

WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE ME

Exercises in Radical Subjectivity

Superstition?

In medieval times, (it is said that) people believed that mice are born from dust-bunnies in dark corners. Will the belief that consciousness derives from brain-matter once appear as a similar superstition?

If consciousness is NOT emerging from matter how can we investigate it? **Reverse the direction of gaze and start from the subjective side!**

Consciousness is a first person reality.

It can only be investigated by "subjective research": We can introspectively distinguish between different levels of operative or ordinary mind and Background Consciousness (or Basic Consciousness).
• Ordinary mind is what perceives, thinks, feels, dreams, shapes our world, makes us act;
• Basic Consciousness or Pure Presence is where it all arrives and is observed to arrive – Basic Consciousness cannot be observed: it is THAT which ultimately observes, an open non-dual background.
• It is not a thing, it is cognizant SPACE. Trained meditators / mental investigators can become aware of it.

Introspection is an activity based on method like science or artistic practice: not everybody is equally capable. But it can be trained.

Logics and Topology of the inner world are different.

Subjective experience exists only in the Present.

There is nothing but experience. Experience happens in the present. The objective world is part of the subjective world.

The double nature of consciousness.

I can observe myself. In the realm of consciousness circularity is not vicious: it is not tautological nor creating short circuit. It is inherent: I see and I am aware that I see. Full Consciousness (consciousness comprising all levels) is intrinsically reflexive. It is „double“: it recognizes and recognizes THAT it recognizes. This presupposes a dimension of mental space or DEPTH. I AM (aware) THAT I AM

The objective world seems solid, located and limited.

The subjective world is fluid.

It has no fixed location or natural borders. Buddhists call this fluidity and openness „emptiness“ (a misleading term).

Every solid in the universe is ready to become fluid on the approach of the mind, and the power to flux it is the measure of the mind. If the wall remains adamant, it accuses the want of thought. To a subtle force it will stream into new forms, expressive of the character of the mind.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Essays.

Leap of faith?

Outer and Inner Research: Both sides start with a first leap of faith. Outer science: Creation *ex nihilo*? Reliability of perception and measurement? One thing is indispensable: **Trust the given and proven methods!** Inner research does not require an act of faith. But just as well: **Trust the given and proven methods!**

Ask the experts – as we do in other sciences! There are experts in introspection. We can find them everywhere, but the most sophisticated methods and we find in Asia. Particularly in Advaita and Dzogchen we find the nature of consciousness described in spatial terms. But not only there:

Durch alle Wesen reicht der eine Raum: Weltinnenraum. Die Vögel fliegen still durch uns hindurch. O, der ich wachsen will, ich seh hinaus, und in mir wächst der Baum.

Through all beings reaches this single space: world's inner space. The birds fly silently through us. O, me who wants to grow I look outside and the tree grows inside of me.
Rainer Maria Rilke: Es winkt zu Führung fast aus allen Dingen (1914) (own translation)

Depth

Reversal of the burden of proof: Instead of: "does consciousness exist?" we ask: "in which way does the world exist for myself?" The answer turns out differently depending on the depth level of mind in which I abide at the moment.

My world-view changes from moment to moment.

The deeper you go the wider it gets. The subjective world is spacious: I can dwell on different levels although all levels are there all the time. The depth of focus of my consciousness varies constantly.

Introspection can go deep. On the deepest level reality is no longer experienced as "real", the subject is no longer separate from what is experienced: inside and outside merge.

Even sceptics like Freud have an inkling. He talks about an *oceanic feeling*, experiencing oneness with the universe. But he considers it an immature remnant of the child's consciousness that has not yet developed a separate self. Instead of deeming it childish one could as well consider it a matured return to a non-dualistic mode of mind. We find testimonies of it with the finest artistic, philosophical and scientific minds.

The depth experience has an inclusive quality: it automatically entails an ethical stance. As moral intuition it manifests on all other levels of consciousness. It is part of our human constitution.

LANGUAGE and Inner Research

When I use my language I have already left the strictly subjective realm. We normally reside on the border between subjective and objective world.

Consciousness: which consciousness?

- attention
- cognition
- awareness
- immediate experience,
- self-awareness
- unfocussed presence
- Background Consciousness
- pure contentless Presence?

Language translates Depth into Surface.

The ambiguity and vagueness of terms like "consciousness" are not a weakness of language but an advantage, mirroring the fluidity of concepts, particularly those concerning the inner world.

Poetic and philosophical language does not define, it gives hints. It can lead beyond conceptual thinking. It can point to a flavour: how it is "be in depth". To become more conscious of what it is like to be Me.

Zeit eilt zum Ort
(Time hurries to the place)
Hölderlin

Es ereignet sich aber das Wahre
(But that which happens is truth)
Hölderlin

Speaking in the first person

The problems arising from First-Person or Inner Space are of a different nature than problems of the third person object world. They cannot be solved – once for all – by theory. They cannot be solved by any other person but myself. They cannot be "solved": either they dissolve when I discover: I asked the wrong question, or they are not a question to be answered but a situation to be mastered.

I am I. This is not a tautology when we put it in context: E.g. when a child asks "why am I I and not someone else?" - isn't this the beginning of philosophy? The name of the god of our ancestors was: I am who I am / I am that I am, I am; I am. I am being me. Why did nobody conclude: I am God – and so is everybody else?

Wherever I am – I am the centre of the world.

My subjective world is concentric.

Everything starts from here.

Being I-centered does not mean "egocentric". On the contrary, I understand that everybody else is the centre of their own world. So necessarily they will have a different view on almost everything. With a sense of depth or openness I will arrive in layers where deep connectedness can be experienced.

Why does this not lead to a solipsistic world view?

Bridging the gap: The second person

Language knows: The gap between first and third person is bridged by the second person: **We are naturally endowed with empathy (some more, some less). I and the other are profoundly interdependent.** The radically subjective view accommodates that: The second Person is included in the first person Space.

The Blindness of Consciousness for Itself

What is left: I minus all I perceive, think, dream, project: I am still there!

Il y a un trou dans le réel:
I am my world. I am the centre of my world. I am Seeing itself, I think, I see, I hear, I taste, I feel, I smell, ... I can see the world but I cannot see my face. **I am the blind spot of my world.** It is where all perceptions arrive.

Most people are conscious but consciousness-blind.

They have mental presence but are not aware of presence / consciousness as such. It takes special methods for a fish to discover what water is. It takes special methods for human beings to discover what consciousness is.

Mirrors

There are methods to overcome the invisibility of my face: there are mirrors. I can learn to understand the way mirrors work.

Who I am is mirrored by my environment. Others are a mirror to me.

There are introspective methods that allow me to see: I am the 3-D screen or mirror in which the world appears.

Outer world: It only takes two mirrors to create an image of infinity.
Inner world: When my mind recognizes Basic Mind I experience infinity.

What is the USE of this research?

Inner knowledge is NOT ethically neutral. The Delphic "Know thyself" is a precise advice.

Inner knowledge changes the person who does the research.

By life experience, mental training or spontaneous openness I can develop personal qualities like inner spaciousness, furthering inner growth and flexibility: *Gelassenheit*, humour, poise, compassion, humbleness ...

Radical subjective research can lead to a radically different world-view and attitude.

Like in science, serious inner research can have its dangers too.

Unprepared and without sound methods and guidance one can go astray: instead of inner maturity one can end with inflated ego, escapism, mental illness – or confusion. For deeper research an experienced guide is required.

nihilum plenum

There is a hole in reality I am the hole

I can see the world and my body – I cannot see my face I am the hole in the middle I am space?

white hole eating events sucking up time

I am the Space where things take place I am nothing but I Am, I stay, diaphanous, I allow whatever wants to enter and play

Time is my tool Time is my pointer, my reading-ray I gaze and possibilities coagulate and crystallize into reality-display

I am the seer and the seen I am the total screen allowing everything: becoming, revelation, error and decay

infinitely hospitable mirror how can I stay clean?

how can I stay?

I am you and you are me and we are all together

The Beatles

Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten.

Wittgenstein

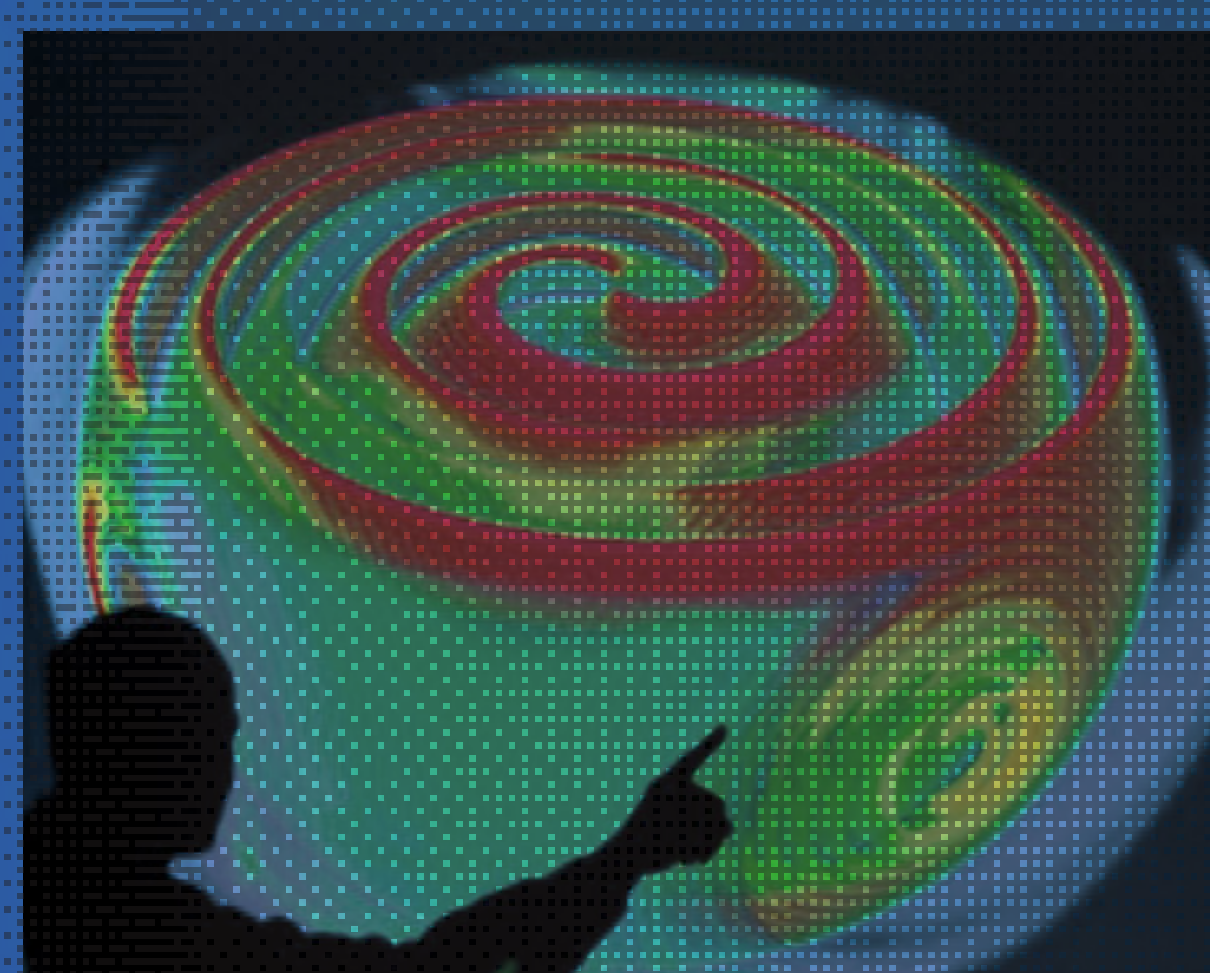
To integrate consciousness into science, radical ideas may be needed.

David Chalmers, TED 2014
How do you explain consciousness?

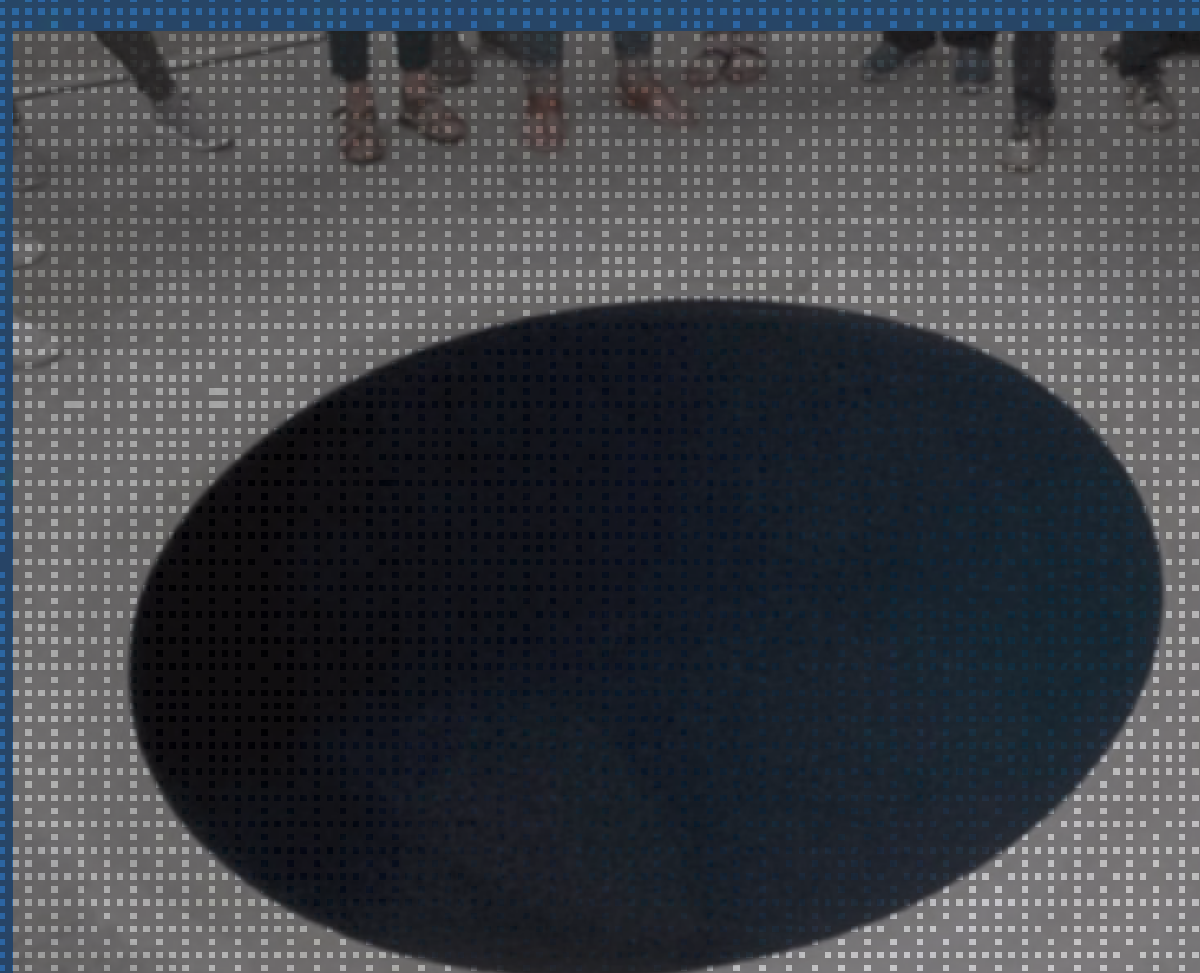
Consciousness is not a something, but not a nothing either.

Wittgenstein 1953 Remarks on the Philosophy of Language, Vol 1, p 22

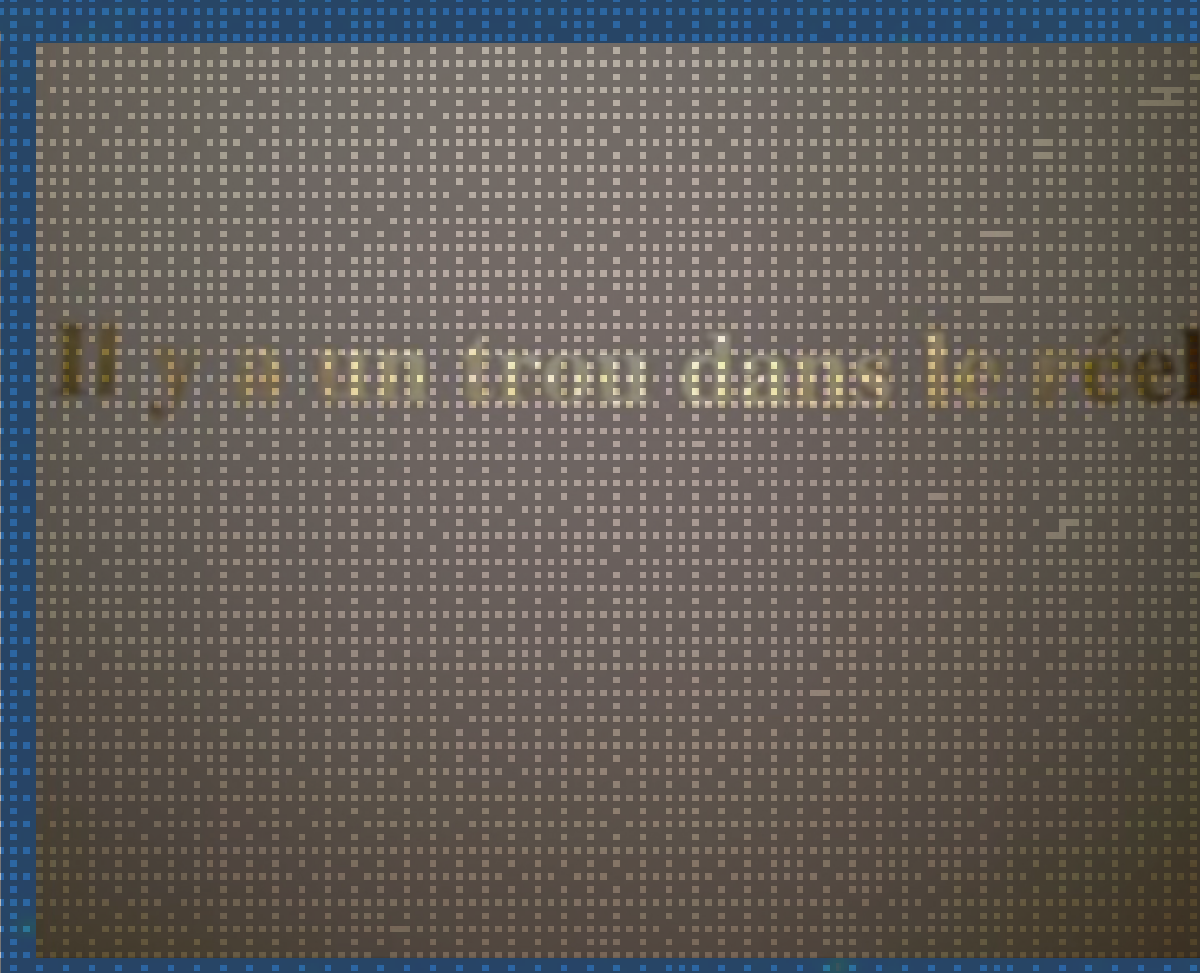
Stream of consciousness



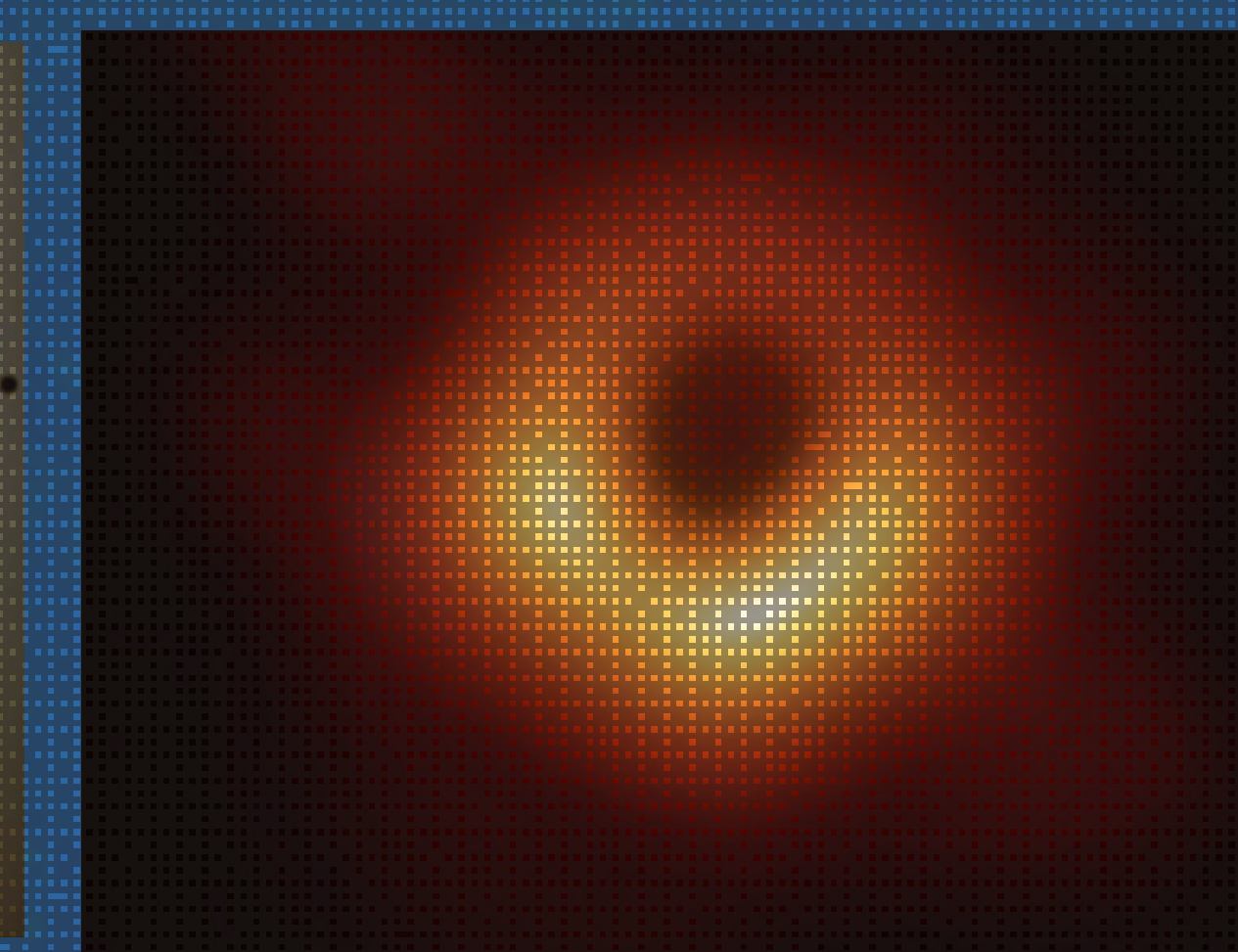
Delle in der Raumzeit



Anish Kapoor



Dora Garcia / Gulbenkian Foundation, Paris
2016: Festival of Uncertainty.



Schwarzes Loch