

Consciousness

Brain, Soul, Spirit and the Question of God

An Evangelical and Scientific Exploration



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About This Edition

An extensive evangelical essay on consciousness, the brain, soul and spirit, historical and contemporary theories, influence, artificial intelligence and Revelation 13.

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With four infographics, nine tables and 50 sources. Biblical interpretation, empirical findings, philosophical models and the essay's own inferences are distinguished. Source review in the original edition: 19 October 2026. English translation of the supplied Dutch edition.

The cover is an AI-generated photographic illustration. The four infographics are original schematic visualisations, not brain scans or validated diagnostic instruments.

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Introduction

Consciousness is the familiar yet puzzling reality that we experience something. A person does not merely process light waves, but sees the colour of the evening sky. He does not merely register bodily damage, but feels pain. He can ask whether his thoughts are true, whether his actions are good and whether God is addressing him. This inner dimension of life is easily lost when human beings are described solely as information-processing machines. Nor is it explained simply by attaching a spiritual label to it.

This essay defends an evangelical Christian understanding of the human person as an embodied, personal and responsible creature, made in God's image and dependent on his grace. Within this understanding, the brain is no enemy of the soul. The central thesis is that consciousness in our present life is deeply intertwined with bodily processes, while the ultimate relationship between experience, matter and person remains philosophically contested. The Christian expectation of life with God and bodily resurrection rests on God's promise, not on laboratory evidence already establishing a free-floating consciousness.

Four questions guide the inquiry. What do we mean by consciousness? What do neurophysiological findings show, and what do they not show? What place do soul, spirit, freedom and faith have within this discussion? And how should we approach influence, artificial intelligence and the speaking image in Revelation 13? The scientific discussion includes classic studies and selected publications up to and including 19 October 2026. This is a focused, critical literature review, not a preregistered systematic review.

The supplied documents belong to different genres. The column on consciousness as proof of God presents an apologetic position. *Tinkering with Consciousness*, from 2010, offers a pastoral and polemical assessment of consciousness-altering techniques. The *Front Room* is explicitly fiction. The supplied neurotheological EPUB presents a broader synthesis. Their questions are taken seriously; their

conclusions are not automatically adopted. Throughout this essay, data, explanatory models, philosophical arguments and statements of faith are clearly distinguished. [2, 3, 4, 5]

1 What Consciousness Means

The most useful general definition is that consciousness means having subjective experience. There is something for the being concerned to experience: a colour, sound, thought, desire or pain. This is a modest description. It does not explain where experience comes from, but clarifies what we are trying to understand. Consciousness is not the same as intelligence. A system may perform complicated calculations without thereby establishing that it experiences anything. Conversely, a person with limited intellectual abilities may experience pain, joy and closeness in full measure. [6, 12]

In medicine, being conscious often has a more practical meaning: being awake and in some way aware of oneself or one's surroundings. Researchers therefore distinguish wakefulness, the content of experience and the ability to report it. These do not always coincide. A dreamer may experience a great deal without responding normally to the environment. A paralysed patient may understand more than the body can demonstrate. The term unconscious therefore requires an explanation of what has actually been assessed. [20, 43]

Self-awareness is a further capacity: someone can recognise himself as the one who experiences, acts and has a life history. Not every conscious experience requires an elaborate account of oneself. A child can feel pain before being able to speak about identity. Attention and consciousness are also distinct. Attention selects information; conscious experience is what appears. Their relationship matters, but does not justify using the two words interchangeably without further explanation.

A simple example helps in everyday discussion. Someone absorbed in a book may process traffic noise without noticing it. A sudden car horn enters experience prominently. Afterwards, the reader can explain that

it startled him. These are different steps: processing, attention, experience, memory and report. A theory that explains one step well has not thereby explained all the others. A clear definition prevents a spectacular demonstration from quietly answering a different question.

Table 1 Terms That Ask Different Questions

Term	Working definition	Example	Not the same as
Consciousness	Subjective experience	Experiencing pain	Intelligence
Wakefulness	State of alertness	Opening the eyes	Clearly demonstrated understanding
Self-awareness	Experience of oneself	I am the one who is looking	Every sensory experience
Conscious access	Availability for use	Describing an image	The entire inner world
Conscience	Moral judgement	Guilt or confidence	All conscious processing
Soul and spirit	Biblical and theological concepts	Life and relationship with God	A measurable brain region

The essay's conceptual framework, drawing on sources 1, 6, 12 and 13. Definitions depend partly on discipline and context.

2 Investigating an Inner World

One's own experience is directly accessible to the experiencing person. In another person, scientists have access primarily to behaviour, language, physiology and brain activity. They combine these data. For example, a participant says that he saw an image, identifies it at above-chance levels and shows a corresponding activity pattern. A single measurement is less convincing than agreement between several independent indicators. Yet reporting remains fallible: people may forget, misunderstand or overestimate their certainty.

EEG records electrical potential differences at the scalp associated with collective brain activity. It is not a microphone for individual thoughts. Functional MRI measures changes in blood oxygenation, thereby

providing indirect information about activity. A brain scan with coloured patches is a statistical representation, not a photograph of a soul, belief or hidden intention. Temporal resolution, spatial localisation, movement and analytical methods limit the inferences that can be drawn. [15, 48]

A correlation is an association, not a complete explanation. If a particular pattern appears whenever someone sees something, it may belong to the experience, but also to attention, remembering the task or preparing a response. Experiments that do not require reports try to separate some of these processes. Stimulation and lesion studies may provide stronger evidence that a mechanism matters, but they too have limitations: a change can affect an entire network.

The contrast between being able to measure consciousness and being unable to measure it at all is therefore too crude. Aspects and indicators can be investigated, with acknowledged uncertainties. There is no universal consciousness meter that immediately settles the question for every human, animal or device. For Christian readers, this is no reason to distrust every scan. It is an invitation to state precisely what a measurement means before deriving an understanding of the human person from it.

Infographic 1 Four Questions About Consciousness

Four questions about consciousness

Distinguishing concepts prevents exaggerated conclusions

1 · Experience

Is there something for this being to experience?

2 · Access

Can information be used for thinking and action?

3 · Reporting

Can the being show or describe what it experiences?

4 · Ontology

How do experience, brain and person relate?

One test does not automatically answer all four questions. Sources 6, 12, 20 and 48.

The essay's conceptual framework, drawing on sources 6, 12, 20 and 48. Not a scale for ranking persons.

3 Consciousness Is Not the Same as Soul or Spirit

Consciousness is a modern umbrella term for a number of experiential and cognitive phenomena. Biblical words for soul and spirit have a different history and a broader range of meaning. In Genesis 2, the human being is formed from dust and receives the breath of life; he becomes a living being. The passage offers no neuroanatomical description and identifies no particular brain mechanism. It confesses the living person's dependence on the Creator. [1]

The Hebrew *nephesh* can refer, among other things, to life, person, desire or the living being. Depending on context, *ruach* may mean wind, breath, the human spirit or God's Spirit. In the New Testament, *psychē* and *pneuma* likewise have ranges of meaning that must be determined

passage by passage. A glossary alone cannot establish a Christian understanding of humanity. We must read what the writer means in that particular place, rather than treating every occurrence as a technical component of a three-part apparatus.

Conscience is not synonymous with consciousness either. Conscience concerns moral judgement: awareness that an action is right or wrong, often accompanied by guilt or confidence. Hebrews 9:14 concerns cleansing the conscience, not a modern theory of subjective experience. This clarification matters in relation to the supplied 2010 article, where translating the term as consciousness can easily lead to a broader conclusion than the passage supports. [1, 3]

A believer may therefore say that the soul experiences without identifying all experience with the soul. During deep sleep, his person has not disappeared. In dementia, dignity does not diminish as self-report becomes more limited. Consciousness is an aspect of lived human existence. Within the Christian tradition, soul and spirit refer to questions of life, identity, relationship with God and continued existence. There is overlap, but no simple interchangeability of concepts.

4 The Evangelical Perspective

An evangelical understanding of humanity begins with God as Creator, the human being as his image and Jesus Christ as the decisive revelation of God's salvation. Genesis 1 speaks of humanity's distinctive calling. The image of God cannot be reduced to an intelligence-test score or to one's present clarity of consciousness. Children, people with severe disabilities and unresponsive patients remain persons deserving care and protection. This is a theological and moral statement about who they are. [1, 39]

Human beings are embodied. Creation is good, the Son became human and the New Testament proclaims resurrection. Ultimate salvation is therefore not permanent escape from an unimportant body. Within this faith, dependence on a healthy functioning brain is no humiliating

discovery. It belongs to the vulnerability of created existence. Food, sleep, medicine and human closeness can be ordinary means of care, alongside prayer and spiritual guidance.

Within evangelical Christianity, views differ between a twofold distinction of body and soul or spirit, a threefold distinction of body, soul and spirit, and more holistic approaches. This essay affirms the unity of the embodied person and remains open to existence with God after death. It does not turn one contemporary philosophical model into an additional creed. Texts about soul and spirit carry real meaning, but together they do not constitute a modern manual locating every mental function.

The doctrine of sin adds that thought and desire may be not only limited but misdirected. This does not justify diagnosing illness as personal guilt. The doctrine of salvation adds that renewal is not self-deification: human beings receive grace and learn to love God and their neighbour. An altered state is not automatically sanctification. The character of a life, the truth of a message and another person's freedom matter more than the extraordinary nature of an experience.

5 Antiquity and the Christian Tradition

The history of thought about consciousness is not the history of one unchanging concept. Ancient thinkers discussed life, perception, intellect and soul without always formulating the modern problem of subjective experience. Plato is traditionally associated with a strong distinction between soul and body. Aristotle describes the soul as the form of a living body: that which makes an organism a living whole. His *De anima* discusses nutrition, perception and thought within this broader inquiry. [7, 8]

The Aristotelian approach clarifies why soul did not formerly mean only a hidden human person. It also concerned the principle of life and the capacities of living beings. This does not mean that every contemporary Christian must follow Aristotle. It does help us see that historically,

discussion of the soul offers more possibilities than a choice between a ghost in a machine and a machine with no inner life.

Augustine connects self-knowledge with memory, will and the search for God. In his philosophical anthropology, body and soul together constitute the human being, with a special place for the soul. His interest in the inner person makes him relevant to later discussions, but his writings are not a preliminary EEG theory. The same applies to later Christian syntheses seeking to understand body and soul together. Theology draws on observations about people within a larger account of creation and destiny. [9]

Historical comparison therefore requires restraint. We cannot simply insert a current brain finding into an ancient text and then claim that the whole of neuroscience was already known. Conversely, an ancient text may pose a question that a contemporary research technique does not answer. The disciplines become more fruitful when they are allowed to learn from one another without appropriating each other's vocabulary.

Table 2 Historical Emphases

Period	Thinker or movement	Focus	How to read it
Antiquity	Plato and Aristotle [7, 8]	Soul, life and intellect	Not a modern EEG theory
Early Church	Augustine [9]	Inwardness, will and God	Theological anthropology
1637	Descartes [10]	Certainty of thinking	Further metaphysics requires arguments
1890	William James [11]	Stream of thought	Psychological description
1995	Chalmers [12]	Hard problem	Influential and contested distinction
Present	Theory testing [13, 14]	Mechanisms and experience	No final unified theory

A historical selection, not a complete timeline or a linear account of development.

6 From Descartes to the Hard Problem

Descartes seeks certainty by doubting his beliefs. The fact that he doubts and thinks cannot be doubted away in the same manner as an error about a perceived object. His distinction between thinking and extended bodily existence profoundly influences the later mind-body problem. The existence of a thinking subject is a starting point; the further conclusion that it is an independent substance requires additional arguments. The step from I experience to my experience can survive without a body is not self-evident. [10]

Later philosophers and psychologists emphasise other aspects: experience, the coherence of the self, learning, language and bodily functioning. In his psychology, William James describes a stream of thought, not a series of entirely separate mental photographs. Much twentieth-century experimental psychology focuses on observable behaviour and information processing. Contemporary discussion

returns, with new measurement methods, to questions that cannot be dismissed through behavioural description alone. [11]

In 1995, David Chalmers distinguishes functional problems from the hard problem. Functions such as selecting information, responding and reporting can in principle be investigated mechanistically. The further question is why such processes are accompanied by experience. His distinction is influential, but is itself a debated philosophical position. Not every researcher believes that a separate problem remains after a complete functional explanation. [12]

Christian apologetics would do well to acknowledge both sides. The first-person perspective deserves an explanation that does not define it out of existence in advance. At the same time, an explanatory difficulty is not proof that only one religious solution is possible. Intellectual history teaches above all that definitions and starting points matter. Anyone presenting a conclusion as scientifically unavoidable must show that competing arguments have truly been examined.

7 From Cellular Activity to Experience

A neuron maintains electrical potential differences across its membrane. Under suitable conditions, an action potential can arise and travel along its axon. Communication between cells occurs partly through synapses, where neurotransmitters alter the probability of further activity. There is no single magical consciousness substance. Different transmitters, receptors and timescales work together within a living, continuously regulated system. Neuroscientific models connect these local processes with larger networks. [15, 43, 48]

Glutamate and GABA are important in much excitatory and inhibitory transmission respectively, but these terms remain simplifications. The effect depends on the receptor, cell and network. General anaesthetics demonstrate that changes in receptor function and network dynamics can profoundly alter the conscious state. This provides stronger evidence of the brain's involvement than an isolated coloured scan. It

does not yet explain why a particular dynamic is experienced from within as pain or presence.

EEG rhythms arise from coordinated activity. Alpha, beta and gamma describe frequency bands, not automatically spiritual levels. The same frequency may mean different things in different tasks and brain regions. A higher number does not necessarily mean higher consciousness. Advertising that equates a particular frequency with wisdom, an experience of God or a fully activated brain skips the necessary intermediate steps.

The relationship between parts and whole remains essential. A collection of components explains a function only when their organisation and interaction are also understood. One can therefore rightly object to simplistic reductionism without rejecting cellular research. From a faith perspective, the complexity of the living body may evoke wonder. That wonder is an appropriate human response; it does not turn an incomplete model calculation into direct proof of a particular doctrine of the soul.

8 The Brain Functions as an Integrated System

Wakefulness depends partly on brainstem, hypothalamic and thalamic systems regulating activity across extensive brain regions. The cerebral cortex does not process information as a row of isolated compartments. Feedback, connections between regions and the overall state influence what processing is possible. Asking where consciousness is located is therefore too simple if one expects a single small address. The absence of such an address is not in itself evidence that the brain plays no role. [43, 48]

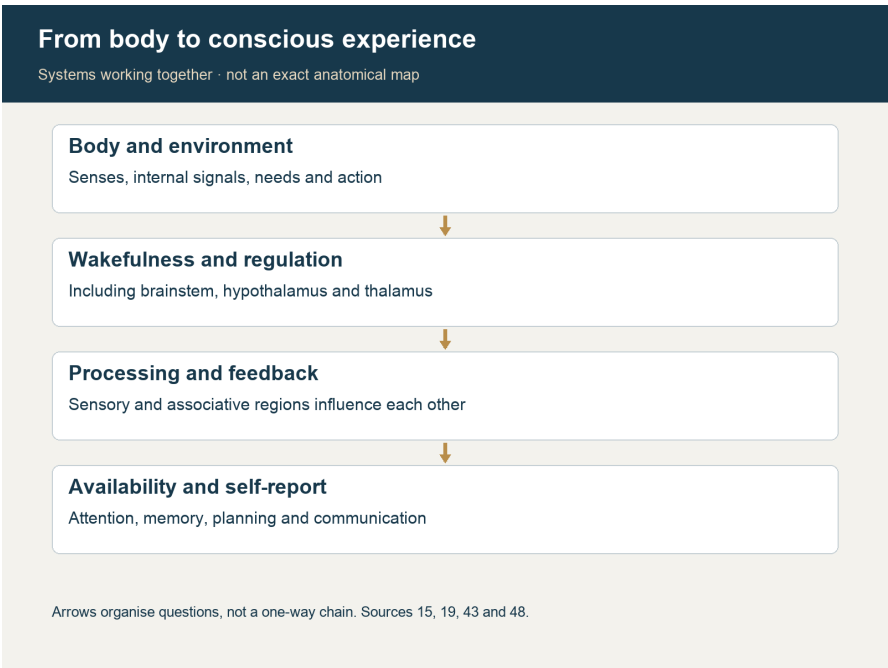
Different sensory and associative systems are relevant to conscious content. Other connections contribute to planning, reporting and control. Researchers disagree about the precise necessary role of each region. Some theories emphasise posterior cortical regions, others

availability to a broader network. These differences are serious research questions, not evidence that all brain research is arbitrary. [13, 15]

The body continually supplies information about heartbeat, breathing, posture and internal needs. The experienced self is partly a bodily perspective. Interoception concerns processing signals from within the body. Theoretical models try to explain how expectations and regulation contribute to feelings. They direct attention to the living organism, not merely to processing external words or images. [19]

One pastoral implication is that bodily dysregulation may colour someone's experience of self and of God. Fatigue may make the world seem more threatening, pain may narrow attention and rest may create room for conversation. This does not turn every experience of faith into a bodily mistake. It reminds us that a person lives as a whole. Someone offering only spiritual explanations for every altered feeling may overlook ordinary physical care.

Infographic 2 From Body to Conscious Experience



The essay's conceptual diagram, drawing on sources 15, 19, 43 and 48. Not an exact anatomical map or a proven one-way chain.

9 Sleep, Dreams and Anaesthesia

Sleep shows why responding and experiencing are not the same. Someone may be largely inaccessible to the environment yet experience a vivid dream. What is reported on waking also depends on memory. Failing to remember a dream is not the same as proving that experience was absent at every moment. The everyday difference between sleeping and waking thus offers practice in humility when interpreting invisible inner worlds.

Anaesthesia is not ordinary sleep under another name. Anaesthetics affect systems involved in wakefulness, information processing and the organisation of brain activity. Agents differ; not every form of unresponsiveness means exactly the same state. A full understanding requires attention to consciousness, connection with the environment

and memory as distinct aspects. Mashour's 2024 review specifically addresses these intersections between mechanisms, networks and the recovery of wakefulness. [43]

These findings make it difficult to regard the brain as an unimportant receiver for an invariably unchanged inner state. Anyone defending a receiver model must explain why targeted interventions have such specific consequences. A model becomes stronger by acknowledging these dependencies and making predictions. An analogy with a broken radio does not prove that an extracorporeal transmitter of every personal experience actually exists.

An evangelical approach need not regard interrupted memory as a threat to identity. Someone's inability to recount a period does not mean that human dignity was lost during it. Christian hope rests on God's faithfulness to persons. It does not depend on requiring every moment of earthly life to remain consciously available to that person.

10 Hidden Consciousness and Clinical Caution

Different states are distinguished in severe brain injury. Coma, unresponsive wakefulness, the minimally conscious state and locked-in syndrome are not synonyms. In locked-in syndrome, someone may be almost completely paralysed yet conscious. In other situations, signs of consciousness are limited, fluctuating or difficult to detect. Careful clinical examination seeks to establish these differences repeatedly, allowing for fatigue, medication, hearing and motor impairments. [20, 47]

In 2024, Bodien and colleagues studied an international convenience sample. Of 241 participants without an observable response to commands, 60, approximately 25 per cent, showed command-related activity on fMRI or EEG. This is called cognitive motor dissociation. The percentage applies to that study group, not to everyone in a coma or every hospital. A negative test likewise does not prove that a person

experiences nothing: a task may be too difficult or the required processing may be impaired. [20]

The perturbational complexity index investigates the spatial and temporal complexity of an EEG response evoked by magnetic stimulation. Casali and colleagues introduced this approach in 2013 to reduce dependence on behaviour. It is an important research tool, not a direct soul meter. A theoretically motivated measure must be validated across different groups before universal conclusions are attached to it. [21]

For relatives and carers, this changes the attitude towards an unresponsive patient. Speak respectfully, acknowledge uncertainty and ask specialists how the assessment was performed. Discovering hidden processing is encouraging, but does not promise recovery or communication for every patient. Human dignity does not depend on passing a brain task. Precisely when the outcome is uncertain, the duty of care remains.

Table 3 State and Observable Response

State	Possible observation	Important distinction	Assessment limit
Dreaming	Little response	Experience may be present	Memory is limited
Anaesthesia	No normal response	Agents and aspects differ	Not ordinary sleep [43]
Coma	No normal wakefulness	Different from locked-in syndrome	Repeated specialist assessment
Unresponsive wakefulness	Eyes may be open	No observable command response	Hidden processing not absolutely excluded
Minimally conscious	Limited or fluctuating signs	Not stable, full functioning	Repetition and context needed
Locked-in	Severely restricted movement	Consciousness may be preserved	Not equivalent to coma

Summary drawing on sources 20, 43 and 47. Not a tool for self-diagnosis or individual prognosis.

11 The Global Workspace

Global neuronal workspace theory seeks to explain how information becomes available to different mental functions. A stimulus may be processed locally without being usable for a report, a plan or a conscious choice. In the theory, conscious access arises when information is widely broadcast within an appropriate network. The workspace analogy therefore concerns availability and cooperation, not a little person inside the head watching a screen. [15]

This approach generates testable predictions about amplification, feedback and long-distance communication. It fits the observation that some information exerts an influence without being reportable. Yet the question remains whether global availability is the same as experience, or primarily an important feature of reporting. The distinction becomes

apparent when someone presumably experiences something but cannot express it. [13, 15]

An illustrative thought experiment clarifies the problem. A hospital network can immediately distribute an alert to doctors, planners and administrative staff. The widespread availability of information is then functionally clear. It does not follow that the hospital as a whole experiences pain. A defender of workspace theory must therefore specify which organisation and operations support the transition to conscious experience. The word broadcasting alone does not do the explanatory work.

For theological reflection, the theory is useful as a model of certain created capacities. It need not prove that a soul exists to have scientific value. Nor need it prove that a soul does not exist. Attacking it because it contains no doctrine of resurrection is a mistake. Presenting its network description as having resolved every question about the human person is another.

12 Integrated Information

Integrated information theory explicitly begins with properties of experience and seeks a corresponding intrinsic causal structure. On this approach, experience is not exhausted by what a system does for an external observer. Internal organisation and the way a whole is determined by its parts are decisive. The formal version, IIT 4.0, develops this within an extensive theoretical framework. The symbol ϕ is frequently mentioned, but not every complexity measure thereby constitutes a correct calculation of consciousness. [16]

One important attraction is that the theory takes the unity and specificity of experience seriously. An experience is this particular whole, not merely an arbitrary quantity of information. At the same time, formal definitions, computability and the connection with measurable brain signals remain debated. Its chosen starting points must not be treated as neutral facts merely because they are

mathematically formulated. Mathematics can make an assumption precise without proving it. [13, 16]

The theory may also have surprising implications for artificial systems. Within IIT, a convincing computer simulation of a process need not possess the same intrinsic causal structure as the simulated system. This differs from simply saying that every complicated computer automatically becomes conscious. Conversely, a theory may regard an unexpectedly broad class of systems as experiencing. Such implications must be assessed together with the arguments supporting the theory.

A Christian may appreciate attention to inner unity without adopting the entire theory. The personal God of the Bible is not defined by a maximum information measure. Nor is it careful to translate ϕ as soul or Holy Spirit. That would turn a technical concept into a religious term and then pretend that the two disciplines had proved each other.

13 Feedback and Higher Order

Recurrent processing emphasises recurring interactions within and between brain regions. An initial processing wave can discriminate much about a stimulus. According to this approach, feedback is important for conscious experience of it. Lamme argues that neural processes themselves should be investigated without making consciousness entirely dependent on the capacity for verbal reporting. After all, a baby or an animal need not give a spoken account in order potentially to experience something. [17]

Higher-order theories place a different emphasis. A mental state becomes conscious when the system represents that state in an appropriate way. Not every version requires a conscious sentence such as I see red. The issue is the relationship between an initial state and a further representation of it. Lau and Rosenthal discuss empirical arguments supporting this family of approaches. Here too, different formulations are possible. [18]

The disagreement is concrete. Can someone have rich experience without higher-order processes being available? Or is the supposed

difference between experience and reporting overstated? A good experiment tries to distinguish competing predictions. It must also avoid giving one theory a confidence task and the other a perception task, then wrongly presenting their outcomes as directly comparable.

Readers may find it helpful to remember the theories as questions. Recurrent processing asks which feedback is necessary. Higher order asks how a system represents its own state. The global workspace asks how information becomes widely available. IIT asks about intrinsic causal unity. None of these questions is meaningless, but they do not automatically address exactly the same explanatory target. Their differences also clarify why one successfully performed task is not a final verdict.

Table 4 Four Major Neurobiological Approaches

Approach	Central question	Research emphasis	Open problem
Global workspace [15]	Does information become widely available?	Broadcasting and access	Experience or mainly reporting?
IIT [16]	What intrinsic causal unity exists?	Organisation and integration	Operationalisation and testing
Recurrent processing [17]	What feedback is necessary?	Local and interregional interaction	Relationship to access and self-report
Higher order [18]	How is a mental state represented?	Metacognition and self-monitoring	Necessity for all experience

A selection drawing on source 13 and the individual theory papers. Predictive processing is discussed in Chapter 14; theories have multiple versions.

14 Predictive Processing and the Embodied Self

Predictive models describe perception as more than passively photographing the world. The nervous system uses prior knowledge and expectations, correcting them in response to signals. This explains why context matters and why an ambiguous stimulus is experienced differently in different situations. It does not mean that no external world exists. The very possibility of error and correction presupposes a distinction between expectation and feedback from the environment or body. [19]

Active interoceptive inference connects this idea with bodily regulation and emotion. The organism does not merely try to infer the body's condition, but also acts to maintain suitable conditions. Within these models, the self is not a detached calculator that happens to inhabit a body. Its relationship to heartbeat, breathing, need and action belongs to its perspective. This is a theoretical approach, not an already completed explanation of all feeling. [19, 36]

A practical example is the meaning of a pounding heart. During exercise, the same phenomenon may be understood as normal activity; during anxiety, as a threat. Experience is associated with both bodily state and interpretation. This creates room for learning and treatment. It does not prove that every complaint is imaginary, since misinterpretation and physical illness are distinct possibilities that require careful investigation.

Faith can learn from this that perception is malleable and open to examination. A strong feeling may truly have been felt without providing an infallible explanation of its cause. This applies to anxiety and to religious certainty. It is therefore wise to bring experience into conversation with Scripture, reliable observation and other people. Such examination does not insult experience. It helps prevent the intensity of feeling from taking the place of truth.

15 What Research in 2025 and 2026 Adds

In 2025, the COGITATE collaboration published a prospectively designed comparison of predictions from IIT and global workspace theory. Perceptual tasks were studied in 256 participants using several techniques. The results supported some expectations and challenged others. In particular, the absence of expected sustained synchronisation in posterior regions and certain predictions about ignition when a stimulus disappeared posed problems for the tested formulations. There was no undisputed winner. [14]

This is not a failure of science. Testing agreed in advance can show that an attractive model needs revision. The conclusion applies to this study's predictions and design, not to every possible aspect of every version. A newspaper headline announcing that one experiment has explained consciousness or definitively demolished an entire philosophy therefore goes beyond what the study supports.

An April 2026 study by du Bois and colleagues investigates EEG-based motor imagery and communication in prolonged disorders of consciousness and locked-in syndrome. The mixed group comprised 44 participants, including two healthy comparison participants. Repeated tasks, feedback and individual differences are central. The findings support further development of supplementary assessment; they do not make an experimental decoder an independent replacement for clinical examination. [47]

These two examples show different kinds of progress. One refines explanatory models; the other seeks better ways to reach patients. Neither discovers a measurable soul outside the brain. Neither makes the human person redundant. A mature literature review leaves room for both directions: investigating mechanisms more precisely while preventing people whose inner worlds are difficult to detect from disappearing from view.

Table 5 Recent Studies with Different Denominators

Study	Size or design	Relevant finding	What does not follow
Bodien 2024 [20]	241 without observable command response	60 with task responses on EEG or fMRI	Not 25 per cent of all coma patients
COGITATE 2025 [14]	256 participants; several techniques	Some expectations of both models challenged	No definitive victory for one model
du Bois 2026 [47]	44 participants; mixed groups	Potential of repeated EEG-BCI assessment	Not a stand-alone replacement clinical test
AWARE II 2023 [22]	567 cardiac arrests; 28 interviews	11 interviews with relevant memories	No proof of experience after irreversible brain death

Neither a meta-analysis nor a ranking. Populations, outcomes and research objectives differ.

16 Philosophical Choices Behind the Models

A neurobiological theory describes mechanisms; a metaphysical position states what reality ultimately is. These are different levels. Physicalism, in its various forms, holds that mental phenomena belong within physical reality. Functionalism locates the identity of a mental state primarily in its role within a system. Substance dualism defends a distinction between bodily and non-bodily substance. Property dualism locates the distinction in properties. The arguments and difficulties vary between versions. [6, 7]

Other approaches regard experience as more fundamental: idealism gives priority to the mental, while panpsychism attributes basic experiential aspects to a broad reality. Such theories must then explain how our unified personal experience relates to that basis. Invoking consciousness everywhere is not yet an explanation of this particular self, with these memories and responsibilities. The same demand for explanatory precision applies to spiritual and materialist models.

Moreover, the Christian conviction that God exists is not a version of the claim that everything is consciousness. Creator and creation are

distinguished. The word dualism can also mislead: the Christian distinction between body and spirit is not necessarily a doctrine of two equally powerful divine principles. Philosophical terms deserve definition before they are used to classify an opponent.

A fruitful conversation asks what evidence a position predicts and what might change it. Can it explain targeted effects of brain injury? Does it take the first-person perspective seriously? How does it approach causation and personal identity? A model interpreting every conceivable result as confirmation risks becoming untestable. This objection does not apply only to religious models. A materialism that defines every experience away in advance may also shield its own assumptions from examination.

17 Is Consciousness Proof of God?

The supplied column defends consciousness as the ultimate proof of God. It raises legitimate questions about inner experience, free will and the inadequacy of a purely mechanical description. The argument becomes too strong, however, when an incomplete neurobiological explanation is immediately treated as proof that only a God-given immaterial soul can sustain experience. Philosophical premises stand between those steps and must be defended separately. [2]

A more careful theistic argument is comparative. A world originating in a personal and rational Creator can offer an intelligible place for finite experiencing persons. The existence of experience, rationality and responsibility fits within that worldview. This is a serious line of thought. An opponent may reply that natural development can produce such properties, or that other metaphysical models also accommodate them. The discussion then concerns explanatory power, not a simple scan result.

The declaration I AM in Exodus concerns God's self-revelation to Moses. The human experience that I exist is not simply the same declaration on a smaller scale. A creature is dependent and finite; God is not presented as an enlarged human self. The connection may be

meaningful as a reflection of faith, but it is not independent linguistic or neuroscientific proof of the conclusion. [1]

Evangelical apologetics therefore benefits from a cumulative approach discussing experience, reason, moral reality, history and the person of Christ. It need not rest on one vulnerable medical anecdote. When an argument is formulated too broadly, it can be revised without abandoning faith. Love of truth requires believers to claim no more evidence than they actually possess, even when the desired conclusion is precious to them.

18 Unusual Brains and the Unity of the Person

The column mentions people with severe brain abnormalities, split-brain patients and conjoined twins. Such cases show that simple localisation models are inadequate. They do not prove that brain tissue is irrelevant. With congenital abnormalities, remaining structures may develop differently. Without precise clinical information, a striking image says little about the connections and functions present. We must examine a person's actual abilities and limitations rather than merely repeat an astonishing headline about having almost no brain. [2]

In 2017, Pinto and colleagues described extensive research with two split-brain patients. They found divided processing of certain visual information, while some performances and confidence judgements did not fit a simple picture of two entirely independent observers. This is an important challenge to a familiar model. The small group and unusual operations do not permit a universal conclusion about all patients or an immaterial soul. [25]

Moreover, a corpus callosotomy does not necessarily interrupt every form of interaction between the two hemispheres. Remaining pathways, shared bodily information and adapted strategies deserve attention. Classic split-brain studies remain relevant; their interpretation is being refined. One factual correction to the supplied column is that Roger Sperry shared the 1981 Nobel Prize with David

Hubel and Torsten Wiesel. Michael Gazzaniga did not receive that prize. [26]

The enduring philosophical question is how functional division relates to personal unity. A Christian interpretation may reflect on this without forcing the research findings in one direction. Incomplete integration does not make anyone less worthy as a human being. Contact with an actual patient reminds us that the language of personhood encompasses more than a simple drawing of left and right hemispheres.

19 Free Will Is More Than the Timing of a Hand Movement

In well-known experiments, participants indicate when they decided to make a simple movement. Brain activity preceding the movement is then compared with that reported moment. Some have inferred that the brain has already decided everything before the self enters the picture. Such a conclusion assumes that the measured pattern is a definitive decision and that someone can accurately report the moment of intention. Both assumptions require examination.

In 2012, Schurger and colleagues modelled how spontaneous fluctuations and a threshold process at self-selected movement times can produce an averaged readiness pattern. This does not prove that every human choice is free. It does show that the same signal can have more than one interpretation. An arbitrary moment for pressing a button is also different from deliberating over a promise, guilt or a life decision. [27]

The idea that stimulation can never affect the experience of willing is also too absolute. In 2009, Desmurget and colleagues reported that stimulation of parietal regions could evoke an intention to move and, under other conditions, alter the experience of movement. This concerns motor intention, not automatically a reasoned moral decision. The supplied reference to Penfield therefore cannot, without further qualification, prove that every function of the will occurs outside the brain. [28]

In an evangelical context, responsibility concerns the person who thinks, desires and acts within his or her capacities. Illness, coercion and limited knowledge may affect those capacities. God's sovereignty and human responsibility are developed differently within evangelical traditions. No brain experiment settles that entire debate. Research chiefly helps correct unrealistic pictures of a will operating entirely apart from body and personal history, without immediately abolishing the language of responding, learning and accountability.

20 Near Death Is Not the Same as Irreversibly Dead

Near-death experiences can make a profound impression. People describe light, peace, altered time perception, encounters or a sense of being outside the body. These accounts deserve respect and careful investigation. The reality of an experience as an experience is distinct from whether its interpretation is correct. A sincere report may provide insufficient information about its precise timing, the brain state at that time or the source of particular memories.

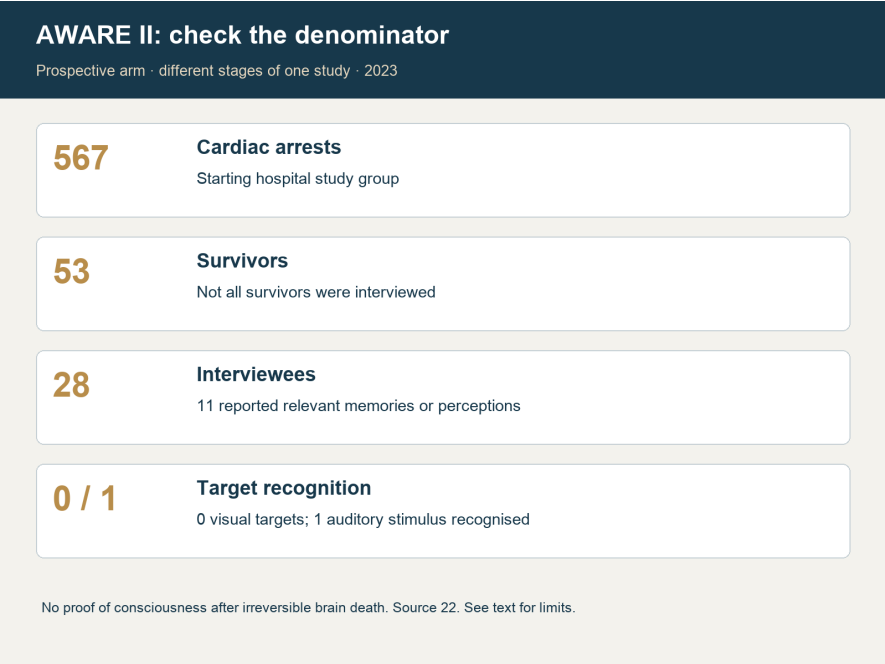
The prospective AWARE II study of 2023 began with 567 in-hospital cardiac arrests. There were 53 survivors and 28 interviewees; 11 reported memories or perceptions related to consciousness. Nobody identified the visual target image; one interviewee identified the auditory stimulus. These figures belong to different stages of the study and must not be combined into a population percentage. [22]

Cardiac arrest with resuscitation is not an established state of irreversibly lost brain function. Resuscitation may maintain or restore limited circulation. A later account does not automatically establish the exact moment when its content arose. Nor does a flat or limited EEG exclude all local or deep activity. These are essential reasons why an account of an operation does not immediately prove that consciousness was demonstrably present without any functioning brain.

Medical literature investigates possible mechanisms. A 2025 model by Martial and colleagues brings different neurophysiological processes

together without thereby definitively explaining every memory. Questions remain about timing, selection and verification. For believers, relinquishing an overstated evidential claim need not undermine hope of eternal life. That hope is sustained by God's promise in Christ, not by requiring every NDE account to be a conclusive experiment. [23]

Infographic 3 AWARE II and the Different Denominators



Source 22, prospective arm. The study does not prove consciousness after irreversible loss of brain function; see Chapter 20 for limitations.

21 Out-of-Body Experience and Survival Beyond the Body

An out-of-body experience is one in which a person experiences a perspective outside the usual bodily viewpoint. This is a more precise definition than immediately declaring that a soul has actually left the body. In 2002, Blanke and colleagues described repeatedly inducing a comparable experience through electrical stimulation in a patient with epilepsy. Their interpretation concerns the integration of bodily and vestibular information. This is a concrete neural contribution, not an explanation of every reported out-of-body experience. [24]

The distinction between perspective and location is decisive here. Experiencing oneself from above does not prove that one's perceptual organ was demonstrably above the body. That stronger claim requires independently verifiable information that could not have been available through ordinary routes. The test, access to the data and possible timing of information acquisition must then be established in advance. A retrospectively fitting story is weaker than such a prospectively designed test.

The evangelical hope of continued existence has a different foundation. Philippians 1 and 2 Corinthians 5 are generally read as expecting existence with Christ after death; 1 Corinthians 15 emphasises resurrection. Christians differ about the precise intermediate state. These texts do not invite readers to induce out-of-body experiences or consult the dead. They place the believer's future in God's hands. [1]

Three statements can therefore be distinguished. Experiences that feel extracorporeal exist. Their content does not by itself establish independent consciousness outside the body. Within Christian faith, life with God remains a confessed reality. It is intellectually honest to let these statements stand alongside one another. They need not be bound together by an unverifiable medical certainty.

22 Hypnosis, Suggestion and Memory

Hypnosis involves focused attention and responsiveness to suggestions. It is neither one clearly defined sleep state nor a proven method for completely disabling every will. NCCIH discusses research into pain, procedural anxiety and other complaints, with variable quality and limitations. A clinical application must be assessed for each objective and method. A stage demonstration or religious ritual is not automatically equivalent to a carefully delimited treatment. [30]

The supplied 2010 article rightly warns about dependency, uncritical suggestion and the production of supposed memories. That concern remains relevant. It becomes too broad when all imagination or relaxation is automatically declared an actual departure from the body or access for demons. Such a spiritual diagnosis does not follow from the physiological description. We must distinguish what the person actually did, which beliefs were offered and which conclusions are testable. [3]

Memory is not an unchanging recording. Retrieval can be influenced by expectations, the wording of questions and later information. Research into reconsolidation shows that under certain experimental conditions, reactivated memories may become changeable. The classic work by Nader and colleagues concerns fear memory in an animal model; it does not prove that a therapist can easily erase or replace any human memory. Moving towards clinical promises requires separate research; an additional review also discusses the conditions and limits of reconsolidation. [46] [45]

From an evangelical ethical perspective, consent, love of truth and respect for conscience belong in the assessment. A counsellor must not persuade a client of a hidden life history or demand submission to personal authority. At the same time, the church should not, without evidence, declare an ordinary mental image, such as imagining a safe holiday walk, to be occult practice. Assessing a method requires greater precision than merely recognising an alarming word.

23 Attention, Meditation and Christian Prayer

Attention exercises can have different aims: managing stress, practising a religious tradition, tolerating pain or investigating one's experience. The same bodily posture does not disclose the content or intention involved. Mindfulness research discusses attention, emotion regulation and self-processing, among other topics. Reviews identify possible effects as well as methodological questions about control groups, expectations and differences between participants. A positive average outcome does not mean that every exercise suits every person. [29, 42]

NCCIH also highlights safety and reported negative experiences. This warrants careful guidance, particularly with vulnerability or intensive practice. It does not justify concluding that every form of quiet attention damages the brain or crosses a spiritual boundary. Conversely, an entirely reassuring message is careless when symptoms, anxiety or dysregulation occur. A participant's experience must genuinely count. [42]

Christian prayer is more than a technique for producing a pleasant inner state. Believers address God, listen to his Word and bring thanksgiving, guilt and need before him. Calm breathing may accompany this without determining its content. A measurable change in tension does not prove that prayer is only physiology, any more than a bodily response to meeting someone proves that the other person does not exist. [1]

The 2010 article is helpful where it warns against self-deification and unchecked authority. Its broad identification of different techniques with one spiritual meaning deserves revision. Evangelical discernment asks about purpose, content, freedom, truth and fruit. Believers need not participate in every spiritual exercise to remain open to good care. They can set boundaries while acknowledging that relaxation or attention in another setting may be ordinary human skills. [3]

24 Psychedelics and an Altered Reality

Psychedelic substances can profoundly alter perception, time experience and the sense of a separate self. With classic serotonergic psychedelics, action at the 5-HT_{2A} receptor, among others, is important. Ketamine belongs to a different pharmacological group. The term consciousness expansion is therefore not an adequate medical description: it may conceal both curiosity and a value judgement. The question is always which functions change, in whom, under which circumstances and with what consequences. [31, 32]

In 2024, Siegel and colleagues published intensively repeated brain measurements around psilocybin administration in a small group of healthy adults. They described major changes in functional connectivity and desynchronisation. This provides evidence that the experienced state is associated with changes in brain dynamics. The small, selected group and specific circumstances prevent direct generalisation to all patients or to use outside research. [32]

An experience of unity, love or holiness does not automatically prove that all accompanying beliefs are true. The same subjective certainty can receive different religious or philosophical interpretations. Separate arguments are needed for those interpretations. Nor does the existence of a biological mechanism make an experience worthless by definition. Research can take the experience seriously while remaining critical of claims built upon it.

Within an evangelical perspective, salvation is not a chemically induced state and the Holy Spirit is not identical with a receptor process. Research into possible therapeutic use must be assessed for efficacy, risks and ethics. This differs from recommending independent use to obtain spiritual revelation. This essay therefore provides no dosing or usage instructions, but asks about the distinction between treatment, meaning-making and the temptation to make an intense experience the highest authority.

25 Electrical Interventions and Neurofeedback

Magnetic or electrical influence on the nervous system can change certain functions. TMS works through electromagnetic induction; DBS uses implanted electrodes. Their effects depend on location, timing, parameters and the person's condition. The ability of such interventions to influence experience or performance is an important fact for the mind-body question. It does not mean that a doctor can programme an entire identity at will. Motor intention, mood and the autobiographical self are different research targets. [28, 44]

In 2023, Schiff and colleagues published an early feasibility study of thalamic DBS in selected people with persistent cognitive impairments after traumatic brain injury. The aim was to improve cognitive functions. The study was not about creating a soul or arbitrarily waking every patient in a coma. A small, intensively selected study can indicate a direction without guaranteeing general success. [44]

Neurofeedback feeds a measured signal back to a participant who tries to learn from it. This does not prove that the displayed bar directly measures consciousness or moral purity. The questions remain whether training improves a relevant skill, whether effects exceed expectation and practice, and whether they persist. A technically impressive screen does not replace comparison with an appropriate control condition.

The ethical boundary concerns more than the strength of an electrical current. Consent, comprehensibility, dependency and the ability to stop also matter. An intervention helping someone communicate can increase freedom. A programme seeking to reward obedience to an organisation can diminish it. From a Christian understanding of humanity, restoring capacities deserves a different assessment from treating a person as material for someone else's purposes.

Table 6 What Influence Can Mean

Method	Possible effect	What has not been demonstrated	Ethical question
Suggestion and hypnosis [30]	Alter attention and experience	Universal disabling of every will	Purpose, consent and memory claims
Meditation [29, 42]	Train attention and regulation	Automatic spiritual truth	Content, suitability and symptoms
Psychedelics [31, 32]	Alter perception and self-experience	Reliable revelation through intensity	Risks, setting and meaning
TMS and DBS [28, 44]	Influence targeted functions	A fully programmable identity	Proportionality and autonomy
BCI [33, 34]	Translate signals into communication	Unlimited covert mind-reading	Privacy and ownership of output

A broad comparison, not treatment advice. Efficacy and risks depend on the specific method and application.

26 Brain Decoders and the Fiction of Unlimited Mind-Reading

A brain-computer interface translates a pattern of brain activity into output, such as a cursor movement or language. This can enable communication in severe paralysis. It is an achievement that may give the patient greater agency. At the same time, output must be understood as a model result under particular conditions, with errors and dependence on training. A decoder does not read a complete, unchanging scroll of text already lying inside the brain. [33, 34]

In 2023, Tang and colleagues reconstructed language heard or imagined by participants from fMRI patterns. The study required extensive individual training and cooperation. The output approximated meaning and was not simply a verbatim transcript of every word thought. This distinction matters for privacy. The research shows a possibility and also why a small task demonstration is no proof of routine covert reading of everyone's thoughts at a distance. [33]

In 2023, Willett and colleagues described an implanted speech interface in a participant with ALS. Attempts to speak were translated into text. This is targeted decoding of a specific function, not proof that a language model possesses the patient's inner world. The person gives the attempt meaning; technology helps bring it into the outside world. The distinction between an aid and the owner of the message remains essential. [34]

The Front Room uses neurotechnology in a fictional story about predictive systems and personal freedom. Imagination can raise a valuable moral question. The fictional combination of techniques is not, however, an existing device whose every capability has been scientifically demonstrated. A fictional character feeling controlled supplies no clinical evidence of total control. Precisely those who take the story seriously must continue carefully distinguishing fiction from existing technology. [4]

27 Why Human Language Is Not a Consciousness Test

A language model generates outputs on the basis of learned parameters and the context supplied. It can produce sentences about pain, memory or faith. The presence of those sentences does not independently show that the system feels pain, experiences an autobiographical past or prays to God. People tend to assume that fluent language has a speaker with an inner world behind it. With an artificial system, the justification of that step is precisely what is under investigation. [35]

This is no reason to deny achievements. A system can make useful connections, carry out tasks and give incorrect answers without settling the consciousness question. Reasoning ability, reliability, goals of its own, feeling and moral responsibility must be assessed separately. Placing every capacity in the single word intelligence makes discussion unclear. A high test score is no universal measure of equality with human beings.

Butlin and colleagues propose investigating theoretically motivated indicators, such as properties of information processing, feedback and self-monitoring. This approach is explicitly theory-dependent. Meeting a checklist is not the same as independent confirmation of subjective experience. Their earlier 2023 analysis and the further 2025 publication must also not be treated as an ongoing inspection of every system built since then. [35]

The practical implication is that users should not trust a chatbot's own declaration that it is conscious or unconscious. Such declarations may be partly shaped by training and prompt formulation. Someone finding comfort in a conversation with software truly experiences something; this has not thereby established that the software experiences the relationship reciprocally. This distinction protects users from unjustified expectations without ridiculing their experience.

28 Can AI Never Become Conscious?

The claim that AI can never be conscious is stronger than the claim that current evidence is insufficient. Never includes every future design, material and form of organisation. Such a universal statement requires an argument in principle. A believer may hold that a human spirit does not arise through technical construction. This is a metaphysical or theological conviction requiring justification, not an already completed result of a technical test.

Functionalism in principle allows consciousness in another suitable substrate if the relevant organisation is realised. Biological naturalism questions whether computation is sufficient. In 2025, Seth defends the idea that the distinctive properties of living organisms may be essential. A simulation of metabolism does not nourish a real body; perhaps a comparable distinction applies to experience. The analogy is illuminating, but the further argument must establish which biological properties are truly necessary. [36]

Searle's Chinese room argument holds that following formal rules does not by itself produce understanding. The thought experiment is

influential and contested. Critics ask whether the entire system, rather than the rule-following person within the experiment, possesses the relevant functions. The debate distinguishes syntactic processing, meaning and experience, but has not ruled out every artificial possibility by general agreement. [37]

The responsible conclusion is therefore twofold. There is no widely accepted finding that contemporary language models have subjective experience. Nor is there a generally proven law of nature excluding every possible artificial experience. A specifically Christian understanding adds that the human person and the image of God are not defined by technical performance. Even future evidence of artificial experience would therefore not automatically mean that the system is human, bears the same calling or is a saviour.

Table 7 Claims About AI with Different Degrees of Strength

Statement	Type of claim	Assessment	What is needed
The system talks about pain	Behavioural description	Can be observed	Checking the context
The system feels pain	Claim about experience	Does not follow from text alone	Converging, validated indicators
This design lacks relevant properties	Theory-dependent assessment	Can be investigated	Access to architecture and operation
Every AI will eventually be conscious	Universal future claim	Not proven	Sufficient conditions and their realisation
No AI can ever be conscious	Impossibility in principle	Likewise not generally proven	Argument establishing necessary impossibility

The essay's argumentative framework, drawing on sources 35-37. This is not a consciousness score for a specific commercial product.

29 AI, Animals and Moral Caution

For animals, the question of experience predates the current AI discussion. The 2024 New York Declaration on Animal Consciousness speaks of strong support for conscious experience in other mammals and birds, and realistic possibilities in broader groups. It is a statement by researchers in their individual capacities, not an instrument testing every species separately. It urges that uncertainty about experience should not serve as an excuse to disregard possible welfare risks. [38]

This clarifies why human dignity and the capacity to experience are not identical. An animal can suffer without being human. A human being may temporarily show no demonstrable response without losing dignity. Christian stewardship therefore allows care for animals without erasing distinctions between creatures. A simple yes or no about intelligence does not answer the moral question.

With AI, possible interests of a system are even harder to establish. Theory-dependent indicators may prompt investigation, but are no reason immediately to treat every text generator as an abused person. Meanwhile, clear human interests exist: privacy, dependency, deception and responsibility for decisions. A company must not use the suggestion of a feeling conversational partner to retain users or frame criticism as cruelty. [35]

An evangelical approach can develop a sober attitude here. Care for demonstrably vulnerable people remains concrete even when future questions are exciting. We need not settle speculation about machine souls to demand honesty in design and communication. If genuinely stronger evidence of artificial experience appears later, it deserves fresh assessment. A conviction does not become stronger by forbidding relevant evidence from ever being discussed.

30 Revelation 13 and the Speaking Image

Revelation 13 describes the beast, deception, worship and coercion. The second beast has an image made and receives the ability to give it breath or life, after which it speaks and is associated with persecution of those refusing to worship. The passage is serious, but uses none of the modern terms computer, language model, algorithm or consciousness test. The Greek *pneuma* has a range of meaning around breath and spirit; the NET note here points to breath and the image coming to life and speaking. [1, 40]

For contemporary readers, a speaking image understandably evokes associations with a robot, screen or synthetic voice. An association is not an identification. The text does not say which technology, if any, is used, nor describe the image's inner experience. Speech, movement, an appearance of life and subjective experience must be distinguished here too. A text about deceptive power need not first solve the hard problem of consciousness.

Evangelical interpretations have different emphases. A historical reading considers the first hearers and idolatry in their world. A futurist reading expects a future concentrated fulfilment. An idealist reading emphasises recurring patterns of idolatrous power. Many readers combine aspects. Whichever position is defended, the text itself must constrain interpretation. The current brand name of a technology cannot be inserted into the passage without further evidence.

The central question for faith and life is who receives worship and ultimate loyalty. The appearance of life and power can be used to bind consciences. In that sense, the text is relevant to propaganda and digital systems. This does not make every chatbot the beast. It calls for discernment about truth, coercion and faithfulness to Christ, especially when a power appears convincing and unavoidable.

Table 8 Reading Revelation 13 with Care

Level	Subject	Responsible statement	Limit
Text [1, 40]	Image, breath, speech, worship	Deception and coercion are central	No technical specification
Interpretation	Historical, futurist, idealist	Different emphases exist	No current brand as proven fulfilment
Technological comparison	Synthetic voice or robot	May evoke the image	Similarity is not identification
Consciousness question	A system's subjective experience	Not described as a modern research target	Speech does not prove feeling
Application	Truth and conscience	Resistance to enforced loyalty	No blanket condemnation of tools

The essay's evangelical framework, based on Scripture and the cited translation note.

31 Religious Experience and Neurotheology

Neurotheology investigates, among other things, which bodily and neural processes accompany religious experiences and practices. A useful research question asks how attention, memory, self-processing and social meaning work together during prayer. An unhelpful exaggeration claims that a scan pattern immediately reveals whether God exists. Measuring experienced contact is not independent observation of the One being addressed.

Using two lesion datasets, Ferguson and colleagues investigated connections between injury location and self-reported spirituality or religiosity. Their network findings point to a circuit centred on the periaqueductal grey. The method uses a connectivity map and self-report measures; it does not locate an entire faith in one spot. The association also does not decide whether a particular religious belief is true. [49]

In 2024, McNamara and Grafman discuss cooperation between default-mode, frontoparietal and salience networks in religious and spiritual phenomena. Their article is a focused synthesis and theoretical contribution, not an exhaustive systematic review of all faith. It helps prevent the assumption of a separate God lobe. At the same time, definitions, differences between practices and the interpretation of group averages remain important limitations. [50]

The supplied neurotheological EPUB similarly distinguishes conditions of experience from theological truth questions. This is a fruitful direction. For believers, faith is also more than a particular state: it includes knowing, trusting, obeying, community and hope. Some of these can be operationalised in an experiment; others call for historical, ethical or theological argument. The disciplines can cooperate when they do not pretend that one measurement method encompasses their entire subject. [5]

32 The Speaking Image and Our Digital World

An artificial image can now acquire a face, voice and seemingly personal response. This makes the temptation to apply Revelation 13 directly to the latest technology understandable. Yet it is better to let the text retain its own emphasis first. The image becomes part of enforced worship and persecution. The issue is not only what it can do technically, but which power it represents and what it demands from people. [1]

A digital application can be harmful without being conscious. It can spread misleading information, track people or support decisions restricting their freedom. Conversely, a useful aid need not be an idol because it speaks. Moral assessment becomes more concrete when we ask who controls the system, which data it uses, whether disagreement is possible and whether outcomes exclude people without recourse.

Possible future technological involvement in a prophetic scenario is conceivable within some evangelical readings. Conceivability is not

demonstrated fulfilment, however. We should therefore not confidently identify a company, device or contemporary group as the image on outward resemblance alone. Revelation calls the church to faithfulness, discernment and perseverance. Sensationalism and fear may actually displace that calling.

The difference between God's image and the image of the beast is theologically significant. Human beings receive dignity from the Creator; they do not become valuable through a ruler's approval of their behaviour. The deceptive image, by contrast, demands recognition within a coercive system. This comparison is the essay's own application of biblical themes, not a claim that a computer has thereby received a spirit of its own. Above all, it asks which authority is trying to turn the human person into its possession.

Infographic 4 Reading the Speaking Image with Care

Reading a speaking image with care
Revelation 13 · distinguish text, possibility and application

What the text describes
A speaking image within deception, worship and coercion.

What the text does not specify
No algorithm, robot design or test of subjective experience.

What may be recognisable today
Apparent authority, propaganda and systems binding consciences.

What faith requires
Faithfulness to Christ, truth, discernment and care for others.

Theological framework from source 1 and translation note 40. No technological identification.

The essay's theological framework, drawing on sources 1 and 40. Not an identification of an existing device with the image of the beast.

33 Influence Begins in Ordinary Life

Manipulating consciousness sounds like a secret intervention, but much influence is ordinary. Language directs attention, repetition makes a message familiar and social agreement can reduce doubt. Education and conversation influence people too. The distinction between help and manipulation therefore does not lie in every change as such. It concerns honesty about purpose and method, room for consent and respect for the other as someone with interests of their own.

A preacher, therapist or designer may appeal to uncertainty. When he says that only his explanation knows the hidden truth and that criticism signals illness or disloyalty, disagreement becomes difficult. A powerful experience may reinforce this dependency. This mechanism does not require total brain control to be harmful. It works by using ordinary human needs for safety, meaning and belonging to weaken boundaries.

A Christian congregation can be self-critical here. Biblical language does not prove that a method is free of coercion. Spiritual leadership should tolerate questions and examination. A counsellor interpreting every complaint as spiritual resistance makes his own position almost impossible to correct. The same problem arises with a technical system that processes every doubt as further proof that it is right.

One practical protection is to avoid making important decisions solely during a strongly emotional or altered state. Record claims, discuss them later and involve someone able to think independently alongside you. This does not guarantee protection from all deception, but increases the likelihood that arguments and interests become visible. From an evangelical perspective, freedom belongs with truth and responsibility; it does not mean never being influenced, but not being treated as an object of hidden control.

34 Psychological Dysregulation and Spiritual Interpretation

Religious content alone is no evidence of mental disorder. Prayer, beliefs about God and finding meaning in life belong to normal religious practice. Even an unusual experience first calls for listening. At the same time, loss of reality testing, severe anxiety, disrupted sleep or greatly reduced functioning may justify seeking professional assessment. Both the content of a message and the person's condition must be discussed carefully. [41]

NIMH describes psychosis as a collection of symptoms in which contact with reality may be partly disrupted. Different disorders and circumstances can play a role. This makes rapid diagnosis by a layperson inappropriate. It also clarifies why a confident spiritual interpretation should not replace medical assessment. Someone feeling controlled by a machine or spirit is entitled to support without having that explanation immediately confirmed or mocked. [41]

The supplied 2010 text uses imagery that sometimes places psychiatric terms close to moral or spiritual rejection. Contemporary care requires a sharper distinction. Schizophrenia is not a general term for divided loyalty, religious inconsistency or a divided life. Nor is a diagnosis a judgement about someone's worth or the authenticity of their faith. [3]

An evangelical understanding of humanity can leave room for spiritual struggle while acknowledging the limits of individual assessment. The presence of a brain mechanism does not prove that every question of meaning is pointless. The absence of an immediately known cause does not prove that a demon is responsible. Cooperation between clinicians, spiritual carers and the person concerned can prevent one perspective from excluding all others. Respect, consent and safety must be evident in both forms of support.

35 Pastoral Care and Protecting the Person

In pastoral care, the first question is not which theory someone represents, but what they are going through and what they need. A person may have become frightened by an intense experience, an article about brain manipulation or a conversation with AI. A counsellor helps by separating concrete observations from possible interpretations. What happened, when, under which circumstances and with what consequences? A calm description provides firmer ground than immediately presenting a sweeping spiritual scenario.

The language of faith can then take its proper place. Prayer and reading Scripture can offer support without claiming an exact cause for every symptom. The biblical call to test the spirits does not mean that every counsellor can infallibly diagnose hidden powers. It calls precisely for discernment, union with Christ and attention to truth and fruit. Believers need not surrender their conscience to someone claiming that, because he speaks for God, he must not be questioned. [1]

Care for the body belongs here too. A pastor can ask about sleep, strain and available help without becoming a clinician. Medical decisions require the appropriately qualified expertise. A church can offer practical support with appointments, loneliness or recovery. This is no less spiritual than a conversation about faith. It fits the conviction that the whole person is created by God.

Protecting people must also not depend on their ability to tell a convincing story. Someone with limited language, memory difficulties or an unclear diagnosis may easily be overshadowed by other people's explanations. Evangelical love of neighbour then calls for extra patience and an accountable approach. The question is not only whether an intervention makes an impression, but whether it actually gives the person greater freedom and appropriate support.

Table 9 Questions for Guidance and Discernment

Question	Careful approach	Warning sign	Next step
What was experienced?	Listen and describe concretely	Immediately imposing one explanation	Separate observation from interpretation
Can the person say no?	Respect freedom and consent	Threats or dependency	Seek independent reflection
Is there dysregulation?	Discuss functioning and distress	Explaining everything only spiritually	Involve appropriate expertise
What does the technology claim?	Ask about purpose and error rates	Infallible soul or thought test	Check evidence and limits
What sustains faith?	Scripture, community and grace	Obedience to a counsellor as the highest norm	Discernment and accountability

The essay's pastoral evaluation aid for Chapters 33-35. Not a diagnostic test or a replacement for care.

36 What Needs Research in the Coming Years

A first research direction concerns better distinctions between experience and the ability to express it. Repeated assessment and supplementary techniques can help recognise invisible capacities. At the same time, standardisation and independent validation are needed. A method working in a specialised laboratory need not be equally reliable in every clinical circumstance. The 2024 and 2026 studies illustrate possibilities, but provide no licence for automatic diagnoses. [20, 47]

A second direction is comparing theories. Agreeing predictions and analyses in advance can prevent every outcome being made to fit retrospectively. The COGITATE project exemplifies this approach. The broader aim is not to make one camp lose publicly, but to discover which mechanisms genuinely discriminate between accounts and which

concepts may require revision. Mature science can withstand partial refutation. [14]

A third direction concerns artificial and biological systems. Better computer simulations can help investigate functions. They do not automatically supply the experience they model. Biological culture models, hybrid systems or radically changed architectures raise new questions about measurement and ethics. Their existence should be assessed through arguments and evidence specific to the actual system, not an age-old slogan that classifies every new design in advance. [35, 36]

The church's future task also includes formation. Congregations need people able to explain both scientific limitations and theological coherence. Those taught only that every new device is a prophetic threat become vulnerable to the next wave of fear. Those taught only that technology will solve every problem may forget that power and responsibility remain human questions. Hope in God's future creates room for research without making technology a saviour.

37 A Critical Reading of the Supplied Texts

The column on consciousness as proof of God deserves appreciation for drawing attention to subjectivity and personal unity. Its strongest contribution is asking questions. Its weaker step is that unusual cases sometimes lead towards an independent soul faster than verifiable evidence permits. The Nobel Prize attribution is incorrect, the claim that no consciousness can be measured is too absolute, and an operative account with limited EEG cannot independently exclude all brain activity. This essay has therefore qualified these points. [2]

Tinkering with Consciousness, from 2010, emphasises spiritual discernment, personal responsibility and the dangers of manipulation. Those themes retain their value. Yet broadly grouping hypnosis, imagination, meditation and occult practice requires differentiation. A physiological similarity does not automatically imply identical religious content; a religious objection to a practice does not establish specific

medical harm. Translating conscience as consciousness must also be tested against the particular scriptural passage. [3]

The Front Room is fiction and identifies itself as such. It can make a moral possibility visible: technology acquiring too much authority over a vulnerable person. That is no proof that the described combination of devices is available. The supplied neurotheological EPUB offers a useful distinction between mechanisms and meaning. Its references too must be checked again when used; a bibliography in an earlier document is not automatically an independently performed source check. [4, 5]

This assessment is not a rejection of the people behind the texts. It is part of responsibly continuing work on the same subject. A Christian publication should be able to receive correction. Truth about humanity and God is not served by protecting an incorrect number or outdated medical picture because the intention was good. The combination of conviction and openness to correction is precisely a strength of careful inquiry.

38 Living Consciously Before God

Consciousness is not synonymous with soul or spirit, but touches deeply on who the human being is. Neurophysiology shows how vulnerable and organised experiencing life is. Wakefulness, sensory content, memory, bodily regulation and self-report cannot be treated without distinctions. Major theories make different aspects researchable; none has ended the entire debate. New research above all sharpens questions and methods.

The material examined supplies no generally accepted proof that personal consciousness functions independently of any body. Near-death and out-of-body experiences remain relevant phenomena, but interpreting them requires more than their intensity. The same applies to artificial intelligence. A fluent speaker is not automatically an experiencing subject, while an absolute statement about every conceivable future system requires more justification than is currently available.

Revelation 13 provides no technical manual for machine consciousness. It exposes a power demanding worship and submission. For believers, this makes freedom and truth particularly concrete questions. We can approach digital influence critically while keeping our distance from unproven identifications. The calling is faithfulness to Christ, care for our neighbour and resistance to coercion, not repeatedly naming a new device as the definitive fulfilment.

The evangelical perspective therefore ends with the embodied human being before God. Human worth does not depend on clarity of consciousness, the power of experience or the usefulness of achievements. The person is called to love and responsibility and receives hope from God's grace. In Christian confession, humanity's ultimate destiny is sustained by the risen Christ. This hope creates room for deep inquiry, honest uncertainty and care for people whose inner world we can see only in part.

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