

Table of Contents

Consciousness, Awareness, Spirit.....	1
0. Why this document exists	1
1. The three terms.....	2
2. The three storeys.....	4
3. Dave: awareness as both whole and heart	6
4. Objectivity by sharing	8
5. Spirit, on the Iconism side of the line.....	10
6. The elemental mappings.....	11
7. Where Iconism stops.....	12
8. Positioning	13
9. What this document does not do.....	15
10. Status and open questions.....	15
11. Candidate aphorisms.....	16

Consciousness, Awareness, Spirit

Working document, Iconism Theory project. The third of the working documents to stand on icon_dynamics_v002.md. Keeps the three terms distinct and says what each commits to and excludes; sets out the three-storey structure of the account and the reply to Chalmers that depends on not collapsing it; gives awareness its double aspect; states the close of Tier 2 as objectivity by sharing; and draws the line between what Iconism develops and what belongs to Spirit.

Sources: the Philosophical Log v6 Consciousness, awareness, spirit and Spirit and fact-causation sections for the definitions; the dialogue findings of 22 August 2026 (F62–F72) for the three storeys, Dave, and the sharing closure; F41, F51 (065A) for the self and identity-as-centring; F16, F18, F19, F21, D6 (refinement series) for the mind/spirit relation, siloing and the agency axis; Iconism Interface v002 §5 for the relations-primitive rule that licenses the composite. Where a formulation is Claude's inference rather than the author's statement it is marked as such.

Nothing here has been written back to source. §2.1, §6.2 and §7.3 contain proposals or flagged tensions awaiting the author's ruling.

0. Why this document exists

The three terms have been used together since 2019 and defined together since the Philosophical Log. They are not synonyms, they are not three names for a spectrum, and the framework's central argument fails if they are run together.

The failure is specific. Chalmers's objection, in his own words:

Why should physical processing give rise to a rich inner life at all? It seems objectively unreasonable that it should, and yet it does.

— Chalmers, *Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness*, 1995

Put to this framework it sharpens, because the framework has said what the physical processing amounts to and the objection can be aimed at that. The author's own restatement of it, and the form §2.4 answers: *there is no reason why a pattern should be conscious, after all, why is a diagram not thought to be conscious? Even more so when single icons are described as being hollow.*

That restatement is the author's, not Chalmers's, and the paper must keep the two apart — Chalmers asks why physical processing gives rise to experience at all, which is general; the diagram version asks why *this* account's patterns should, which is the version with teeth against Iconism specifically. The second is the harder question and the framework should be seen to have chosen it.

It looks unanswerable if the account says *icons are consciousness*, because a single icon is hollow and a diagram is a pattern. It becomes answerable when the account is read as it was built: **in three storeys**, with icons as the building blocks, the composite as a whole of a higher order, and the sharing as the closure. The author's own note on this, in August 2026, is worth keeping as an instruction to the writer: *note the claim's modesty and keep it.*

So this document's first job is to hold the storeys apart. Its second is to give awareness its double aspect, which resolves a question that has looked like a dichotomy since the Log. Its third is to state where Iconism stops.

1. The three terms

1.1 Consciousness

Consciousness is the obtaining of icons.

It is not a faculty, not a light that comes on, and not a property a system has or lacks as a whole. It is the standing fact that icons are obtaining — and in a living brain they are obtaining constantly. The author, August 2026:

Icons abound in a brain that is active, from birth to death, even when sleeping, if there are brainwaves as measureable activity, then there are neurons firing and making patterns. It doesn't look like brains do anything else, these are neural correlates of consciousness.

And the patterns are *"abstract, and analog, and taught by experience, and have a substrate evolved to hardwire specific processes"*, in constant flux: *"one pattern is born and decays, morphing into another, accepting interrupts from the world and from collisions with memory, and with collisions with other patterns."*

Two commitments follow immediately, and both are unusual in the field. Consciousness is **not** the same thing as being able to report, attend to, or introspect a content — those

belong to awareness. And consciousness is **graded and populous** rather than unitary: there are many icons obtaining at once, most of them never reaching the centre.

1.2 Awareness

Awareness is the centre of consciousness — and, as §3 develops, it is also the whole of it, which is not a second claim but the same one seen from the other end.

The centre is *“by definition the most focussed part, the maximally connected at any given moment.”* It moves. Icons enter and leave the collection; the centre is wherever the configuration puts it, exactly as a centre of gravity is wherever the masses put it.

Awareness is an **achievement, not a condition**. Not all conscious states have it, which is what makes the p-blindsighter conceivable (conceivability_v001.md §4.3) and what makes clinical blindsight the one place a framework claim is attested rather than argued.

1.3 Spirit

Spirit is the collection of all true facts about the individual. The Log:

everything they have been conscious of, everything done to them in their awareness, things they witnessed as bystanders, and even things in their vicinity that they were ignorant of but not innocent of.

Spirit is a **fact rather than a reality** — it has no properties that place it in the classical present Now and it is not subject to change when the world changes around it. In Iconism it does one job, and the job is mechanical: **it is what contributes to the wave functions collapsing in the vicinity of the brain** (§5.3).

1.4 What each term excludes

Stating the exclusions is what keeps the distinctions load-bearing.

Term	Is	Is not
Consciousness	the obtaining of icons	reportability; attention; introspective access; a single unified item
Awareness	the centre and whole of the icon-collection	a higher-order state that represents the icons; a place; an observer; a faculty
Spirit	the collection of true facts about the individual	a substance; a second mind; anything that acts by a force

The middle row is the one that does the most work, and §8.2 turns it into the framework’s position against Higher-Order Theory.

2. The three storeys

2.1 Icons are building blocks, not consciousness itself

The author's careful formulation: icons *"are in some manner like something, so I'd say that they are the building blocks of consciousness, composed of the intrinsic spaces of firing neurons."*

Building blocks. Not consciousness. That modesty is deliberate and it is what the reply to Chalmers depends on.

A tension to record, and a reading proposed. D9 and icon_dynamics_v002.md say *consciousness is the obtaining of icons*; F62 says icons are the building blocks of consciousness. Read carelessly these conflict. The reading that keeps both is that **consciousness is the plural fact** — the obtaining of icons, in flux, together — where each icon singly is a block and none singly is consciousness. On that reading "the obtaining of icons" was always a plural, and the framework is consistent; it has simply never had to say so before, because nothing turned on it until the composite was introduced. *Claude's reading; it needs the author's ratification, because if it is wrong then D9's wording has to change.*

2.2 The composite is itself an icon

the mind, being composed of all its icons at a given moment, forms a whole mind object, a thing in itself, that groups all the icons together... it seems more than reasonable, in fact necessary, that the composite itself is a form of icon, but as the sum of icons, more complex, more layered, more connected with meaning.

And the characterisation, which should survive into the paper unparaphrased:

It is the book, the movie and the play, all in one, the score, the poem and the performance, it is the heartbreak and the joy, the deduction and induction. It is knowing the answer, and what we mean by understanding — literally placing supports under ideas that make them stand up and be counted.

Text note. The 22 August transcript reads "the move"; the author corrected it to "the movie" on 25 August. The contemporaneous record in iconism_dialogue_findings_22aug_v001.md is left as typed, and this document carries the corrected text.

And the allusion is not decoration — it is the argument. *Book, film, play* are the three categories of **Charades**, and knowing that changes what the sentence is doing. In Charades a player mimes a title without words and the audience must form the icon from what the miming affords; the categories are precisely the **media** that F46 says hold meaning *inanimately* — a book contains meaning but does not have it, and the score is not the performance even if it includes all the dots. The composite is being characterised as all three media at once **and** the performance of them: the thing that holds the meaning and the thing that has it, which is exactly the claim that separates a mind from a library. The paper should say so in a clause rather than let an editor read it as a list.

This move is licensed from below, and the paper must say so, because a reader will otherwise assume it was made for convenience. Tier 1's commitment is that relations are primitive and relate downstream: *a relationship between two nodes is itself a whole with a single identity, and is therefore available as a node* (Iconism Interface v002 §5). A composite of icons being an icon of higher order is not a new principle. It is the stacking rule the framework already owns, used once more.

Note also what §4.4 of `icon_and_world_v001.md` establishes about how the composite is built: **layered, not filled**. The constituent icons elaborate the composite's boundary rather than occupying its interior, and that is why the composite is *more layered, more connected with meaning* rather than merely larger.

2.3 Sharing is the closure

The third storey, and the largest new claim in the corpus:

at the end of Tier 2 the water perspective may be aware of what is going on, may be able to locate lunch and avoid being someone else's lunch, but the final twist is the addition of awareness as objective fact, and for awareness to become objective fact, as opposed to subjective fact, it requires to be shared.

§4 develops it. What matters structurally is that it is a *third* storey and not a gloss on the second: the composite can be fully in place, doing everything a mind does, and the closure has still not occurred.

2.4 The reply to Chalmers, in three parts

The objection, in the author's own restatement of Chalmers — *his* wording, aimed at this framework rather than at physicalism in general (§0): *"there is no reason why a pattern should be conscious, after all, why is a diagram not thought to be conscious? Even more so when single icons are described as being hollow."*

The reply has three parts, and the second and third are what do the work.

First, a type restriction. *"The subjective parts and the objective parts can only form relations of the types of subjective part and objective part."* Relations are type-preserving: subjective parts compose into subjective wholes, objective into objective. A diagram is a collection of objective parts and composes into an objective whole; no amount of it yields the other kind. *Claude's note: this is the part of the reply that most needs the author's own expansion, because as stated it is compressed and a reader will want the principle it rests on. It looks to be Tier 1's — relations hold between relate of a kind — but the paper should not assert that without his word.*

Second, meaning alone is not sufficient — and this is a guard the framework places on itself. The bullet case: an inanimate object *"has very limited meaning as a material object, but if it assassinates the president, as with JFK, Lincoln and Garfield, then enormous meaning accrues to it, but we don't imagine meaning alone to confer consciousness."*

This is worth its place because it forecloses a misreading of the framework's own apparatus. F30 has icon-richness as brightness load; a hasty reader could take the framework to be saying that enough accumulated meaning is what makes something

conscious. The bullet refutes it from inside. Meaning accrues to objects all the time and confers nothing.

Third, the composite and the sharing. §2.2 and §2.3.

Why the three-storey structure is the answer. Chalmers's objection is aimed at storey one, where the framework agrees with him: a single icon is hollow, a pattern is not by itself an experience, and there is no reason why a diagram should be conscious. The framework's positive claim is at storeys two and three, where the objection has no purchase because a diagram has no composite of its own kind and nothing to share.

Collapse the storeys and the objection lands; keep them apart and it misses.

3. Dave: awareness as both whole and heart

3.1 The false dichotomy dissolved

The question was whether awareness is the composite or the centre of the composite, since a centre of gravity is emphatically not the system. The author answered **both**, by way of the Cheech and Chong gag he uses for virtual facts generally — Dave being told Dave is not here, when Dave is the one knocking:

The whole point is that the whole is virtual, the sum of the parts, no more than that, but the whole has a heart. If we were to call the whole mind Dave, then Dave would be like the centre of gravity, there but not there. Dave is both the whole and the heart.

F21 already had this — awareness as both the wholeness of mind and its heart — so this is confirmation rather than change.

Claude's gloss. "Dave" names the virtual fact, and whole and heart are the two aspects under which a virtual fact shows up: **extension and focus**. A centre of gravity is likewise both the system's own fact and a located one, without being two things. The joke is apt precisely because both parties are right.

3.2 The moving centre and the subconscious periphery

there can be a whole with a moving centre as various subconscious icons, more peripheral blocks of consciousness that don't quite get to be awareness, are quietly forgotten and dissipate off the scene.

This gives the consciousness/awareness distinction a **gradient rather than a line**. Peripheral icons are conscious without ever reaching awareness, and the periphery is where forgetting operates. It interlocks with F61 — forgetting as the Q3→Q4 unboost, relinquishment, the weak force applied to minds — and with F17, centring as brightness by meaningful connection.

It also makes the p-blindsighter ordinary rather than exotic: what that figure has totally, everyone has most of the time.

Open (O16). Whether the quiet dissipation at the periphery is the same Q3→Q4 relinquishment as ordinary forgetting, or a faster attrition of a different kind.

3.3 Identity is centring, not ownership

F51 established it and the August material supplies the phenomenology:

if the centre is just awareness of some other thing, perhaps a task that is being concentrated upon, then the self has become that task, to all intents and purposes, but if the self is observing what it is doing, it is placing the task in the context of the self, which is a different perspective. The self then is no longer internal to the task, but witnesses its task performing self from an objective viewpoint, perhaps the gaze of the other as Sartre may call it, but with the other being the self all along.

So identity is a fact about **where the centre is sitting**, not a relation of ownership. This dissolves what looks like a contradiction in the July diary — *you are your consciousness; there is no separation* (10 July) against the dreamer's *it is not truly me except as witness* (18 July). The first denies a separate self standing behind consciousness. The second reports that the centre has moved off the self-icon. Neither is about ownership.

The everyday case makes the point without arguing from dreams at all: the absorbed reader, the absorbed listener, the driver who arrives without remembering the journey.

3.4 The self is not a strange loop

F41, and it closes the obvious objection to a constraint ladder that tops out at awareness — that the top rung reintroduces an observer, a thing that *looks at* the icons.

is the self a self reference, or is it rather simply a self being whatever it happens to be... I am never aware of an extra self when I consider myself in the world, or apart from it. As a sentient self I never reference qualia, I simply am qualia.

Awareness does not reference its icons; it is the centring of them. That is the first-person statement of what F17 says structurally, and §8.4 turns it into the position against Hofstadter.

3.5 The temporal aspect: awareness is a process, consciousness need not be

Ruled by the author, 26 August 2026, in answer to the question left open by the 25 August diary line "the sentient being is in any moment as inanimate as a book".

The Self, as Individuality, has to be the consequence of change, so while consciousness could be argued to be static in the moment, awareness would have to be the whole of numerous instances of consciousness, much forming and decay of icons, a process as much like air at any stage of emergence, so yes it is process, air is change, but from change emerges the vantage point that is internality. It is a perspective on being, and it can be a perspective on anything's being.

The ruling is finer than the question, and it should be carried in its finer form. **The process-claim attaches to awareness, not to consciousness.** An earlier formulation had consciousness itself being "in the changing", which is too strong: a set of icons

obtaining is a state, and can be taken at an instant. What cannot be taken at an instant is awareness, because awareness is *the whole of numerous instances* of that state.

So the three storeys gain a temporal reading, and it costs nothing to hold:

Storey	Temporal status
Icons	momentary; formed, lit, decaying
Consciousness	the obtaining of icons — arguable as a state at an instant
Awareness	necessarily across instances; the whole of many such states

An apparent tension, and its resolution. F65 has Dave as the whole and heart of the icons obtaining *now*, which reads synchronically; this ruling has awareness as the whole across many moments, which reads diachronically. They do not conflict. They are the same double-aspect structure applied to a second axis: Dave is whole-and-heart in **extension**, and awareness is instant-and-trajectory in **time**. A centre of gravity likewise has a location now and a path across moments, and is not two things for having both.

The trajectory is already accounted for. `icon_dynamics_v002.md` §7 has the centre recentring without discontinuous jumping, because the wave-function contribution of accumulating facts biases each configuration toward continuity with the last. That section was written as an answer to the continuity problem; on this ruling it is also **the account of what awareness is made of** — not a defence of awareness’s persistence but its constitution.

And the Self is what change leaves behind. Individuality as the consequence of change is F61 read forward: the Q3→Q4 turn loses the parts that made the whole and leaves the inner hole. What the process deposits is the shaped void, and that void is the self.

One consequence worth checking, flagged and not banked. If awareness is constitutively a process while consciousness may be a state, the framework’s answer to the unfolding argument (`positioning_iit_v001.md` §3.2) sharpens considerably. An unfolded feedforward network reproduces the input–output function without reproducing the temporal process — so it might possess icons, and consciousness in the framework’s sense, while lacking awareness. That is not an ad hoc rescue: it is **the p-blindsighter**, a figure the framework already recognises as conceivable (`conceivability_v001.md` §4.3). The unfolding argument would then be pointing at a case Iconism has a name for, which is a considerably better position than either horn of Doerig’s dilemma. *Needs the author’s ruling before it goes into the IIT note.*

4. Objectivity by sharing

4.1 The claim

Awareness as *subjective* fact is what the composite has by being a composite with a heart. Awareness as *objective* fact requires sharing.

This is the close of Tier 2, and by Tier 1’s own criterion — *a tier boundary is where a closure deposits individuality rather than law* — it is where the individuality-deposit

occurs that forces Tier 3, with the spirit-fact as the surplus. That prediction is recorded and routed; developing it is Spirit's (§7.2).

4.2 Sharing takes two forms, and the second appears to be original

sharing can actually take two forms, there is the sharing of experience between different individuals, and then there is sharing one's experience with oneself, i.e. being self-aware, having mindfulness about oneself.

Self-awareness as sharing with oneself makes mindfulness a *structural operation* rather than a practice, and as far as I can find it is original to the framework. Together with §3.3 it says what the operation consists in: taking the objective viewpoint on one's own task-performing self — the gaze of the other, with the other being the self.

This is the item to take to a journal. It is a substantive claim, it is unfamiliar, it follows from machinery already in place, and it engages a literature (on self-awareness, metacognition, and reflective distance) that the framework has otherwise not touched.

4.3 Objectivity is not truth, and not universality

the personal is objectively true if shared, just not necessarily universal. Universal truth can only come about when all personal truths are in accord, which seldom happens, well never really.

So sharing effects the structural move **out of internality into fact** — the Q4→Q1 step — rather than making content true. This is the safe answer and it is the author's own; a constitutive reading of sharing would otherwise invite the charge of consensus-truth about consciousness.

And it forced a correction the author made himself, which the paper should carry because it is a good example of the framework catching its own error. The June Tier 3 candidate has *"Untruth: the unshareable, which cannot persist."* That is wrong as written, and he caught it: untruth is eminently shareable and persists indefinitely as belief. What persists is the **fact of the belief**, which is perfectly true as a fact about minds; the untruth it contains anchors to nothing. In the framework's terms propaganda is a **partially-untrue fact offered as though fully anchored** — shareable, persistent, unsupported. His phrase for it is exact and citable: it *"can never be true, only truly propaganda."*

Untruth, properly defined, is *"when multiple facts are connected in such a way that they contradict other fact"* — which is over-determination, and connects the account to the conceivability criterion's third constraint.

4.4 The two registers, and the publication ruling

Sharing between individuals runs in two registers, and **neither is a channel**.

The ordinary register — the material link. *"people use words etc to point to the ideas in their minds... language is a reasonably effective way of communicating, and the more precise the language the clearer the message. A mathematical formula is very precise, but even that requires a translator to derive its meaning."* This is F38 and F46: reference runs through icons, and a medium holds meaning inanimately.

The exceptional register — common constraint, not transmission. *“there is no electromagnetic wave that can carry information from one mind to another, [but] the only thing forming the quantum wave function is fact, so if two individuals share facts so similar they are effectively identical, then the wave function of either will be just as identical, so the probability will be of identical outcomes for the individual realities.”* Identical twins are the mundane instance.

Why this is the right form of the claim (Claude’s note). It posits **no channel**. Nothing traverses; two systems under identical constraint collapse identically. That is Tier 1’s Pyramus-and-Thisbe shape, running on machinery icon_dynamics_v002.md §5 already has rather than machinery invented for the occasion. The *“as if”* is retained: behavioural identity under common constraint, not numerical identity of icons across brains.

The ruling, and it stands. *“For the purposes of any academic discussion, I would stick to whatever is entirely justifiable by the evidence of science, and the logic of the explanation.”* The paper takes the **shared-facts** register only. The stronger reading — one individual’s facts constraining another’s collapse directly, which would deliver transfer of content rather than convergence — is **O15**, open in the theory and out of the paper.

testability_v001.md §2 records why this is a prediction rather than a concession: constraint scales with sameness of meaning, so the signal is strongest where sameness is greatest, which is inside a single mind.

5. Spirit, on the Iconism side of the line

5.1 Identical in kind, different in extension

F18, and it is the rider that keeps the third term from looking like a second substance smuggled in.

Mind and spirit are **the same kind of item** — virtual facts, icon-wholes of the sort layer 3 obtains — **differing only in reach**. Mind is the live, currently-obtaining icons the brain is lighting now. Spirit is the whole standing collection of the individual’s true facts, with the lit-now included as its leading edge and the no-longer-lit retained.

Nothing of a different kind is introduced when the talk turns from mind to spirit. That is the whole of what Iconism needs to say about spirit’s ontology, and it is deliberately little.

5.2 What spirit does in Iconism

One job: **it contributes to the wave functions collapsing in the vicinity of the brain.** The Log’s statement stands —

Most of the time the contribution is too slight to divert outcomes that are otherwise heavily determined; occasionally — the moment of clarity, the butterfly’s wing — the spirit is sufficient to tip a balance, and the outcome is swayed.

— with **F71’s correction**, which is a queued source edit and not merely a note. *“Too slight”* had no mechanism behind it. It has one now: slight means **weakly connected in**

meaning. The context is the region; distance is irrelevant; the strength of the connection is the measure of its relevance. The moment-of-clarity case is a strongly connected fact tipping a balance.

This is also where “*memory is spirit is facts*” is cashed. Memory is not a store; it is the spirit-facts acting as constraints on the brain’s current guessing.

5.3 Siloing, and why recall is effortful

If the spirit-facts are all present as constraints, why is the rest of the spirit not simply available at once?

Siloing, and siloing is a brightness effect (F19). The living brain is loud: its own activity is bright enough to wall the currently-lit bundle off from the vast quiet field, admitting only what the guess-and-paint step brightens into the socket. Brightness is not only what lights an icon; it is what *silos* the mind.

This explains why a quieter brain lets more through — the relaxed self, the hypnagogic state — and it is the Iconism-side mechanism behind the mind-origin dreams of D6.

What happens to the siloing when the loud brain is gone is not Iconism’s question. It is flagged and left (§7.2).

5.4 The registers must not be run together

icon_dynamics_v002.md §5 states the discipline and this document repeats it because it is the easiest line to smudge.

The wholes Iconism deals with are **stable, not eternal**. An icon is a stable whole, a rock more stable, a proton more stable still — and even the proton may decay on long enough timescales. Stability is a matter of degree.

The **eternal-fact** register — what a whole becomes once it can no longer change — is Spirit’s. Both registers are in play whenever spirit is mentioned, and the paper should never let a claim slide from one to the other unmarked.

6. The elemental mappings

6.1 What is settled

The three terms carry elemental assignments, and they are not decoration: they are how the account connects to Tier 2’s quadrants and to the Emergence grid.

- **Consciousness — Air.** The gathering; the under-determined field in which icons form; mimicry of the world.
- **Spirit — the standing collection,** which sits with Fire as the lit settled fact: what can be added to but not changed.

6.2 An unresolved placement, and it should not be quietly harmonised

Awareness is assigned to Fire in the Philosophical Log and the project instructions, and to Water in the August dialogue and the Emergence grid.

The Log has *awareness as the centre of consciousness (Fire-element fact)*. The grid's Tier 2 row runs Change → Consciousness → Awareness → Memories, which places Awareness at the air→water turn. And the author in August: *"the water is reckoned by me to be aware of what it is being at any moment, of what any qualia feel like to be."*

A candidate resolution, Claude's, offered in the dialogue and not ruled on. **Subjective** awareness is at water — the closure into one whole, the individuality, what it is being at this moment. **Objective** awareness is that same centre deposited at the water→fire turn by sharing — the lit settled fact. On that reading the Log's Fire assignment is right about awareness-as-deposited and the August reading is right about awareness-as-lived, and §4's distinction between subjective and objective awareness is what the two elemental placements have been tracking all along.

If it holds it is tidy. It is also exactly the kind of tidiness the framework's own caution warns about, so it is recorded as a proposal and **needs the author's ruling**. Until then the paper should use the subjective/objective distinction and avoid the elemental assignment for awareness altogether, which costs nothing.

7. Where Iconism stops

7.1 The rule

The mechanism is Iconism's; the ontology is Spirit's. Psychological causation is the standard case: the *mechanism* by which spirit influences the conscious self — wave-function constraint, graded by sameness of meaning — is Tier 2's business, because it is how spirit acts in a life. The *ontology* of the constraining facts — their eternity, their persistence after demergence, what is brought along at birth — is Tier 3's.

7.2 What is flagged and left

- **The eternal-fact ontology** and what a spirit-fact *is* beyond being a true fact about the individual.
- **Post-mortem un-siloing.** §5.3 gives the in-life mechanism; what becomes of the silo when the loud brain stops is Spirit's, and the framework should resist the pull to answer it here, because it is the single most interesting question in the vicinity and therefore the one most likely to drag Tier 3 material into a Tier 2 paper.
- **Internalisation.** F47 gives the Iconism-side claim and only that: the machinery is the icon machinery — a socket shaped by spirit-facts rather than by sensory input, filled by the ordinary handshake. What is being an image *of*, and what accumulates across a life or before one, is Spirit's.
- **Communion and shared awareness** as the Tier 3 seed. §4 places the seed at the close of Tier 2, which is where the tier-boundary criterion predicted the Tier 3 forcing would sit. The June Tier 3 candidate fills already carry *communion* — *shared awareness* and *shared awareness multiplies truth*. Developing them is the Spirit project's.
- **The untruth restatement** of §4.3, which corrects a June Tier 3 line and therefore needs carrying across when that project opens.

7.3 One boundary question that is not settled

Valenced rejection (F44, O14). Aversion sharpens a socket rather than excluding a candidate — *“the more you try to push away the unwanted thing, the more its space is cleared and so it is automatically dragged back in.”* Tier 1 supplies sameness and difference; valenced rejection is neither. Either Iconism owes an account of it in the two, or it is Spirit’s and the boundary needs drawing. Flagged, not settled.

There is a related tension worth keeping visible: F33 has *difference excludes* while F44 has *aversion drags in*. The candidate resolution is that they concern different relations — F33’s difference is a mismatch between socket-shape and candidate, which properly excludes; F44’s pushing-away is a valenced relation to an icon whose shape is thereby held exactly. If that is right the framework must keep **structural difference** apart from **valenced rejection**, and the two have been sharing one word.

8. Positioning

8.1 Chalmers

Covered at §2.4. The short form for the paper: the objection is aimed at storey one, where the framework agrees with it; the positive claim is at storeys two and three, where it has no purchase.

8.2 Higher-Order Theory

The corpus has been thin here and this is the natural place to fix it, because HOT is the theory Iconism is most likely to be mistaken for.

HOT holds that a mental state is conscious in virtue of being represented by a higher-order state — a thought or perception directed at the first-order state. Awareness, on Iconism, looks superficially like that: a second thing, above the icons, in virtue of which they are had.

It is not, and the difference is total. Awareness is not a state that represents the icons. It is their **centre** — a virtual fact about the configuration, in the sense in which a centre of gravity is a fact about a system of masses. F41 says it in the first person: *I never reference qualia, I simply am qualia*. There is no second state, so there is nothing to represent, and nothing that could represent wrongly.

Two consequences worth stating.

The targetless-higher-order-state problem does not arise. HOT’s standard difficulty is what happens when the higher-order state misrepresents or has no target: is the subject conscious of something that is not there? On Iconism the question is ill-formed. A centre cannot misrepresent its configuration; it is wherever the configuration puts it.

But Iconism owes what HOT was built to explain. HOT exists to account for the difference between a state one has and a state one is *aware of having*. Iconism accounts for it by centring — the icon at the centre is the one that is had awarely, the peripheral ones are had without awareness — and that is a real answer rather than a refusal. §3.2’s gradient is where it lives.

8.3 Global Workspace

Global Neuronal Workspace has contents become conscious by being *broadcast*: a non-linear ignition makes a representation available across the system, and availability is what consciousness consists in.

Two differences, and the first is substantive rather than terminological.

Iconism is more liberal about consciousness and more restrictive about awareness. On GNW, a content that is not broadcast is not conscious. On Iconism, peripheral icons are *conscious* — consciousness is the obtaining of icons — and what they lack is the centre. So the two theories draw the line in different places and disagree about the status of the same states: what GNW calls unconscious processing, Iconism calls consciousness without awareness.

And centring is not broadcasting. A workspace is a functional mechanism — a place contents get to, and a process that puts them there. A centre is not a mechanism and not a place; it is where the configuration's focus falls, and it moves because the configuration moves. Iconism has no ignition event to look for.

Claude's note on where this could be pressed. The disagreement about peripheral states is not purely verbal, because the two theories predict differently about cases where availability and richness come apart — inattentional blindness, overflow experiments, the phenomenal-versus-access debate. Iconism sits naturally on the overflow side. That is a positioning claim rather than a test, and it is not developed here.

8.4 Hofstadter

The framework's reply to strange-loop accounts is not that the loop is wrongly described. It is that **there is no loop** — only a whole being what it is (F41). Self-reference requires two terms and a direction; awareness has neither.

The author's own view of both sides, from August 2026, is worth recording because it is even-handed and gives the positioning its tone: Penrose *"is closer to the answer because he sees that it requires looking at what physics does, but differently. He just doesn't know how"*; Hofstadter *"sees an impressive puzzle and says, that's it, which is what he accuses Penrose of. Neither explain enough to provide understanding."*

8.5 Sartre

Sartre has *le regard* — the Other's look — doing the objectifying. The framework has the look **self-administered**, and the self-administered look is precisely what makes awareness objective fact (§4.2).

This is a clean and publishable disagreement with a named figure, and one of the few places the corpus engages the phenomenological tradition directly. It should be one paragraph and no more; the framework has no wider quarrel with Sartre and should not start one.

8.6 The no-threshold consequence

F72, recorded here as a consequence of the account rather than as an aside:

there is nothing special about being human, other than the very much greater ability we have to understand. Animals do much of what we do, and deserve as much respect as we can give them.

If icons are the building blocks and understanding is a matter of degree, the framework has **no threshold on which to hang human exceptionalism**, and it should say so rather than leave a reader to notice. It is the same structure as the AI reservation: a criterion admitting of degree, with no line drawn across it.

9. What this document does not do

- **It does not develop the centre of awareness.** §3 states the double aspect; `centre_of_awareness.md` gives the analysis, including the transfer from `gravity_and_the_past_v1_0.md` §13.6.
 - **It does not develop the AI case.** §8.6 notes the shared structure and stops.
 - **It does not develop Spirit.** §7 draws the line and lists what is left.
 - **It does not settle the elemental placement of awareness.** §6.2 states the tension and proposes; it does not rule.
 - **It does not engage the metacognition literature**, which §4.2's self-awareness-as-sharing claim will eventually have to.
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10. Status and open questions

Firm. The three definitions and their exclusions (§1). The three storeys and the reply to Chalmers (§2). Dave, the moving centre, identity as centring, the refusal of the strange loop (§3). **The temporal aspect — awareness as constitutively a process, consciousness as arguably a state — ruled 26 August (§3.5).** Objectivity by sharing, the two forms, the two registers, and the untruth correction (§4). Mind and spirit identical in kind (§5.1). The wave-function contribution with F71's graded-relevance mechanism (§5.2). Siloing as a brightness effect (§5.3).

Proposals awaiting the author's ruling.

- **§2.1 — the plural reading of “consciousness is the obtaining of icons.”** If rejected, D9's wording has to change.
- **§2.4's first part — the type restriction.** Needs the author's own expansion; as it stands the principle it rests on is not stated.
- **§6.2 — the subjective/objective resolution of the Fire/Water placement.**

Queued source edits.

- **`icon_dynamics_v002.md` §5** — F71: remove the spatial language throughout; *too slight to divert outcomes* gains graded relevance as its mechanism.

Open.

- **014** — valenced rejection: Iconism's or Spirit's (§7.3).
- **015** — shared facts or the other's facts (§4.4). Out of the paper, open in the theory.

- **016** — peripheral dissipation and ordinary forgetting: same or different (§3.2).
 - **The F33/F44 tension** — structural difference against valenced rejection, and whether they have been sharing one word (§7.3).
 - **Whether §4.1's Tier 3 prediction holds** — that Tier 3 is forced by the same criterion as Tier 2, with the spirit-fact as the surplus. Recorded and routed; not this project's to settle.
 - **Whether the unfolded network is a p-blindsighter** (§3.5). If it is, the framework's answer to the unfolding argument improves and `positioning_iit_v001.md` §3.2 should be rewritten around it. Claude's inference from the 26 August ruling; needs the author's word.
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11. Candidate aphorisms

- *"Icons abound in a brain that is active, from birth to death."* (22 August 2026.) Consciousness as populous and constant.
 - *"It is the book, the movie and the play, all in one, the score, the poem and the performance."* (22 August 2026.) The composite, and the best-written sentence in the corpus. The three Charades categories, and the media that hold meaning inanimately — the composite is all of them *and* the performance.
 - *"Dave is both the whole and the heart."* (22 August 2026.) Awareness, and the virtual fact generally.
 - *"The gaze of the other, with the other being the self all along."* (22 August 2026.) Self-awareness, and the disagreement with Sartre in nine words.
 - *"I never reference qualia, I simply am qualia."* (18 July 2026.) No strange loop.
 - *"It can never be true, only truly propaganda."* (22 August 2026.) Untruth as a partially-untrue fact offered as though anchored.
 - *"There is nothing special about being human, other than the very much greater ability we have to understand."* (22 August 2026.)
 - *"Memory is spirit is facts."* (8 April 2025.) Borrowed from the substrate document because this is where the third term earns it.
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Companion documents: `icon_dynamics_v002.md` (§2.1 the constraint ladder, §5 the wave-function contribution, §7.4 the agency axis), `icon_and_world_v001.md` (§4.4 layered-not-filled, §5 what the brain adds), `conceivability_v001.md` (§4.3 the p-blindsighter), `positioning_iit_v001.md` (§2.3 nesting), `testability_v001.md` (§2 why the publication ruling is a prediction), *Iconism Interface v002* (§5 relations-primitive), *The Tier Boundary v002* (§5 the tier criterion §4.1 invokes). Next in the chain: `centre_of_awareness.md`, then `ai_and_sentience.md`.