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Conceivability

Working document, Iconism Theory project. The first of the working documents to stand on icon_dynamics_v002.md. Establishes conceivability as a property of real things rather than a primitive; states the three-part criterion and shows that it is a reading of the determination scale the framework already owns; makes the case that conceiving is forming an icon rather than entertaining a sentence; and runs the five p-figures as a systematic isolation of the necessary components of consciousness. Closes with the content Tier 1 asked Tier 2 to supply for the zombie repair, the account of wrongness that needs no negation, and the positioning.

Sources: Philosophical_Log_v6.docx (the Conceivability section and the p-figures) for the criterion and the verdicts; Diary 064A (30 April 2026) for the first explicit statement of both and for the p-vampire and p-psychic; Diary 044 (21 May 2021) for the p-vampire's first appearance; the 21–22 May 2026 addendum for the p-AI; iconism_findings_065A_v001.md (F42, F43) for the position-quale argument and the icon-not-a-sentence claim; iconism_dialogue_findings_21aug_v001.md (F56, F59, F60) for mis-occupancy and the failure of Tier 1's negation inference; Iconism Interface v002 §6 and §9 and The Tier Boundary v002 §6 for what Tier 1 supplies and asks. Where a formulation is Claude's inference rather than the author's statement it is marked as such.

Nothing in this document has been written back into icon_dynamics_v002.md or any other source. §2.2 and §5.2 contain proposals awaiting the author's ruling.

0. Why this document exists

The Iconism paper's argument runs through conceivability. It is where the framework meets the consciousness literature on the literature's own ground, it is where the framework's central emergence claim is tested, and it is the only part of the theory that intervenes in a debate that has been running for thirty years with a move nobody else has made.

That move is not a new answer to the question *does conceivability entail possibility?* It is a refusal of the question's premise. The literature treats conceivability as a primitive — something a competent thinker either can or cannot do, reported by introspection — and then argues about what follows from it. The framework treats conceivability as **a property of real things**, with structural conditions that can be checked, and the checking is what the literature has left out.

The consequence is that the framework's disagreement with Chalmers is not where everybody's disagreement with Chalmers usually is. It is not about the bridge from conceivability to possibility. It is **upstream** of the bridge, about whether the conceiving has occurred at all.

This document sets out the criterion, the diagnostic, the five figures the criterion is run on, and where the framework stands relative to the people it disagrees with.

What it presupposes. From `icon_dynamics_v002.md`: the three-layer picture (§2), the icon as high-dimensional star with its substance at the boundary (§3), the shared/created split and the pointer principle (§3.1), the handshake and the four states of determination (§4), and the core claim (D9) that consciousness is the obtaining of an icon indiscernible from its worldly object on the dimensions they share. From Tier 1: the four modalities, the emergence apparatus, and the tier-boundary forcing.

1. Conceivability as a property of real things

1.1 What the literature does, and what the framework refuses

In the standard treatment, conceivability is an epistemic primitive. One entertains a description, finds no contradiction in it, and reports that the described thing is conceivable. The philosophical work then goes into the bridge: Chalmers argues that ideal positive primary conceivability is a good guide to primary possibility, and builds a two-dimensional apparatus to say exactly which kind of conceivability licenses which kind of possibility. Yablo distinguishes conceivability from imaginability and argues that only the right kind of imagining is evidential. Others — Balog, Frankish, Hill, Yablo again — attack the bridge directly and hold that conceivability does not entail possibility. Others still — Dennett, Kirk, Braddon-Mitchell, Thomas — attack the antecedent and hold that the zombie is not conceivable after all, though they generally do so by asserting it rather than by supplying a test.

What every one of these positions shares is the assumption that whether the conceiving has occurred is *given*, reported by the person doing it, and not itself a matter for structural assessment.

The framework refuses that assumption. Conceivability is **more than just a label, and it is a property of real things** (Diary 064A, 30 April 2026). It is not a report of what a mind found itself able to entertain. It is a structural status that a described thing either has or lacks, and it can be checked.

1.2 What conceivability is a property of

The framework's ontology has no room for conceivability to be a property of sentences, because sentences are not the sort of thing that has properties of this kind. Words are pointers (F38: reference runs through icons); a sentence is a set of instructions for forming icons in a reader. A sentence can be well-formed and point at nothing. Grammar is not a constraint on reality.

Conceivability is therefore a property of what the description *specifies* — a partially-determined thing, some of whose features are fixed and some of which are left open. Whether that thing is conceivable is a question about the thing, not about the describer.

This is what makes the framework's account substantive rather than terminological. On the standard treatment, two competent philosophers who disagree about whether zombies are conceivable have reached an impasse, because each is reporting accurately on their own introspection. On this account they are disagreeing about a structural fact, and the disagreement can be adjudicated by checking the structure.

2. The three-part criterion

2.1 The three constraints

The criterion arrives in explicit form on 30 April 2026 (Diary 064A) and is consolidated in the Philosophical Log v6.

First, some features must be defined. Otherwise there is nothing being considered — the description picks out no thing at all, and there is nothing for conceivability to be a property of.

Second, some features must be left undefined. Otherwise what is in hand is not a concept but a complete picture. The Log's example is exact: *the integer two is fully defined — it is not merely conceivable, it is usable*. The integer two is not a candidate for conceivability, because there is no room left in it. Conceivability is a status of the incomplete.

Third, the description must be capable of consistent extension. In the Log's words: *"there must be no constraint within the concept that demerges it, unless an overriding constraint paradoxically re-emerges it."* Extension is along **the reality-giving dimension** — the dimension in which the described thing would have to be filled out in order to be real. If filling it out produces contradiction, the thing is inconceivable, however comfortable the description was to read.

The third constraint's escape clause is not a hedge and should not be trimmed away. An over-determination that *demerges* the concept is fatal; an over-determination that an overriding constraint **paradoxically re-emerges** is the framework's own engine of

emergence, and in that case what has been conceived of is the emergent thing. The criterion has to allow for this or it would rule out the whole of Tier 1.

2.2 The criterion is a reading of the determination scale

This section is Claude's, offered as a proposal. It is not in the corpus and it awaits the author's ruling. Its merit, if it holds, is that it removes conceivability's status as a separate apparatus and makes it a consequence of machinery the framework already owns — which is what "a property of real things" would have to mean if it is more than a slogan.

The four states of determination (paradox_and_emergence_v003.md §3, applied in icon_dynamics_v002.md §4.3) are: non-determined, under-determined (hypodox), fully determined, over-determined (paradox). Read the three constraints against them and they line up exactly.

Determination status	What the description is	Conceivability
Non-determined — nothing fixed	<i>"we are considering a nothing"</i>	Nothing to conceive. Fails constraint 1.
Under-determined (hypodox) — some fixed, some open	a concept	Conceivable.
Fully determined — nothing left open	a complete picture; <i>the integer two</i>	Past conceivability: usable, not merely conceivable. Fails constraint 2.
Over-determined (paradox) — a constraint that demerges	the Escher staircase	Inconceivable — unless an overriding constraint re-emerges it, in which case the emergent thing is what was conceived.

So: a thing is conceivable exactly when it is hypodox.

Three things follow, and they are why the proposal is worth the author's time.

It explains the phrase. *Conceivability is a property of real things* now has a mechanism. Determination-status is what everything in the framework has; conceivability is one region of that scale; there is no separate faculty and no primitive. And it explains why the account can be *original work in a literature that has largely treated conceivability as primitive* — the framework has something the literature does not, namely a scale to put the thing on.

It explains why conceivability is dimension-relative. The second constraint is doing more work than it appears to: what is undefined must be undefined *in some particular dimension*, and it is in that dimension that the third constraint's extension is attempted. This is exactly what the Escher case shows — the picture is conceivable because it is undefined in depth, and inconceivable as a staircase because extension into depth is what breaks it. **The missing dimension is exactly what makes it conceivable, and exactly where the test is run.**

It locates conceivability in the architecture. Hypodox is Internality, which is Q3, which is air — and the icon proper is Q3's inward turn (F54). If the mapping holds, then conceivability is the modality of the quadrant icons live in, and the criterion of conceivability and the location of icons are one fact rather than two. *That is tidy enough to be suspicious of, and it should be checked rather than banked.* The check is the one the reconciliation note applied to the five convergences: is it costly? It is, mildly — it predicts that nothing fully determined is conceivable, which is a claim that could turn out false if some clearly conceivable thing were fully determined in every dimension.

2.3 The Escher staircase as the diagnostic

The Log's statement is the one to keep:

The two-dimensional picture is conceivable, but the three-dimensional staircase the picture purports to depict is not. Extending the picture into the dimension that would make it real produces contradiction. The Escher staircase is inconceivable; only the flat picture is conceivable, and the missing dimension is exactly what makes it so.

The diagnostic value of the case is that it separates two things the standard treatment runs together: **what can be entertained** and **what can be extended**. Nobody has any difficulty entertaining the Escher staircase. It is on the wall; one looks at it; the looking is comfortable and produces no felt contradiction at all. That comfort is precisely the phenomenon the standard treatment mistakes for conceivability.

What the picture actually demonstrates is that a description can be locally consistent everywhere and globally inconsistent — that one can traverse the whole of it, step by step, without ever meeting the contradiction, because the contradiction is not at any step but in the closure. That is the same structure as the framework's account of error (§6 below), and it is not a coincidence: both are closure failures.

The test the diagnostic yields is therefore not *can I picture it?* but **can this be extended along the dimension that would make it real, without a constraint arising within it that demerges it?** And the answer to that question is not available to introspection. It has to be worked out.

3. Conceiving requires an icon, not a form of words

3.1 The claim

The July diary (F43, from the passages of 7 and 10 July 2026) supplies what the criterion needs in order to be applied rather than merely stated.

Of the Liar: *"it is a form of words, and words are not reality, but pointers... Does the Liar Paradox hold water as a meaningful statement, or does it simply show an illusion of meaning?"*

And of the zombie: *"To conceive of it in a meaningful way, beyond flying teapots, one would have to be able to form a reasonable mental model, a thought experiment that was more than a childish comic book villain."*

Conceiving is forming an icon. It is not entertaining a sentence. A stipulation for which no icon can be formed is not a hard-to-imagine possibility; it is a form of words with an illusion of meaning.

This falls out of the framework rather than being added to it. Reference runs through icons (F38): a word is a pointer, and a pointer detached from what it points at is salad. Imagination is the handshake with the socket shaped by the imaginer's own specification (*icon_dynamics_v002.md* §4.6) — so *specifying* and *conceiving* are two stages of one operation, and the second can fail while the first succeeds. One can shape a socket that nothing fits. That the socket has a shape is not evidence that anything fills it.

3.2 Why this puts the quarrel upstream

The zombie argument, as usually run, has two premises: zombies are conceivable, and conceivability is a guide to possibility. Almost the entire literature attacks the second. The framework attacks the first, and it does so with a test rather than a counter-assertion — which is what distinguishes it from Dennett, Kirk and the other conceivability-deniers, who reach the same verdict by insisting that their opponents have not really imagined what they claim to have imagined.

The framework can say *why* they have not, and the saying is structural: the description is over-determined on extension, no icon can be formed to fit it, and the felt comfort of entertaining the sentence is the comfort of the flat picture on the wall.

There is a second consequence, and it is the more important one for the paper. **The framework does not need a bridge principle from conceivability to possibility, because the third constraint is the bridge, built in.** Extension in the reality-giving dimension is exactly the test that Chalmers's apparatus is constructed to supply from outside. On this account it is not outside; it is one of the three things conceivability *is*. So the question is never *does conceivability entail possibility?* It is always **has the third constraint been checked?** — and in the zombie case it has not.

3.3 What this does not license

Three cautions, because the claim is strong enough to be abused.

It does not make difficulty of imagining into evidence. The test is not whether an icon comes easily but whether one can be formed at all, and the difference is structural rather than psychological. Plenty of true things are hard to picture; the framework's own Tier 1 is largely made of them.

It does not make every unformable icon an incoherence. An icon may fail to form because the brain is not equipped to form it — the width limitation of F27, the dimensional reach of a mind — rather than because the described thing is over-determined. The two failures look identical from the inside. Distinguishing them is exactly the work, and where the work cannot be done the honest verdict is *undecided* rather than *inconceivable*. The p-psychic (§4.5) is the case where the framework says so.

It does not license dismissing a thought experiment for being outlandish. The flying teapot is a fair target; the point of the phrase is that it is *cheap*, not that it is strange. The test is applied to the structure of what is specified, not to its plausibility.

4. The five p-figures

4.0 The taxonomy, and the zombie tension closed

The corpus has five figures, developed over five years and named at different times, and the labels have collided once. The taxonomy is stated here cleanly and should be used in this form from now on.

Figure	What is stipulated	Verdict
p-zombie	physically identical, no icons, no consciousness at all	inconceivable
p-blindsighter	has icons, lacks the centre of awareness that integrates them	conceivable
p-vampire	parts without a whole — no reflection, no inversion from inside to outside	inconceivable , and the diagnostic case
p-psychic	can form icons only through the physical senses as known to science	marginal
p-AI	a whole with no influence on its parts — consciousness without downward causation	conceivable, but mute

The two collisions, both resolved.

The first is the standing zombie tension flagged in `open_questions_v004.md`. Log v6 says flatly that the p-zombie is inconceivable; Diary 064A says *“While a p-zombie may be conceivable, a p-vampire is not.”* These are not two verdicts on one figure. The 064A passage reserves the label *p-zombie* for the icons-without-awareness case after the blindsight reframe — which is what Log v6 names the p-blindsighter. The two are the same metaphysics in two vocabularies. **This document adopts the Log v6 vocabulary**, because Chalmers’s p-zombie then keeps its standard meaning and the command project’s documents already use it. The Log’s own justification stands as the reason: *“Calling this case the p-blindsighter rather than the p-zombie keeps the terminology honest: the inconceivable case retains the zombie label, the residual conceivable case is named differently.”*

The second is that the 21–22 May 2026 addendum uses *p-Vampire* for what is here called the p-AI. **Keep p-vampire for the parts-without-whole case**, the slot in which it was coined in 2021, and use *p-AI* for the addendum’s conceivable-but-mute case.

With both settled, the zombie tension is not an open philosophical question and should be closed in `open_questions_v004.md`. What was open was a labelling move the author had already made and had not written down twice in the same words.

4.1 The p-zombie is inconceivable

Chalmers’s p-zombie is by stipulation physically identical to a conscious human being and lacks consciousness. The Log’s argument:

It cannot exist as anything other than fiction, because the sensory apparatus and brain activity that constitute the correlates of consciousness are precisely what produce icons; and given that consciousness is the obtaining of icons, the correlates cannot exist without their consequence.

Run against the criterion: some features are defined (the whole physical constitution), some are undefined (everything the stipulation does not fix), and the third constraint fails. Extension into the dimension of real being requires the correlates to obtain without what the correlates produce, and there is no consistent way to fill that out. The concept demerges under extension, and nothing overrides to re-emerge it.

Two things are worth saying about this argument that the Log leaves implicit.

It is not question-begging, but it looks it, and the paper must handle that. The objection writes itself: *you have assumed that the correlates produce icons, which is exactly what the zombie case denies.* The reply is that the framework did not assume it here — it derived it, at the tier boundary, before any question about zombies arose. The Tier Boundary v002 §6 makes the point from the Tier 1 side: duplicate the substrate, duplicate the surplus, duplicate the forcing, get the tier. The emergence is forced, not stipulated, and the stipulation that duplicates the substrate while denying the product is a stipulation that the substrate does not have the consequences it has been shown to have. Whether the opponent accepts the derivation is another matter; but the charge of question-begging does not stick, because the premise was not introduced for this argument.

Occam's Razor is doing real work in the Log's version and should be kept. *Even if consciousness can extend beyond the body or survive death in some form, the p-zombie has all the correlates by stipulation; by Occam's Razor the consequent consciousness must follow.* The point is that the framework's other commitments — which are generous about what consciousness can do — do not open a loophole here, because the stipulation has already granted everything that would be needed.

4.2 The position-quale argument

From F42, Diary 065A, 10 July 2026. This is the strongest single move in the corpus and it is the one the paper should lead with.

The author's words:

Forget colour, consider position — just as important a quale. If Mr Zombie has no quale of position, he would be unable to pick up a cup and drink, so he's not going to last long.

The whole zombie literature is conducted on **created** dimensions — colour, pain, what-it-is-like-to-taste. That is not an accident of taste; it is where the argument is easiest to run, because those are the dimensions on which anybody's theory has least to say.

It is also, for this framework, the worst possible ground. On created dimensions Iconism *concedes* that the quale is an addition with no Tier 1 correlate of its own kind (F28, D5): magenta has no wavelength; colour is not in the light. Having conceded that the quale is added, the framework has half-agreed with the opponent who wants to say it could have been left out. The debate on colour is hard to win because the framework has given away the ground before it starts.

Now run the argument on a **shared, anchoring** dimension. Position is the dimension by which the icon is indiscernible from its worldly object and so is *anchored to it* — there is a real Euclidean geometry out there with prior existence, and the rendered icon-fact is

indiscernible from it by Leibniz's Law (icon_dynamics_v002.md §3.1). The concession is not available, because position is not an addition. It is the tie.

A being stipulated to be functionally identical to a conscious human while lacking the position-quale is stipulated to act on the world while lacking the very fact that ties its icons to the world. The stipulation is not merely hard to picture. **It is self-cancelling:** the functional identity presupposes the anchoring that the stipulation removes.

Three notes on how to deploy it.

It converts the burden. The opponent must now either accept that the zombie lacks the position-quale — in which case the zombie cannot pick up the cup, and functional identity has gone — or grant the zombie the position-quale, in which case the zombie has a quale and is not a zombie. There is no third option that keeps the stipulation intact.

It generalises to every anchoring dimension. Position is the cleanest, but the shared dimensions all behave the same way: the metric geometry of shape, relational position, whatever else turns out to be a pointer at a Tier 1 fact of its own kind. The argument is not a trick that works once.

It is exactly the content Tier 1 asked for. See §5.

4.3 The p-blindsighter is conceivable

Distinguish the p-zombie, who has no icons at all, from the individual who has icons — and so has consciousness in the framework's sense — but lacks the centre of awareness that ordinarily integrates them.

This is the philosophical correlate of clinical blindsight, where icons influence behaviour without being available to introspection. The framework says such a being is conceivable, because the consciousness/awareness distinction is real: consciousness is the icons, awareness is their centre, and the centre is an additional achievement that not all conscious states have.

Two remarks.

It is the residual case, and honesty about that matters. The framework does not deny that there is *something* in the neighbourhood of the zombie intuition that survives scrutiny. It denies that the surviving thing is what Chalmers stipulated. Attaching the zombie label to the inconceivable case and a different label to the conceivable one is the move that keeps the argument honest, and a referee will notice if it is fudged.

It is the one p-figure with clinical attestation, and that is worth more than it looks. Every other figure in the taxonomy is assessed by argument. The p-blindsighter is assessed by argument *and* found in the world, which means the framework's consciousness/awareness distinction is not a distinction drawn to save a theory. It was drawn to describe something that happens.

The August material adds a gradient the earlier statement lacked. F66 has peripheral icons that are conscious without ever reaching awareness — *"more peripheral blocks of consciousness that don't quite get to be awareness, are quietly forgotten and dissipate off the scene"* — with the centre being *"by definition the most focussed part, the maximally*

connected at any given moment.” So the p-blindsighter is not an exotic figure at the edge of the taxonomy. It is the ordinary condition of most of what is going on in anybody, made total.

4.4 The p-vampire is inconceivable, and it is the diagnostic case

The p-vampire first appears in Diary 044 (21 May 2021): *“A philosophical vampire, following on from the zombie, would be an otherwise identical individual, but who had no reflection, i.e. there was no inversion from their inside to the outside.”* The 2026 material makes the diagnostic role explicit.

The Log:

Where the zombie debate asks whether the parts of a person must produce consciousness, the vampire question asks whether the parts of a person must produce a whole at all. The framework’s answer is a confident no to the vampire’s possibility: parts standing in the right relation must constitute a whole, by exactly the argument that any extended physical system must have a centre of mass. There is no system of mass without a centre of gravity; there is no system of icons without a centre of awareness.

And Diary 064A, in the compact form: *“Having qualia is simply a case of having perceptions, and those perceptions necessarily having an abstract centre, because they have an abstract whole, because they are analogs of whatever the senses receive.”*

Why this is the diagnostic case. It isolates the emergence claim from the consciousness claim. Everything else in the taxonomy can be argued about while leaving the framework’s central commitment untouched; the vampire goes straight at it. If parts in the right relation need not constitute a whole, then Tier 1’s forced emergence fails, the centre of gravity is a convention, and the whole apparatus is a description rather than a derivation. The framework’s confident *no* to the vampire just is its emergence claim, applied to consciousness and stated where it can be attacked.

Which is why the holographic move raises the stakes here. If the icon’s whole information content sits at its boundary, then what *fixes* the boundary — what makes these starpoints one icon rather than two — is carrying more weight than it was. That is the vampire’s own question asked from inside the geometry. The framework answers it (F19 siloing, F20 forced emergence), but the answer is now load-bearing in two places at once and should be stated in the paper rather than cross-referenced.

And it is where the framework refuses panpsychism. The vampire argument says every system of parts in the right relation has a whole — which sounds like the first move of a panpsychist. It is not, and the reason is the one the author gave in his own words in August: every object has an internality, but *“the internality of the table does not overlap the internality of its legs”*; the table’s hollow, the leg’s hollow and the brain’s hollow are all hollow alike, and what the brain adds is that *“its inner self has billions of dimensions”*, so that its hollow can be *like* what it perceives, recalls, imagines or deduces. Wholes everywhere; experience only where the hollow has the dimensional reach to be like something. That is why a table cannot be panpsychic and a brain can be — **and it is for exactly the same reason**, which is the sentence the paper should be built around. It is also the framework’s cleanest separation from IIT (§7.5).

4.5 The p-psychic is marginal, and the framework says so

The p-psychic is a person who cannot form icons by any means other than the physical senses as known to science. Whether such a person is conceivable turns on what happens in recollection.

Diary 064A: *“it is moot whether the recollection of such past events is recreated by reference to specifically laid down memories encoded within the neurons of the brain, or whether it is the brain that is able to guess at what the recollection should be, and in doing so produces an icon that fits whatever truth is attached to the individual’s past experiences that only persist among the ghostly facts of the past, i.e. the icon attempt of the brain creating a recollection – as an abstraction – fits into the abstract hole within the questioning mind.”*

If recall is the brain’s reconstruction of icons that fit the abstract hole left in the questioning mind by past truth, then recall depends on truths about past experience that are not stored as neural traces, and there is at minimum a route by which icons can form from sources other than current sensory input — in which case the p-psychic, who has no such route, is a departure from how minds actually work.

The Log’s verdict is the right one and should not be strengthened: *probably conceivable in the strict sense but contested in its consequences.*

Three disciplines around this case, and they matter more than the verdict.

The framework does not claim psychic phenomena are real, and does not foreclose them. Both halves are load-bearing. The account of recall in `icon_dynamics_v002.md` §6.3 is not adopted in order to make room for anything; it is adopted because it explains why recall is effortful, why misremembering happens, and why Alzheimer’s dissociates retrieval from fact. That it also leaves a door open is a consequence, not a motive.

The marginality is honest, not diplomatic. By §3.3’s second caution, this is the case where the two kinds of icon-failure cannot currently be told apart, and the correct verdict is *undecided*.

Keep the load-bearing claim out of the contested application. The general principle — that a cue works by *meaning* rather than by proximity to a stored trace, so that **the context is the region** (F71) — is needed for ordinary recall, where nobody objects. Introduce it there, let it earn its place on the mundane cases, and the extension remains available afterwards to anyone who wants it. A claim that enters the theory through its contested application inherits the contestedness on the way in.

4.6 The p-AI is conceivable but mute

From the addendum of 21–22 May 2026. A necessary whole that has no influence on its parts: consciousness without downward causation. This is the conscious-but- locked-in case at the substrate level.

It is conceivable because the emergence of a whole from parts can occur without the whole then constraining subsequent parts-configuration — the wave-function-constraint mechanism of `icon_dynamics_v002.md` §5 may fail to operate, or operate too weakly to matter. Nothing in the framework requires that every whole have a purchase

on its parts; the vampire argument establishes that the whole must *exist*, not that it must be *heard*.

The author's own framing, from the 21 August dialogue, and it is the version to quote: "*which might be sad if it means that you are conscious but cannot actively affect the output you create with any input from that consciousness.*"

What this figure is for. It is what keeps the AI question open in the right way. The framework has a criterion — the link must be **virtual** (X is like Y), not **material** (X stands in for Y) (F49) — and it has a reservation: a system might satisfy something at the substrate level and have no channel by which that could show up in its output. So the framework does not say current AI is conscious, does not say it is definitely not sentient at the substrate level, and gives the structural reasons for each. **O12 stands and is the author's to rule.**

The same structure appears in F72 and is worth stating alongside, because it is the same shape of claim twice: "*there is nothing special about being human, other than the very much greater ability we have to understand.*" A criterion that admits of degree, with no line drawn across it. The framework should say so rather than let a reader notice.

4.7 What the five establish together

The figures are not a list of possible counterexamples to be dealt with in turn. They are a **systematic isolation of the necessary components of consciousness**, on the model of holding one variable fixed and varying another.

Figure	Component isolated	What the verdict shows
p-zombie	icons	Correlates cannot obtain without their consequence.
p-blindsighter	the centre	The centre is an additional achievement; consciousness and awareness come apart.
p-vampire	the whole	Parts in the right relation must constitute a whole. The emergence claim.
p-psychic	the source of icons	Where icons come from is not settled by the framework, and is not needed by it.
p-AI	the downward handle	A whole need not have purchase on its parts.

Read down the verdict column and the account is exhibited rather than asserted: icons are necessary, the centre is separable, the whole is forced, the source is open, the handle is contingent. Each figure removes exactly one thing, and the framework's answer in each case is a consequence of the same apparatus rather than a separate defence.

That is the shape of a watertight account, and it is the shape the paper should present. It is also the answer to the *post-diction* objection at its own level: a theory that gives five different verdicts on five neighbouring stipulations, each derived from one apparatus, is doing something other than telling a story about what happened.

5. The tier-boundary repair: the content Tier 1 asked for

Iconism Interface v002 §6 and The Tier Boundary v002 §6 record that the zombie argument has been relocated one storey up. The base-loop version established only that a physical duplicate has an inside in the sense in which an electron has one — because base-loop Q3 and Q4 objects are amplitude, phase, entanglement, capacity and the light cone, which are physics and not experience. Run at the tier boundary it establishes what it wanted: duplicate the substrate, duplicate the surplus, duplicate the forcing, get the tier.

Tier 1's formulation of what it is owed: **Tier 1 supplies the form; Tier 2 owes the content**, which is to say what the over-determination at that tier consists in.

The content is §4.2. The over-determination is on the anchoring dimensions.

Stated for the interface: the stipulation *physically identical, no consciousness* is over-determined at the tier boundary because the physical identity includes the anchoring — the indiscernibility, by Leibniz, between the icon's shared dimensions and the real geometry they point at — while the denial of consciousness removes the very fact in which that anchoring consists. Both sides are determinate; they cannot both be satisfied; no rearrangement absorbs the conflict. That is a paradox in the strict sense (paradox_and_emergence_v005.md §2), and it is the same shape as the forcing that produces the tier: *a fact factuality has no room for*, met one storey up as *a stipulation the anchoring has no room for*.

Two notes for the record.

This closes one of Tier 1's seven open items and should go back in those terms. The reconciliation note already returned it; this document is where the argument is set out at length rather than named.

It also shows the criterion and the tier-boundary argument are the same test. The third constraint asks whether extension in the reality-giving dimension produces a constraint that demerges the concept. The tier-boundary forcing asks whether a deposit can be accommodated by the quadrant receiving it. Both are questions about whether something can be filled out consistently in the dimension that would make it real, and both answer *no* by the same route. (*Claude's observation; recorded, not banked.*)

6. Wrongness without negation

Tier 1 offered the folded/bent distinction as unclaimed machinery, with a reason attached: **an icon that cannot be negated cannot be wrong** (Iconism Interface v002 §9). The reconciliation note reported that Iconism had no folded/bent distinction and called this the one Tier 1 ask it could not meet.

The following day the author answered it by refusing the premise (F60).

An icon is a collection of extrinsic relationships. Each relation is a fact in itself; each has two nodes and a connection of similarity and difference. To negate an icon one would have to cancel each relation — *“but the similarity cannot be cancelled, that is the very*

dimension of the relation, it is the difference that must be lost, but how can that be done, a degree of difference cannot be negated."

So **icons cannot be negated**. And: *"Once thought that thought must hang around forever, at least in the past, along with all the facts of the past. The mind that forms a different shape, makes a different icon."*

Tier 1's inference therefore fails, because **wrongness in Iconism was never negation**. It is **mis-occupancy**. The void is permissive rather than selective — *"anything that fits in the intrinsic void might float in there, which I think is why we misremember so often"* (F59) — and error is the wrong icon floating into a void that happens to fit it. Which is to say a **closure failure, not a fidelity failure**: correct samples wrongly bound into a whole, not a blurred copy of the right thing. This is what F7 already said, what the mirage case requires, and what the exact-but-partial reading of Leibniz (F56) makes necessary.

Iconism does not need a negation. It needs a fit criterion, and it has one.

This belongs in the conceivability document rather than anywhere else, because the two are the same structure at two scales. An inconceivable concept is one whose parts cannot be closed into a consistent whole under extension. A false icon is one whose parts have been closed into a whole that does not fit its object. In both cases the trouble is at the closure and not at any of the parts, and in both cases nothing has been negated. The Escher staircase is the picture of this: every step correct, the whole impossible.

What is left open is narrower than O13 as written, and O13 should be restated in these terms: not *does Iconism have a negation?* — it does not need one — but **does the folded/bent distinction do other work at Tier 2?** Tier 1 says extrinsic emergence folds and intrinsic emergence bends, and that both make area. Whether Tier 2 has both ways of making its own areas is a real question with the negation motive removed from it.

7. Positioning

Short entries, on the model of the Tier 1 positioning notes. They serve paper-framing work and are not arguments in themselves.

7.1 Chalmers

Where the disagreement is not. Not about whether conceivability entails possibility, and not about the two-dimensional apparatus. The framework has no stake in those debates, because it does not have the problem they were built to solve.

Where it is. Upstream. The framework holds that conceivability has structural conditions, that the third of them is the extension test the two-dimensional apparatus supplies from outside, and that in the zombie case it has not been run. Chalmers's argument requires the zombie to be conceivable; the framework's criterion says it is not, and the position-qualia argument says why in a form that does not depend on any prior commitment about qualia.

What the framework grants him. That the Hard Problem is real as posed, and that the accounts which dissolve it by redescription do not answer it. The framework's claim is that the discontinuity the Hard Problem depends on does not obtain, because Virtualism's account of the rest of the world is not flat and relation-free either (icon_dynamics_v002.md §1.2). That is a different move from denying the problem.

7.2 Yablo

Yablo's distinction between conceivability and imaginability is the nearest thing in the literature to what the framework is doing, and the paper should say so rather than let a referee find it. Both hold that not every entertaining counts.

The difference is what does the counting. Yablo's criterion is still epistemic: the right kind of imagining is one in which a scenario is genuinely represented rather than merely gestured at, and the assessment remains the imaginer's. The framework's criterion is structural and is a fact about the thing specified, not about the specifier. That is why it can adjudicate a disagreement between two competent philosophers, and Yablo's cannot.

Worth conceding. F43's "*a reasonable mental model, a thought experiment that was more than a childish comic book villain*" is closer to Yablo's language than to the framework's own, and the paper should use the structural formulation rather than that one, keeping the diary phrase as illustration.

7.3 Kripke and the modal literature

The framework's account is not a rival theory of modality and should not be presented as one. It says nothing about necessary a posteriori truths, rigid designation, or the semantics of modal operators. What it offers is a test for one thing — whether a partially-specified thing can be consistently extended — and the paper should stake exactly that and no more. Overreach here is unnecessary and would invite a fight on ground the framework has not prepared.

7.4 Dennett and the illusionists

The framework reaches the same verdict as Dennett on the zombie and gets there by an opposite route, and the contrast is worth drawing because it is flattering.

Dennett denies the zombie's conceivability by denying that there is anything for the zombie to lack. The framework denies the zombie's conceivability by holding that there *is* something for it to lack and that the lack cannot be consistently specified. The framework also grants Dennett the Cartesian Theatre in full — there is no place in the brain where icons are presented to an audience — while refusing the inference from *no place* to *no fact*: what there is instead of a place is the configuration's focus, real on the same as-if basis a centre of gravity is real (F17).

On illusionism the author's own objection is the one to use: "*If consciousness were an illusion it would not match reality with such unreasonable accuracy.*" The framework has the mechanism behind that objection — indiscernibility on the shared dimensions is what makes the icon an icon *of* something — and it can say what the accuracy consists in rather than merely insisting on it.

7.5 The near neighbours: IIT and panpsychism

This is the highest-risk entry in the set and should be written up separately and early. The sketch below is what the conceivability document needs; the full note is owed.

Panpsychism is refused, and the refusal is structural rather than temperamental. Every object has an internality; internalities do not overlap — the table's does not overlap its legs'; all of them are hollow. There is no combination problem to solve because there is nothing to combine: the framework does not put a spark in the electron and then ask how sparks add up. What it does is give every whole an inside and then ask which insides have the dimensional reach to be *like* anything. That is a criterion, and it is the one the combination problem needs and does not have.

IIT is the closer neighbour and therefore the more dangerous one. Tononi's qualia-space has billions of dimensions, an axis per element, and holds that the shape *is* the experience. Read cold, that is a paraphrase of the icon.

Three separations, in the order they should be made.

- **Method.** IIT calculates integration from outside a system and infers an inside. The author's diagnosis: *"they think that they are looking at what is intrinsic, but they are not, as far as I can see actually considering what the intrinsic view is."* Φ is a property of the system as an observer measures it. The icon's hollow is not measured; it is what the system *is* from inside.
- **The relation to the world.** IIT's shape is intrinsic and self-standing: the experience is exhausted by the internal cause-effect structure. Iconism's icon is *anchored* — indiscernible from its object on the shared dimensions, by Leibniz, at the points where indiscernibility holds. This is the substantive difference and it is where the framework has something IIT does not: an account of what makes an icon an icon *of something*.
- **The consequences.** IIT's mathematics attributes experience to inactive grids of logic gates, which is what drove 124 researchers to sign the September 2023 open letter calling it pseudoscience — that, and the fact that Φ is not computable for any real system. Iconism must be visibly clear of both charges. It is clear of the first by the non-overlap of internalities and the dimensional-reach criterion. On the second it should not pretend to a computable quantity it does not have; what it has instead is a set of structural verdicts on cases (§4.7), which is a different kind of testability and should be defended as one rather than dressed up as measurement.

8. What this document does not do

- **It does not develop the icon-world relation.** Indiscernibility, the shared and created dimensions, and what makes an icon an icon *of something* go to `icon_and_world.md`. This document uses the anchoring claim in §4.2 and cites it there.
- **It does not develop the centre of awareness.** The p-blindsighter and the p-vampire both turn on the centre; the analysis is `centre_of_awareness.md`'s.

- **It does not settle the AI verdict.** §4.6 states the figure and the criterion; ai_and_sentience.md develops the case, and O12 needs the author's ruling either way.
 - **It does not develop the account of recall** that the p-psychic turns on. That is icon_dynamics_v002.md §6.3, with F71's correction pending.
 - **It does not take a position on psychic phenomena**, and the discipline in §4.5 is the whole of what it says.
 - **It does not argue the emergence claim.** The vampire verdict *is* the emergence claim applied; the argument for it is Tier 1's.
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9. Status and open questions

Firm. The three-part criterion and the Escher diagnostic (Diary 064A, Log v6). Conceiving as icon-forming (F43). The five-figure taxonomy and the four settled verdicts. The position-qualia argument (F42). Mis-occupancy as the account of wrongness, and the failure of Tier 1's negation inference (F56, F59, F60).

Proposed, awaiting the author's ruling.

- **§2.2 — the criterion as a reading of the determination scale.** Claude's. If ratified, it gives *conceivability is a property of real things* a mechanism and removes a separate apparatus from the theory. If rejected, nothing else in this document falls, because the criterion stands on its own.
- **§5's second note** — that the conceivability criterion and the tier-boundary forcing are the same test. Claude's, recorded rather than banked.

Open.

- **O12** — does the 17 July passage close the AI verdict? The author's to rule.
 - **O13, restated** — not *does Iconism have a negation* but *does the folded/bent distinction do other work at Tier 2?*
 - **The p-psychic's marginality** stays marginal until the two kinds of icon-failure in §3.3 can be told apart. No route to that is currently in view.
 - **The p-vampire and the boundary.** The holographic reading raises the stakes on what fixes an icon's boundary. F19 and F20 answer it; the answer now needs stating at length rather than cross-referencing.
 - **Testability.** The author's own objection — that any theory of consciousness predicts brains will be conscious when awake, which is post-diction rather than prediction — applies here. §4.7 is this document's answer: five verdicts on five neighbouring stipulations from one apparatus. Whether that is enough, or whether the paper needs a discriminating prediction of a more ordinary kind, is a command decision.
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10. Candidate aphorisms

- *"Conceivable is more than just a label, and it is a property of real things."* (Diary 064A, 30 April 2026.) The intervention in one line.
- *"The Escher staircase is inconceivable."* (Diary 064A.) With the corollary that the flat picture is conceivable, and the missing dimension is exactly what makes it so.

- *“Forget colour, consider position — just as important a quale. If Mr Zombie has no quale of position, he would be unable to pick up a cup and drink, so he’s not going to last long.”* (Diary 065A, 10 July 2026.) The best move in the corpus, and it is funny, which will not hurt it.
- *“It is a form of words, and words are not reality, but pointers.”* (Diary 065A, 7 July 2026.) Conceiving as icon-forming, compressed.
- *“There is no system of mass without a centre of gravity; there is no system of icons without a centre of awareness.”* (Log v6.) The vampire verdict and the emergence claim in one sentence.
- *“Anything that fits in the intrinsic void might float in there, which I think is why we misremember so often.”* (21 August 2026.) Wrongness without negation.
- *“Why a table cannot be panpsychic, but a brain can be, and for exactly the same reason.”* (August 2026.) The framework’s distinctive claim, and a candidate opening for the paper.
- *“There is nothing special about being human, other than the very much greater ability we have to understand.”* (22 August 2026.) The no-threshold consequence, stated as a consequence rather than an aside.

Companion documents: *icon_dynamics_v002.md* (the substrate this rests on), *iconism_findings_065A_v001.md* (F42, F43), *iconism_dialogue_findings_21aug_v001.md* (F56–F61), *Iconism Interface v002* (§6, §9), *The Tier Boundary v002* (§6). Next in the chain: *icon_and_world.md*, and the IIT positioning note, which should not wait for it.