; what differs between people over time is movement, how readily and how quickly they come back to a face or the tip, which the practice of section 6 measures, and position is not rank: the tip is no higher than the faces (Interpretive). The author names a spiritual trap: whatever is perceived as egoic is labelled ego by an identifier that is also ego, and the wisdom that declines the trap is one more label, of positive polarity. On this account labelling is I2's act, so every label, "ego" or "wise", is a state on the triangle, of negative or positive polarity, and labels of labels stay at that one level rather than making layers of the ego; what notices is not a further layer but the awareness already present, which does not label (Interpretive). The trap closes when a label is used to escape: "that was my ego" disowning what one did, or ego for others and wisdom for oneself, the cut denied and the exempted self of paper IV at the scale of one person. Turned on another person the same label becomes a seal, every objection counted as the objector's ego and so as proof, which the author reads as a tactic of primal capture (below; paper IV, section 3). It is a paradox of level, a word and the act of saying it taken for one (paper III, section 2), and wisdom is not a better label but noticing without needing one, which is what the script of section 6 asks of a feeling, attention resting on it "without naming it or explaining it" (Interpretive). Taking up I3 is not dissociation. The defended row of the companion essay is feeling walled off from understanding; from I3 both are present and seen together, so refocusing through I3 re-associates what the state had split, scattered light gathered again to a point, which on this reading is the difference between decentering and detachment (for decentering, Bernstein et al. 2015). What I3 taken up provides is flexibility: staying in contact with what is felt and thought and still choosing, which acceptance and commitment therapy calls psychological flexibility and builds partly from an observing self, self-as-context, the witness under another name (Hayes et al. 2006); Schooler's (2002) meta-awareness is the nearest construct in consciousness science. In one more image, from the book section 4 drew on (McGilchrist 2009), the self is the master and the ego, the I as it acts in its states, is the emissary: sent into the states to act and return, it serves only while it remembers it is not the master, and identifies with a state when it forgets, which is the essay's closing advice in one picture; the witness is how the self keeps its emissary in view. Only the relation is borrowed; the hemispheres stay where section 4 put them. Jung's Self (above) is a parallel to the self and the impartial spectator (Introduction) to the witness; neither is an extra definition; this is an Experienced and Interpretive reading, not a measured claim.

The witness and the ego (Interpretive). The self is self-aware without the ego. Experience is given to itself as mine before any thought about it, the pre-reflective self-awareness that phenomenology keeps apart from reflective self-consciousness, in which the self is taken as an object (Measured; Zahavi 2005); that awareness is the eye always there, and it needs no I2. A perception of oneself is another matter: a state, I2 labelling what I1 feels, an image made and held. The looker cannot be its own object, and the ego is I1 and I2 taken for one, so every self-image, self-concept and measure of self-esteem is the ego's, the author proposes, and the hats are its material, the job, the nation, the faith named when asked who one is (paper IV, section 2). Part of esteem comes from those groups (Measured; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Luhtanen and Crocker 1992), which is why a slight to a hat is felt as a slight to the self, and why a hat matters in proportion to how far the ego has taken it in, its centrality (paper IV, section 2). The witness is the case between. It is the self looking at its own perspectives through I3: reflective, since it looks, and not identified, since what it looks at are its perspectives and not itself as an object. It makes no image, so it has no rank to defend, which is why the tip of the pyramid is no higher than its faces; the ego perceives a self and takes the image for itself, the witness sees the perspectives and knows itself as the one seeing. Even to say this is I2's act, so the saying is a momentary ego, and the return is to the witness, where there is only the now (Interpretive; this would be wrong if reports of witnessing could not be told apart, in the practice of section 6, from reports of thinking about oneself).

The ego posing as the witness (author's reading, Interpretive). A common trap in taking up the witness is the ego masking as the witness and judging itself as the ego: "that was just my ego", said with contempt, is one picture condemning another, and the condemning is the ego again. From the witness the whole movement is seen, judge and judged together, like a dog chasing its tail. Attention to oneself is of two measured kinds, rumination, driven by fear and self-doubt, and reflection, driven

by curiosity about the self (Measured; Trapnell and Campbell 1999); self-judgement dressed as witnessing has rumination's shape, and the witness is neither, since it makes no image to judge (Interpretive). This would be wrong if watching oneself in order to condemn the ego went with the same fall in distress as watching without judging.

The instigator and cognition (Interpretive, with the measured findings beside it). The ego in action is two things taken for one. The instigator is I1's part, the felt push that starts an act, and it takes I1's sign: at I1+ it instigates care, at I1− appetite or defence, and at neutral nothing. Cognition is I2's part, a process of attending, remembering and reasoning, neutral as I2 is; running without the instigator's self-directed push, it is what the author calls purity of mind. Deciding to concentrate is the instigator; the concentrating is cognition. Ego flattery is the instigator at the self-directed pole, with cognition serving the self-image, inflating or defending it: what psychology calls self-enhancement, "taking a tendentiously positive view of oneself" (Measured; Sedikides and Gregg 2008). As a standing habit it is narcissism, whose grandiose and vulnerable forms (Measured; Miller et al. 2011) would, on this map, be the appetitive and reactive forms of I1−, with grandiosity itself in two kinds, a reward-seeking kind, appetitive, and a defensive front, reactive (inflation and deflation, below; Interpretive; this would be wrong if no grandiosity went with sensitivity to threat, or if the vulnerable form went with the pursuit of reward). What the ego dislikes in another is often what it shelters or disowns in itself, Jung's shadow seen in someone else (Interpretive). The measured version is narrower: people who suppress thoughts of an unwanted trait in themselves see it more readily in others (Measured; Newman et al. 1997), and a threat to the self on one trait is turned onto stereotyped others on the same trait (Measured; Govorun et al. 2006). Not every dislike is a disowned trait. The author's proposed sign is the charge: dislike out of proportion to the harm is the instigator defending the picture, and dislike in proportion is understanding judging an act, which the companion essay takes up as judgement (paper II, section 5; Interpretive; this would be wrong if, with harm held equal, the strength of dislike for a trait in others did not track how strongly a person disowns it in themselves). The witness, through I3, sees the push and the process as two, and does not act (Interpretive).

The ego as a self-model (Interpretive, with the measured findings beside it). On this reading the ego is a working picture of oneself taken for oneself: the picture is cognition's work and the charge is the instigator's. Metzinger argues that nobody ever had or was a self; the self as experienced is an ongoing process, the content of a transparent self-model (Interpretive, a model; Metzinger 2003), a representation being transparent when it is conscious and cannot be experienced as a representation (Metzinger 2011). The essay's "taken for" is that transparency, and the witness discovered is the model seen as a model, the awareness having been present throughout (Interpretive). The charge has a social source: self-esteem behaves as a gauge of acceptance, falling when people were excluded from a group for personal reasons and not when the exclusion was random (Measured; Leary et al. 1995), so a threat to the picture registers as a threat of exclusion, the picture being checked against the social superego of paper IV (Interpretive). The picture lives in time. Gallagher separates a minimal self, without temporal extension, from a narrative self of personal identity and continuity across time (Interpretive, a model; Gallagher 2000); the ego is the narrative self with the charge in it, which is why it loosens in the now (Interpretive). Mind-wandering correlates with unhappiness and with activity in a network associated with self-referential processing, whose main hubs were relatively deactivated in experienced meditators (Measured; Brewer et al. 2011). The picture moves between two poles of its own, inflation and deflation (below): "I always ruin things" defends a picture as hard as "I get things right", so the measure of the ego is how much worth hangs on the picture, not how high it stands (Interpretive), close to the line Kernis draws between secure self-esteem and a fragile kind, contingent on outcomes and unstable (Interpretive, a model; Kernis 2003). The picture is also a line round what counts as mine, and drawn round a group it is the same process at a larger scale: people whose personal and social identities have become functionally equivalent are more willing to fight or die for the group (Measured; Swann et al. 2009). Seen as a model, the picture keeps its work, planning, remembering, keeping a promise, and loses its charge, which is purity of mind (above). The word "ego" has pointed both ways: James called the self as known "the Empirical Self or Me" and the knower "the Pure Ego"

(James 1890, chapter 10); the ego here is James's Me. The reading would be wrong if seeing a self-image as a mental event left its pull unchanged, if threats to the self-image that carried no social risk set off the same defence as public ones, or if defensiveness tracked how high self-regard stands rather than how contingent it is.

Self-reference is in borrowed words (Interpretive). Whatever a person can say of themselves is said in language, and the language was not made by the self. A picture of oneself that nobody handed over is therefore still built from material that came from others, down to the words used: all self-reference is in this sense memetic, carried in units that pass from person to person. This is why the ego can be captured. It is made of what can be said, so an idea that attaches to the picture is defended as the self: ego capture is memetic. The witness cannot be captured in this way, since it is not a statement about the looker but the looking, what is there before anything is said (section 8). The bare sense of being the one who is having this experience, the minimal self as against the narrative self (Gallagher 2000), is not a reference at all and needs no words. The claim follows from what language is, so it is nearer a definition than a finding, and it is offered as one.

The primal (Interpretive, with the measured findings beside it). The instinctive layer of Table 2 has had no name of its own in this essay, only other people's: the Id, the Child, the chimp. The author calls it the primal: the primal drive, the layer where the instincts reside. A person shares it with the animal of paper VI's range of beings (paper VI, section 7). It lies beneath feeling, and feeling is how it shows: panel B of Figure 1 draws it as the area inside the circle below the base, and below is on the page only, since position is not rank (above). The instigator (above) is the push that starts an act; the primal is where that push is born. The ego's words are borrowed (above) and its force is the primal's, which makes the primal almost the spirit of the ego: measured, it is instinct; lived, it is the force in "I want" and "mine"; one thing read two ways, transphysical in the sense of section 1. Freud saw the same dependence: his ego is a rider holding a stronger horse in check, and doing it with "borrowed forces" (Freud 1923, chapter 2). The primal is closer to Jung's shadow than to Freud's id. The id, on this essay's reading, is appetite alone (above). The primal holds care as well: it is the primal drive to protect one's children and to motivate legacy, the extension of self. The measured picture is as wide. Seven primal emotional systems, seeking, rage, fear, lust, care, panic or grief, and play, are "situated in homologous subcortical brain regions in all vertebrates tested" (Measured; Panksepp 2011), so care and play sit at the same depth as fear and rage. For the extension of self an older account and two measured ones agree in outline: James counted in a man's self "all that he CAN call his", his wife and children and his reputation and works among it (James 1890, chapter 10); inclusive fitness counts an organism's effects on its relatives along with its own offspring (Measured, a model; Hamilton 1964); and generative concern, concern for the generation that follows, was higher in fathers than in men who had never had children (Measured; McAdams and de St. Aubin 1992).

The extension of self at three widths (Interpretive). The extension of self is one movement at three widths. The primal extends the self to its young. The ego extends it to whatever it calls mine: the picture is a line round what counts as mine, and drawn round a group it is the same process at a larger scale (the ego as a self-model, above; Swann et al. 2009). And as awareness is witnessed, identity widens to include all life (the superego, fear and conscience, below), the width of the unividuual (paper VI, section 7). On this reading the primal is where the in-group paradox of paper IV (section 3) begins: care that stops at the edge of what is mine. The widest circle has its measure, identification with all humanity, which in the studies that introduced it predicted valuing the lives of in-group and out-group members equally (Measured; McFarland et al. 2012). The reading would be wrong if care for one's own kin and favour for one's own group were unrelated in people, or if those who identify with all humanity cared no less partially than those who do not.

The primal and the shadow (Interpretive, with older images beside it). The primal is not disowned by nature. Only a strict superego disowns it, and the primal, disowned, is the first part of the shadow, which therefore has a cause (the superego, below; paper III, section 5). Jung says as much of the shadow: it is "not wholly bad"; it holds "childish or primitive qualities which would in a way vitalize and embellish human existence", but, in his words, "convention forbids"; and "the less it

is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is" (Jung 1938/1969, paras 131 and 134). It "does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities" (Jung 1951/1968, para. 423). The image is old. Plato has Socrates model the soul as three creatures grown into one inside the likeness of a man: a "many-headed beast" with heads tame and wild, a lion and a man (Plato, Republic IX, 588-589; the three parts of the soul in the Republic are reason, spirit and appetite, Lorenz 2003/2024). Sufi teaching pictures the lower soul as a black dog which should "not be killed but merely tamed" (Encyclopaedia Britannica n.d.-b). The Tanya gives a person an "animal soul" in the left chamber of the heart and a "divine soul" in the brain, contending for the body "just as two kings wage war over one city" (Shneur Zalman of Liadi 1796, chapter 9). These are other traditions' names for what is called the primal here; they are images, not evidence. The reading would be wrong if care for the young had no primal system of its own and had to be taught by a circle, or if people raised under a strict prohibition of anger and desire saw those states in others no more readily than people raised without one.

Primal capture, and three uses of the word ego (Interpretive, with the measured findings beside it). There is not only ego capture but primal capture. In ego capture an idea attaches to the picture and is defended as the self (above): the borrowed words come first and take the feeling's force. In primal capture the primal has hijacked the mind: a drive comes first and takes understanding into its service, the instigator's push with cognition serving it and the witness absent (the instigator and cognition, above). Paper II lists the result among its states, in its words "Understanding sets the course and serves appetite or aggression" (paper II, Table 3). Freud drew it: the rider is often obliged to guide the horse where it wants to go, and so the ego is "in the habit of transforming the id's will into action, as if it were its own" (Freud 1923, chapter 2). Its measured relatives are that wanted statements feel truer (Measured; Kunda 1990) and that moral reasoning "is usually a post hoc construction, generated after a judgment has been reached" (Interpretive, a model with the evidence it reviews; Haidt 2001). Either way the end is the same fusion, feeling and understanding taken for one, which is this essay's ego. That is why the primal, once it has hijacked the mind, is so egoic in nature, and why spiritual teaching terms the primal ego. The word then has three uses, which are kept apart here. Freud's ego is the mediator, the reality-testing self of Table 2; his own word for it was das Ich, the I, as in the German title of Freud 1923, Das Ich und das Es. This essay's ego is the picture, feeling and understanding taken for one, James's Me (above). The ego of much spiritual teaching is wider and takes in the primal: one Sufi teaching text speaks of "the desires of the ego" and names a Commanding Self with, inside it, an Animal Self that "runs after sensual desires and material possessions" (Threshold Society 2002), and the Sanskrit ahamkara, "I-making", can also mean "excessive self-regard" (Encyclopaedia Britannica n.d.-a). So when a spiritual teacher says ego, the primal with the mind in its service is often what is meant: it is egoic while it holds the mind, and seen from the witness it is the primal, one aspect of the self among the others (below). In none of the three is the ego outside consciousness: the author's reading is that it is consciousness reading itself as separate, one pole of a pair whose other pole is the whole, and that a person first becomes aware of it in its resistance to the claim that the many are the one (Experienced and Interpretive; the Unifying Paper, part 2, A3). The distinction would be idle if the two captures could not be told apart: if, in the practice of section 6, people could not say whether a state that had taken them began as an urge or as an idea about themselves.

Passion (Interpretive, with a measured distinction beside it). The author adds, as a possibility, that the primal is the source of passion: the push at strength, held on one thing. Research on passion separates two kinds. Passion is defined there as "a strong inclination toward an activity that people like, that they find important, and in which they invest time and energy"; harmonious passion is "in harmony with other aspects of the person's life", and obsessive passion "creates an internal pressure to engage in the activity" and "causes conflict with other activities in the person's life" (Measured; Vallerand et al. 2003, four studies, more than 900 participants). The two have the shape of union and capture: a drive that keeps its place among the other aspects of the self (spiritual union, below), and a drive that has taken the person (above). The measure does not say where passion comes from, and in that research the difference lies in how an activity is taken into a person's identity, which is

nearer the picture than the primal; so the source stays the author's reading, offered as a possibility, and nothing measured here bears on it.

Spiritual union (Interpretive). Spiritual union, in the author's words, is that which unifies all aspects of the self in harmony: the primitive, the intellect, the balance between restraint and activity, the dance between the stationary and the motion. The witness sees all aspects of the self as is, and I3 is the view point. The dance is the in-breath and out-breath of the Supplementary Material (the Unifying Paper, part 2, A3), gathering and giving, in whose rhythm a person is whole; I3 is not one of the dancers but where the dance is seen from, and it does not act. Seen as it is, the primal is neither obeyed, which is primal capture, nor forbidden, which makes it shadow; it keeps its place among the others. Keeping it there is practice: the author's reading is that the primal is tamed by repetition and is transcended only in being seen, included and no longer in command (Experienced and Interpretive; paper IV, section 3, gives the Measured findings and the older texts). In this essay's own words the union is the soul, the whole person acting on both perspectives with the witness present (section 1), so "spiritual" in "spiritual union" has its wide sense, of the whole person, and not the narrower one the essay keeps for the felt side, I1. The word is old: yoga means "Yoking" or "Union" (Encyclopaedia Britannica n.d.-c). The classical aim given there differs, the spirit "freed from the bondage of matter", a union reached by leaving the primitive behind; this one includes it.

Inflation and deflation (author's reading, Interpretive, with the measured findings beside it). The ego has a polarity of its own, which the witness sees as one movement: inflation, self-bolstering, the "I'm always right" that keeps up a false esteem, and deflation, self-ridicule, the safety of a low picture, which parallels victim mentality (paper II, section 6). Both seek security: each secures the ego in a setting, a mode that keeps it consistent so as not to be dislodged. Inflation as a front has partial support: people high in explicit but low in implicit self-esteem were the most narcissistic and behaved most defensively (Measured; Jordan et al. 2003), though the wider view that grandiosity masks low self-worth has mixed results (Measured; Bosson et al. 2008). Consistency is sought even when the picture is low: people with negative self-concepts were more committed to spouses who thought poorly of them (Measured; Swann et al. 1992). Depression follows the deflating trajectory, as a matter of how it is lived and kept going, beside its biology (below): rumination predicted later depressive disorders, including new onsets (Measured; Nolen-Hoeksema 2000), self-criticism predicted rising depressive symptoms in ten of sixteen prospective studies of students, with weak to moderate effects (Measured; McIntyre et al. 2018), and self-compassion, the opposite stance, goes with less psychopathology (Measured; $r = -0.54$; MacBeth and Gumley 2012). On the map both poles are the reactive form of I1− turned on the picture, protection rather than gain, and the appetitive form is the rarer inflation that reaches for gain rather than cover (Interpretive). The security both poles seek is the witness's already, since it makes no picture to hold: the ego's security is consistency, the witness's is freedom to move, which is why from I3 a setting can change (Interpretive). The rigidity with which the ego holds its setting may itself be a spectrum, one that predicts a person's mental stability as well as their flexibility (author's reading, Interpretive). The nearest measured constructs point the same way: people high on ego-resiliency were more competent and comfortable in the "fuzzier" interpersonal world (Measured; Block and Kremen 1996), and the processes of psychological flexibility, recognising and adapting to changing demands, are absent in many forms of psychopathology (Measured, a review; Kashdan and Rottenberg 2010). The reading would be wrong if people who decentre more held as tightly to feedback that confirms their self-image, if self-ridicule did not predict depression beyond other known risks, or if how rigidly people hold their self-image predicted neither their mental health nor their flexibility.

The superego, fear and conscience (Interpretive). Three things that resemble one another are kept apart here. The superego is the rule. The resistance a person feels when they debate breaking a rule is the rule, taken in from family or culture, pressing back as fear of the penalty: what Fromm called the authoritarian conscience, the internalised voice of an authority, which he identified with Freud's superego (Fromm 1947). On this essay's reading it is not conscience, and it is only as good as its rule, since the resistance feels the same whether the rule is just or not. "I would not want that done to me" is fear as well: the self protecting itself, and reading its own threat into the other's place. Courage overturns both, so a restraint that rests on either lasts only while the fear does. Conscience is

positive. It goes with connection: as awareness is witnessed and identity widens to include all life, harm to another is felt as harm, without bias toward anyone and without first asking what one would want for oneself. This is how the essay reads Fromm's humanistic conscience, and it is the conscience the essay places at I1+ (Introduction); the positive pole of I1 is in this sense the pole of connection. Positive ego is the I1+ side of the ego, whether understanding is with it or not, and the author reports that it feels different from humanistic conscience (Experienced). As a univídual (the Unifying Paper, "The word") conscience is expressed maximally, and so is no longer needed as a voice that holds a person back: no one stands apart to be wronged, for all is all. The reading would be wrong if people who say they hold back for fear of the same being done to them held back as much once the risk to themselves was removed, or if concern for others grew no more even toward everyone as a person's sense of identity took in more of life.

Mental health, read through the perspectives (author's mapping, Interpretive, with the measured findings beside each reading). On the author's reading the mind's activity is transphysical, as I3 is (section 1): physical and metaphysical held as one. Every condition of mind then has two views at once, the measured view of its biology and the lived view of the ego, the I as it acts in its states. The author reads several conditions in the second view, as matters of how the ego is placed and whether it is seen from I3. The first view stays in force beside each reading, and nothing here is a diagnosis or a substitute for clinical care. Anxiety, on this reading, is an ego and a nervous, energetic system heightened in sensitivity to reality, without the perspective that one is not the mind. Depression is in part biochemical and in part an ego ill adjusted to its reality, held on the deflating side of the ego's polarity (above), and may also be a deficit in the metaphysical energy of the being, which no instrument measures and which stays the author's reading. The missing perspective has a measured counterpart. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy raised metacognitive awareness, the set in which negative thoughts and feelings are experienced as events in the mind (Measured; Teasdale et al. 2002), and across nine trials and 1,258 patients it lowered the risk of depressive relapse within 60 weeks by about a third (Measured; Kuyken et al. 2016). In borderline personality disorder the author reads a person overtaken by each state, with no perspective kept on the ego. Dialectical behaviour therapy and mentalisation-based treatment each reduced self-harm against usual care, on evidence of low certainty (Measured; Storebø et al. 2020), and both, on this reading, train a step back from one's own states. In bipolar disorder the highs and lows can be lived as the ego active and then inactive, or as the same loss of perspective. But a twin study put about 85 per cent of the variation in risk down to genes (Measured; McGuffin et al. 2003), so the reading describes how the swings are lived, and how much perspective is kept through them, not what drives them. Dissociative identity disorder the author reads as a partitioned ego. This is close to the structural dissociation model, in which trauma divides the personality into parts and the disorder is the most complex division (Interpretive, a model; van der Hart et al. 2006). Kastrup (2018) gives the same figure a cosmic scale, all living beings being "dissociated alters of cosmic consciousness"; taking up I3, which re-associates (above), is its reverse. Schizophrenia the author reads as a form of dissociation. The measured overlap is narrower. Dissociation goes with hearing voices (Measured; r about .52 across studies; Pilton et al. 2015, as reported by Wearne et al. 2018), but schizophrenia has more features than voices and was about 79 per cent heritable in the largest twin study (Measured; Hilker et al. 2018), so the reading holds for voices and goes beyond the evidence for the illness as a whole. The Dark Tetrad belongs to the harm states of the companion essay (paper II, section 6) and to paper IV (section 5).

Partition, possession and the words of the self (Interpretive, with the measured findings beside the reading). Trauma can lead the ego to partition itself so as not to feel the subjective self, the heart. Trauma is the cause, the partition is the defence, and the form each part takes comes from learned ideas and roles, since all self-reference is in borrowed words (above). Two accounts of dissociation that are usually set against each other then fit together. One review found strong empirical support for the hypothesis that trauma causes dissociation (Measured; Dalenberg et al. 2012). Another found that multiple identities occur under different names in many cultures and follow the expectations of those around the person, changing as the expectations change, and concluded that they are socially constructed (Measured, a review; Spanos 1994). The author reads

ego capture and possession as one phenomenon: a learned pattern runs the person while the witness is absent. In capture the pattern is taken for the self; in possession it is met as another. The event is transphysical (section 1). Its mechanism, how it operates, is the understood reading: the ego partitioned and a pattern acting. The subjective spirit, who has come and what it wants, is the lived reading, and takes the names the person's world gives it. Neither description cancels the other, and the spirit stays Experienced. Possession and trance are reported worldwide, and one review of 402 reported cases calls them a global idiom of distress (Measured; During et al. 2011). Where the form recurs across cultures, the author's reading is that the partitioned part, cut off from its own feeling, runs on fears that all people repress, the collective unconscious as paper III reads it (section 5), while the identities stay local. Three limits. The reading says nothing about states with a bodily cause, which a clinician has to rule out. It describes how such states are lived and shaped, and is no guide to diagnosis or treatment. And it would be wrong if the themes of possession, threat, intrusion and being controlled, varied across cultures as much as the identities of the spirits do, or if recovery from such states came with no gain in the stepping back that decentering measures.

The two views meet in both directions, which the author reads as an interplay of mind and biology within the transphysical, and that interplay as one process seen from two sides (Interpretive). Genes raise the susceptibility to the states without fixing it: identical twins share schizophrenia about a third of the time (Measured; 33 per cent against 7 per cent in non-identical twins; Hilker et al. 2018), and mania and depression share part of their genetic susceptibility (Measured; genetic correlation 0.65; McGuffin et al. 2003). What makes identical twins differ is in good part physical too: they carry a few genetic differences of their own (Measured; Jonsson et al. 2021), their epigenetic marks drift apart with age (Measured; Fraga et al. 2005), and twins with markers of a shared placenta were far more often concordant for schizophrenia than twins without them (Measured; about 60 against 11 per cent, estimated from placental markers; Davis et al. 1995). The twin figures divide genes from everything else, not the body from the mind (Interpretive). States act back on the body: the relief that expectation alone brings to pain was undone by an opioid blocker, which points to the body's own opioids (Measured; Levine et al. 1978), and recovery through cognitive behaviour therapy changed brain metabolism in a pattern unlike an antidepressant's (Measured; Goldapple et al. 2004), though a mindfulness course changed no brain structure in two trials (Measured; Kral et al. 2022). Read as causes, readings of this kind can leave a person feeling to blame and turn them away from treatment, most where the biology is strongest. What the essay offers is the perspective a person keeps on a condition, beside treatment and never in place of it. The reading would be wrong if, across conditions, a person's decentering, measured over time, predicted nothing about the course of the condition beyond the severity of its symptoms, or if its link with the course disappeared once the person's measurable biological risk, genetic or otherwise, was taken into account (Interpretive).

The figure read as the ego and the superego (Interpretive). Figure 1 can be read a second way, drawn in its panel B. The triangle is the ego: I1 and I2 taken for one, the felt and the understood fused into the one who acts and is defended, the emissary of the McGilchrist image above. The circle is the superego: the norm seen whole, the internalised average of how the people around a person behave that the cyclic reinforcement paper (paper IV) calls the social superego. The ego forms inside the circle and takes the superego up into its own formation, so there is no clean ego to defend; when the ego defends itself it defends the norm it was built from, which is why a threat to one's standing and a breach of one's norm feel alike, and why Freud's later account, in which the superego is a precipitate of the ego's identifications, is nearer this picture than the three agencies of Table 2. The ego also identifies with the hats it wears, the author proposes, the norms of its trade, nation and faith (paper IV, section 2): asked who it is, it names a job, a nationality or a faith, so that each becomes part of what it takes itself to be, and people fused with a group, whose personal and social identities have become functionally equivalent, are more willing to fight or die for it (Measured; Swann et al. 2009). I3 at the centre is what neither is: the point from which the triangle is seen as a construct and the circle as a cut, and a hat as a hat. The circle itself is read two ways in this essay, as Π seen whole from the centre and as the norm seen whole from the ego, and the two readings are a transjection, one circle from two stances, not a contradiction: from the centre the edge is where Π is focused into this person; from the ego the same edge is what this person's group has made of it. Taking up I3 is the

move from the second reading to the first without the edge changing. A person whose norm answers to their own conscience (I1+), deciding their own morals and applying them, has redrawn the circle from the centre, which is Fromm's humanistic conscience against the authoritarian one (paper VI, section 4), and can only be done from the stance from which the absorbed norm is visible as a norm. At the scale of groups the two shapes name two things often confused: unity is the circle, the whole a group's hats fit inside, and the triangle is a group's ego; seen from I3 the two are unividual, since the circle passes through the triangle's corners, and empire is the triangle taken for the circle, one group's ego imposed as the whole; and the cyclic reinforcement paper (paper IV, section 3) draws the consequence. This reading would be wrong if people who score higher on decentering were no more able to tell their own conscience from their group's norm than people who score lower.

A possible link to Panksepp's model (Interpretive). In the neuroscience of affect, primary processes are raw feelings, secondary processes are learning and memory, and tertiary processes are the higher cognitive forms of consciousness built on them (Solms and Panksepp 2012). Tertiary processes are cognition, so they resemble I2, not I3, and "higher" here means higher in the brain, not better. Reflecting on one's own feelings may nonetheless be a capacity that the witness needs. If so, tertiary-process reflection could be a precondition of taking up I3 without being I3 itself; the eye itself is always there (above). This is a suggestion, not a finding.

The three triads, side by side. Table 3 sets the essay's three triads, two languages, three modes of claim and three perspectives, beside each other; the rows line up loosely, not as equivalences, since a claim from any perspective can be made in any mode, and the modes classify claims, not people or places.

Table 3. The three triads the essay uses, side by side (Interpretive).

Triad	First	Second	Third
Languages	Spiritual: the felt account	Scientific: the measured account	Both held together: scientuality
Modes of claim (section 3)	Experienced: a report of what it is like; judged by honesty and consistency	Measured: a finding; judged by evidence, replication and effect size	Interpretive: a reading of how things relate; judged by coherence and usefulness
Perspectives of the I	I1, the felt perspective (subjective)	I2, the understanding perspective (objective)	I3, the witness's eye (transjective)

6. An experiential test of I3 (proposed)

An account by someone who had not read the essay (Experienced: another's report; the paper claims nothing from it). From "Eye of the Ship", a poem by Bonnie Antonette, written for the author in 2026, before the writer had read this essay, and given in full in the Supplementary Material (the Unifying Paper, part 2, A4): "I climbed and climbed, still fearing the below but as I climbed further, my worries began to low. To myself I thought the problems were still there, but then I second guessed as the less I cared. I could've been a giraffe up here as tall as I could climb. But little as a crow I was, sitting with a deeper mind. … The more I looked through the glass, it wasn't other ships but better friends at last. It's not really friends I mean, it's the thoughts that I have, the peace of observation, the space to think at last." The lines are a report, not a result.

The framework has a part that is tried, not measured. The companion essay's four hypotheses (paper II, section 7) can be tested with scales and behavioural measures; I3 is not measured here as a trait, and this section sets out a test any reader can run. Each report is Experienced, judged by honesty. The claim the test bears on, that more readers find a stance from which feeling and understanding are held together at the centre mark than at a matched control, is a claim about the distribution of reports, and would be Measured once run. A positive result would show only that figure and script elicit a stance of the kind the decentering literature describes (section 2), where a matched control does not. It would show nothing about a lens, π or what awareness is; nor is it Turing's (1950) test: that asks whether talk can pass, this whether a stance is taken up; the Supplementary Material (A3) extends the contrast to artificial systems.

Protocol. Four conditions, each about a minute, each followed by the same written report: (a) felt, (b) understanding, (c) centre and (d) outside, the control. Readers take one of four orders forming a balanced Latin square (a b c d, b d a c, c a d b, d c b a), each condition once in each position and once after each other; position is recorded. The drawing used is Supplementary Figure S13: Figure 1 with every word removed, with two identical marks, a small ring with a point at its centre, one at the centre of the figure and one outside the circle, to its right on the line through the centre, on no edge, seam or corner the figure draws, on two sheets so that on each the mark in use sits at the centre of the page. The figure is an aid to attention, not the object of the test: it gives attention a place, and the eyes then close, since what the test asks about is not seen with them. The script, read aloud or by the reader, is followed exactly:

(a) Felt. “Look at the coloured base of the figure. Close your eyes, and let your attention rest on whatever you feel right now, without naming it or explaining it. Stay with the feeling.” (b) Understanding. “Look at the top corner. Close your eyes, and let your attention rest on what you can say about what you feel: what it is, where it comes from, what it means. Stay with the thinking.” (c) Centre, on the first sheet, and (d) outside, the control, on the second, with one script for both: “Look at the mark at the centre of the page. Close your eyes, and let your attention rest where the mark was. Notice what is present.” The two conditions differ only in which sheet is on the table, so the words tell the reader nothing about what to find.

Report. After each condition the reader answers five prompts: what was present (feeling, thinking, both, neither); if a feeling was present, how near or far it seemed (a five-point scale, very near to very far; otherwise “no feeling present”); whether feeling and thinking could be held at once (yes, partly, no); what the place attention rested on was like, if there was one (empty, full, neither, or a word of your own); and one or two free sentences describing the minute. After each report the reader also completes the Toronto Mindfulness Scale’s decentering items, a state measure of that stance (Lau et al. 2006), so that the second prediction has a score for each condition. Two groups: one has only the drawing and the script; the other reads this essay first. Where a group can afford it, some readers are interviewed in Petitmengin’s (2006) second-person method, which draws out an experience’s structure while managing suggestion, and the interviews compared for recurring features (neurophenomenology; Varela 1996).

Closing: centring. After the fourth report, whatever the order, one more minute closes the session. The reader is shown the drawing of Figure 3 without its caption, with this script: “Look at the point at the centre. Close your eyes, and let your attention rest where the point was. Whenever you notice you have been carried off by a feeling or a thought, come back to the centre.” The reader then answers one prompt, whether they came back to the centre (yes and stayed; yes, more than once; carried off), and writes one or two free sentences. The step comes last so that nothing in it can tell the reader what to find in the four conditions. It is the practice of the second part in one minute, a demonstration of the witness, the self that comes back, not part of the comparison, and no prediction rests on it (Experienced). The lattice drawn in paper VII (section 7), in which every circle is the triangle in its circle with its own point of light, serves a reader’s own practice in the same way, with the same script; a group run keeps Figure 3, so that every reader has the same sheet.



Figure 3. The eye of the witness (Interpretive). The triangle in its circle of Figure 1, without words or colour, drawn three times around one point of light. Each circle is the inner circle of the triangle around it, so the drawing could go on inward or outward without end, and the point is the same at every scale. The point is the singularity, Π brought to a point in one person; the glow around it is the eye, I3, and the centre is where a feeling or a thought is seen from and come back to. Looking at the circles gives a flat eye, one looked at. Looking at the whole gives a further dimension, inward to the point and outward from it: an eye looked through, joining the inner view and the outer view as the edges of Supplementary Figure S12 do. In that reading the figure is transjective (section 2). It is an image, not evidence.

What would count. Three predictions are stated in advance, and a secondary fourth. First, more readers report holding feeling and thinking at once in the centre condition than in the outside condition, "partly" being coded with "no" so that only a clear "yes" counts; if the two do not differ, the effect belongs to resting attention on a mark, not to the centre. The two marks also differ in what surrounds them, the centre mark inside the circle and the triangle and the outside mark in open space, so a positive result may come from the surround rather than the centre; a third sheet, the mark at the centre of a plain circle, would separate the two and is the first follow-up if the result is positive. The author reads the lattice of paper VII as doing the same work as Figure 1, since each of its circles is the triangle in its circle (Interpretive); a second follow-up tests that reading, with the same mark at the centre of the lattice compared with the centre condition: the reading holds if the two differ by less than the smallest effect of interest set below, and fails if the lattice centre falls short by more. Second, the decentering score is higher after the centre condition than after the outside condition. Third, both differences appear in the group given only the drawing and the script; if they appear only in readers of the essay, expectation is the better explanation. Fourth, and secondary, more readers describe the centre as empty than the outside mark, in the forced choice or in their free sentences, coded blind. This bears only on the author's report that the centre is felt as hollow (section 5), not on the lens or Π: a success gives the picture the weakest support, since a hollow mark is one mundane explanation; a failure removes it; the main claim is untouched either way. The felt and understanding conditions are reference points, not tests: their scripts direct attention to one side, so fewer reports of holding both are expected there; that difference is not evidence. The planned analysis is a mixed model of each outcome with condition, position and group as predictors and reader as a random effect; the result is reported as proportions and means with their uncertainty, a Measured claim about reports; each report stays testimony.

What would count against. The claim loses its support if, in a run large enough to find the smallest effect of interest, the centre and outside conditions do not differ on either outcome, or if the differences appear only in readers of the essay. That smallest effect is set in advance: a difference of 15 percentage points in "yes" reports, and of 0.4 standard deviations on the decentering score, between the centre and outside conditions. A first run of about eighty readers, ten in each of the

eight cells, is a pilot with no power calculation claimed: a difference of that size or larger would show the predictions holding, and a smaller one would leave the question open rather than answered. A group run needs ethics approval and informed consent, and should be registered first; a reader's own use needs neither, and is a demonstration rather than a test, since every reader of the essay is in the group that has read it. None of this has been run.

A second part: practice (proposed). The session tests one minute; the author's report is about what repetition does (Experienced). Brought to the centre, one remains in a meditative state of presence, at one with all; with repetition, centring becomes automatic; the bliss state lasts longer; and when one becomes identified with I1, one recentres quickly. The same holds when engaging with technology: recentring brings one back to awareness instead of being caught up in the screen (Experienced). Readers who complete the session are assigned at random to ten weeks of daily practice, either the centre minute, condition (c) followed by the closing step, or the outside minute, condition (d), the same script on the other sheet, so that both groups practise a minute of attention a day and differ only in where it rests. The practice runs ten weeks because in a study of everyday habits automaticity took a median of 66 days to reach its plateau, with a range of 18 to 254, partly projected, among those whose data fitted the curve (Measured; Lally et al. 2010). Each day the reader logs three things: the intensity of presence after the minute, how at one one was with all (0 to 10, from apart from everything to one with everything); how long the state lasted afterwards, in minutes, as the reader judges it; and, for each time in the day the reader noticed being caught, in a feeling or in a screen, how quickly they came back (at once, within a minute, longer, or not at all). Once a week the reader also completes the four automaticity items of the Self-Report Habit Index (Gardner et al. 2012). At the start and the end of the ten weeks the reader also names, for one of their own groups, the things its members take for granted, and sorts a prepared set of statements about that group into norms and facts, the cyclic reinforcement paper's test of whether the witness sees a norm as a norm (paper IV, section 2); the lists and the sorts are scored blind. At the start and the end the reader also completes a brief measure of spiritual superiority (Vonk and Visser 2021), since a practice of the centre that raised it would have made the centre a rank. Coming back is the step meditation research calls shifting attention, one interval in a cycle that runs from mind wandering through awareness of it and shifting back to sustained attention (Measured; Hasenkamp et al. 2012). On the pyramid of section 5 the session's two outcomes read its two parts, holding feeling and thinking at once a face, a state witnessed, and the centre felt as empty the tip, presence; in the practice, the presence rating is the tip and the returns are movement on the faces, from a state toward the centre with the witness kept (Interpretive).

What would count in the practice, and against. If the author's report holds beyond the author, the centre group's automaticity rises faster and higher than the outside group's, its reported time in the state lengthens, its returns, from feelings and from screens alike, come sooner, its presence ratings rise, and it names more of its groups' assumptions as assumptions, with the sort more accurate (Interpretive). Its spiritual superiority should not rise; if it rises in the centre group more than in the outside group, the ego has taken the centre up as a rank, which counts against reading the centre as the witness's. If the two groups change alike, the change belongs to practising a minute of attention a day, not to the centre; if neither changes, the report does not generalise to readers who practise this way. Self-timed durations are estimates and every log is testimony (Experienced); the result would be Measured only as a difference between the groups.

A second method. The essays are written for the understanding; the drawing and the script are for the reader who will not read them. There is a third way in, older than both. Art takes a person to the centre with no script: the state the essay calls I3 taken up is reported more often from music, landscape and a face in a painting than from any argument, and a short film made from this series is planned as that method, not as an illustration of the papers (Interpretive). It carries the same test: whether the state a work induces reads as decentering on the scale used here. It may not. Absorption in a work and the stance of the witness can come apart, and flow, in which the self is lost in the doing, is not the same as the self seen; if the two measured as different, art would be a door to a neighbouring room and not to this one, which the reading would have to accept.

7. Objections and replies

- **"The source is introspection and informal observation."** True, and the position statement says so. Introspection can mislead and informal observation is open to bias, which is why the framework is offered to be tested, in section 6 and in the companion essay.
- **"This cannot be tested."** The Interpretive claims are labelled as such and are judged on coherence and usefulness. The experiential test is in section 6 and the measurable parts in the companion essay.
- **"Mixing science and spirit is a category error."** The essay does not ask either to do the other's job. Its labels exist so that a reader always knows which kind of claim is made.
- **"The parallel maps (Freud, Berne, Jung) are loose analogies."** Agreed. They are marked Interpretive and used to illustrate, not to prove; Freud's structural model in particular is dated, which is why contemporary dual-process and empathy research is set beside it in section 2.
- **"The left-brain and right-brain story is discredited."** The popular version is, and the essay says so (Nielsen et al. 2013); McGilchrist's claim about styles of attention is different, used here only as a parallel, with its limits stated.
- **"The I1, I2 and I3 scheme is only a relabelling."** In part: it is an organising scheme, and Interpretive, though section 5 says where it is more than that. What this essay tests itself is the central perspective, through section 6; the scheme's further testable content is in the companion essay: H1 (compassion at the seam of the two empathies), H3 (within-person variation in emphasis) and H4 (indifference and cruelty as different profiles). If the hypotheses all fail, the scheme should be kept, if at all, as a metaphor and not as a framework for arriving at the centre.
- **"The self is a model, so the aware self is one more model."** Metzinger holds that nobody ever had or was a self (Interpretive, a model; Metzinger 2003), and the essay agrees as far as the ego goes (section 5). It parts company at the centre: on that account the aware self would be one more content of the model, while the essay holds that it is the awareness in which models appear. Nothing measured yet decides between the two, and the difference is left open (Interpretive). Metzinger's own study of nearly contentless awareness reported in meditation, minimal phenomenal experience (Metzinger 2020), is where the two meet: it would favour the model reading if every such report carried some content of a self, a location or a sense of ownership, and the essay's reading if some carried none.

Risks of the framework

The framework could be misread in five ways: as presenting spiritual claims as findings, as encouraging people to skip medical or psychological care (nothing in either essay replaces clinical care), as taking the spiral, laser and lens images literally, as one person's view with a stake in it, or as treating arrival at the centre as the removal of the ego or the end of the work, when the state passes, the ego is what acts, and the certainty that comes with the experience is part of the experience rather than a verdict on it. Labels, the position statement and Limits reduce each risk but cannot remove it.

8. Discussion

This essay proposes a transjective framework in which scientific and spiritual accounts of human experience are held together as two views of one thing, provided every descriptive claim declares its mode: Experienced, Measured or Interpretive. Its contribution is a labelling discipline, an arrangement of three perspectives of the I, with the witness's eye, I3, at the centre, a picture of that eye as a lens with the singularity of consciousness at its focal point, and an experiential test each reader can try. The companion essay (paper II) applies it to empathy and compassion, with four

hypotheses that can fail: H1, compassion sits at the seam of the two empathies; H2, labelling transfers; H3, within-person variation in emphasis; and H4, indifference and cruelty are different profiles. The later papers carry it further: to paradox (paper III), to the norms families and cultures pass on (paper IV) and to artificial intelligence (paper VI).

The singularity of consciousness: the cosmology the essay carries (Interpretive and Experienced). The cosmology is given in full in the Unifying Paper (part 2, A3). Figure 1 shows a ring at the centre of the perspectives, a point of light within it and a circle through the three corners. The author reads the circle as π, universal consciousness, seen whole; the ring, I3, as the eye through which π passes in one person; and the point as the singularity of consciousness, its focal point: π brought to a point in one person, the aware self of section 5. A life, as it is lived, is that point: life is π brought to a point, the singularity of consciousness; as it is measured, life is the lens, the body that does the focusing; looked through, the same lens is I3, the witness's eye (Interpretive). The self is π emanated, the same in all, which paper VI names unividual (section 7): one awareness present whole at a point, the individuation being the lens and not a second awareness. All is one and the one are many, each self a fractal of universal consciousness, connected to the others through the singularity (Interpretive: the cosmopsychist reading placed below, named here and not argued). Schrödinger (1944, Epilogue) reached the same point from physics: "consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown", the plurality "merely a series of different aspects of this one thing"; the author reads this as a kindred thought, not as evidence. Through the lens of I3 the everything resides: π does not only pass through the eye but is at home in it, as light is at home in a lens that neither makes nor keeps it; so the eye is not the light: I3 is a window, and what passes through it is awareness itself (Interpretive). π is a mark, not a name (the Unifying Paper, part 1, section 3): what it marks is beyond words and thought, and the essay uses the mark so as not to pretend otherwise (Interpretive). Wherever π appears in this essay it is the mark; the number is meant only where a theorem is cited, and the two are never one claim. "The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way; the name that can be named is not the constant name" (Laozi, chapter 1, trans. Lau 1963). The centre is therefore polycentric: every lens has its own focal point, so there are as many centres as persons, and π focused in all of them; the count is of the lenses the essay can see, and is a lower bound, and whether π is focused elsewhere, in the animal or the stone, is asked in the Supplementary Material (the Unifying Paper, part 2, A3) as a question no test answers, and paper VI (section 7) carries it across the range of beings. Arriving at the centre means arriving at the self, π brought to a point as oneself, not at a single centre of everything. The I is a vantage, not an owner: at the centre the vantage falls away, and what remains is awareness itself, with no I standing apart from it (Interpretive); that is the self merged with the all, and the author's report is that one comes back (Experienced). The light at the point is gathered from all directions and given in all; the lens works both ways. From that follows a further reading, the singularity of the all and the many, a polycentric singularity: every lens focusing π to its own point, and the lenses joined by the light they exchange, with a value commitment drawn from it; both are in the Supplementary Material (A3, Figures S5 to S11). These are readings of the picture, from the author's own experience: no hypothesis depends on them, the test in section 6 touches them only in its secondary prediction, and the essay still does not say what awareness is.

Where the picture sits (Interpretive). The lens image is a filter picture with relatives in the consciousness literature. James (1898) proposed that the brain may transmit consciousness rather than produce it; Huxley (1954) called the brain a reducing valve; Kelly et al. (2007) revived the transmission view; and Kastrup (2018) argues in the Journal of Consciousness Studies that individual minds are dissociated parts of one universal consciousness. Cosmopsychism makes the metaphysical claim outright: the cosmos is the one fundamental subject, and individual subjects derive from it (Shani 2015; Goff 2017). The image borrows the shape of these views, π and many lenses, and states their claim once, as a reading, without arguing it: it says nothing about how one consciousness becomes many, the combination problem, and is not an account of what consciousness is. The witness itself has an older literature: the witness-consciousness of Advaita Vedānta, defined and defended in the same journal by Albahari (2009) and examined by Fasching (2011), where "witness" names the constant awareness that this essay calls the self, its witness being the act of looking, the

words inverted and the structure the same; Deikman's (1996) "'I' = awareness", identifying the sense of I with awareness itself; and Forman's (1998) pure consciousness event. Advaita also has the structure of the centre, in its three bodies and in turīya, the fourth that is not a fourth state; that reading, and a second number, the golden ratio, as an image of the self, are in the Supplementary Material (A3), and nothing here depends on them. The self and the witness of this essay are closer to these than to any filter theory, and I3 taken up closest to decentering (section 2), which is why section 6 tests a stance and not a picture. The picture carries the labels it does, Interpretive for the reading and Experienced for the report from the centre, because that is all the essay can claim for it; its one Measured contact is section 6's secondary prediction, which bears on a report of emptiness and nothing else.

The figure itself (Interpretive, with the objection's observations Measured). One objection to the figure belongs here. The recurrent geometric images people see with the eyes closed, under pressure on the eyes or in trance, Klüver's form constants, lattices, cobwebs, tunnels and spirals (Measured; Klüver 1966), have been derived from a model of the functional architecture of the striate cortex (Interpretive; Bressloff et al. 2001), so a sceptic can say that a circle with a centre recurs across cultures because every human cortex produces it, and that awareness need not come into the account. The reply is that this explains the content and not the appearing. Every form constant in that literature is a report, and a report has a witness, so the measured data are Experienced claims before they are anything else; awareness is required, or nothing is witnessed. From the understanding, the lens produces the figure, the cortex drawing its own geometry; from the witness, the figure appears, to a point that is not in it, which is Wittgenstein's point that the eye is not found in its visual field (Wittgenstein 1921/1961, 5.633) and the looker of section 5, which sees of itself only its perspectives. The two readings are the figure from its two sides, and this essay's figure is the one that puts the point in the drawing. Nothing counts against the statement that awareness is required for witnessing: it is true by definition, so it sits outside the modes and is not evidence. What it secures is that no account of the figure can leave the witness out; it does not secure that the awareness at the point is one awareness in many lenses, which stays Interpretive. The test that would separate the readings has not been run: whether congenitally blind practitioners of centring report a centre and a surround, which the cortical account does not predict and the author's proposal does.

Limits. The framework comes from one author's introspection and informal observation, and no new data are reported. Most of the essay is Interpretive, and the scheme of perspectives (I1, I2, I3) has measurable content only through the hypotheses of the companion essay (H1, H3 and H4; H2 tests the labelling discipline itself); the experiential test in section 6 is the only way offered here to try I3, and it rests on each reader's own report. The parallels (McGilchrist, Freud, Berne, Jung) are analogies, and the brain basis of the divided-brain story is contested. The religious material, placed in the Supplementary Material, is brief and comparative: two Buddhist images (the Wheel of Life, Supplementary Figure S4, and Indra's net), Advaita's three bodies and turīya, the chakras and third eye of the yogic subtle body, Laozi, Eckhart and the bliss states of A3; it does not claim to represent any tradition's own account, and does not engage theology in depth. The essay does not say what awareness itself is; it works with the aware self, awareness as it appears in a person. The framework and most of the cited evidence come from Western settings and may not generalise to other cultures.

What would change the view. If readers of the script in section 6 report holding feeling and thinking at once no more often at the centre mark than at the control, with no difference on the decentering measure, or only when they have read the essay first, the claim that the centre mark helps a reader take up I3 loses its support. If, in the practice, the centre group grows no more automatic, stays in the state no longer and comes back no sooner than the outside group, the author's report of what repetition does loses its support. If the hypotheses of the companion essay (H1, H3 and H4) failed, the scheme should be kept, if at all, as a metaphor and not as a framework for arriving at the centre.

Next steps. The experiential test can be tried by any reader now, as a demonstration; as a test it needs readers who have not read the essay, and their reports compared. Its second part, ten weeks of

daily practice against a matched practice, needs a group willing to keep a short daily log. The measured tests are in the companion essay (paper II, section 7). Others are invited to test, extend or refute any part.

One way to close, in the author's words: "Be careful not to identify with the state you are in, for the achievable transcendental mystery of the centre of all is but a moment of experience away from realising." That is advice, outside the modes; on the reading above, the centre of all is π, and the moment is one's own focal point. Section 6 is the way offered here to try it. Science asks how far we can measure; this essay accepts that some of what matters is met by living it, and the two together are more honest than either alone. Measurement comes closer to experience without end and does not arrive, which is the shape of a limit. On this reading, science and the spiritual are not rivals because one is the approach and the other is the point, and the point is only ever reached from the stance that sees the approach whole, which is arriving at the centre (Interpretive). What the framework arrives at can be said in a phrase: the felt is subjective, the understood is objective, and consciousness, brought to a point through the lens of a person, is transjective: the transjectuality of consciousness.

Your centre, our centre, the centre of all.

Declarations

Competing interests. The author founded Centricity, a community project about neighbours sharing tools, skills and help. It is a separate project: it pays the author no salary or other income, and it is not part of the arguments or hypotheses in this essay and does not depend on it.

Funding. No funding, grant or employer support was received for this work.

Ethics. No new data were collected from human participants. No ethics approval was needed.

Permissions. "Eye of the Ship" is quoted in section 6 and reproduced in full in the Supplementary Material (the Unifying Paper, part 2, A4) with the permission of its writer, Bonnie Antonette.

Use of AI. Generative AI (Claude, from Anthropic; Sonnet 5.5, Opus 5.5 and Fable 5.1) was used to help draft and edit the text, for consistency and reference checks, and to render the figures. The model also contributed the design details of the experiential test in section 6, among them the control condition, the two groups, the report prompts, the use of the Toronto Mindfulness Scale's decentering items, the analysis plan and the pilot of about eighty readers. It also worded the script of the closing step, and proposed the passage on art as a second method (section 6), including its caveat that absorption and the witness's stance may measure differently. It raised the form-constants objection to the figure (section 8) and proposed the test with congenitally blind practitioners. It also proposed the check on spiritual superiority in the practice (section 6). On the side of Figure 1 joining I1+ to I2, it placed compassion on the upper part, where understanding directs the feeling. It also designed the norm-naming measure in the practice (section 6), paper IV's H8. On 8 November 2026 it also proposed, in discussion, the reading of Jaynes's bicameral mind in section 4: the voice as the circle of Figure 1 heard from outside the triangle, Jaynes's consciousness as the ego, the broad mode commanding the narrow on the map of section 4, the reading of Block and Dennett's dispute, and the paradox of taking the metaphor's "I" for the looking. It also proposed the reading of what a thought can feel aligned to, a hat, the ego or the centre (section 5). The author reviewed all content and takes full responsibility for it.

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