

The Remarkably Difficult Psychology of Creative Visualisation

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1. INTRODUCTION

One hundred years ago this week the war poet David Jones was wounded on the Somme. Unlike other war poets it took over 20 years for the horrors he had witnessed to work their way out into his writing. This workshop examines the cognitive processes involved (a) when poets re-render past visual experience as words, and (b) when readers of those words reconstruct the original emotions for themselves. The workshop tasks will thoroughly explore the mind's "semantic interlingua", that is to say, the as-yet-unbroken *deep-mind code* into which all incoming, and out of which all outgoing, communications have to be translated. The tasks therefore promise practical benefits to participants wishing to ground their visualisation practicum more effectively in the sciences of mind. Factsheets and suggestions for follow-up reading will be provided.

2. THE WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

The workshop will deliver five exercises, progressively targeted as follows:

2.1 The Elements of Cognition

The first exercise will demonstrate the difference between left-brain and right-brain cognitive skills. The second exercise will demonstrate the difference between reflex behaviours, instinctive-emotional behaviours, and propositionally reasoned "go/no-go" behaviours, and will show how these are variously represented in hierarchical models of the cognitive system such as that by Dennett (1978), as summarised in Figure 1. The third exercise will demonstrate the cyclicity and basic 7-Hertz "clock-speed" of mental processing. The fourth exercise will draw upon the author's 20 years Speech and Language Therapy teaching by demonstrating how the 12 fundamental communication skills may be clinically assessed.

2.2 Communicating Aesthetic Emotion

The final exercise will bring the earlier threads together by having participants physically enact the flows of information during the end-to-end processing of a target phrase taken from the WW1 war poem *In Parenthesis* (Jones 1937). They will literally stand within the poetic mind at the points where creation works its magic, and from there observe the mind's encoding system at first hand. They will be carefully guided in this deliberately theatrical "immersion" in the creative act by the present author's *Konrad* cognitive simulation platform (Smith 2009, 2013, 2014).

2.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon completing the exercises participants will be able to:

- locate the main left- and right-brain stages of comprehension and poetic creation on published cognitive models.
- monitor the cognitive scientific literature for advances of relevance to their personal professional practice.

3. REFERENCES

- Dennett, D. C. (1978) *Brainstorms*. Penguin: London.
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- Smith, D. J. (2013) *Artificial Consciousness*. CA World 2013, Las Vegas, USA.
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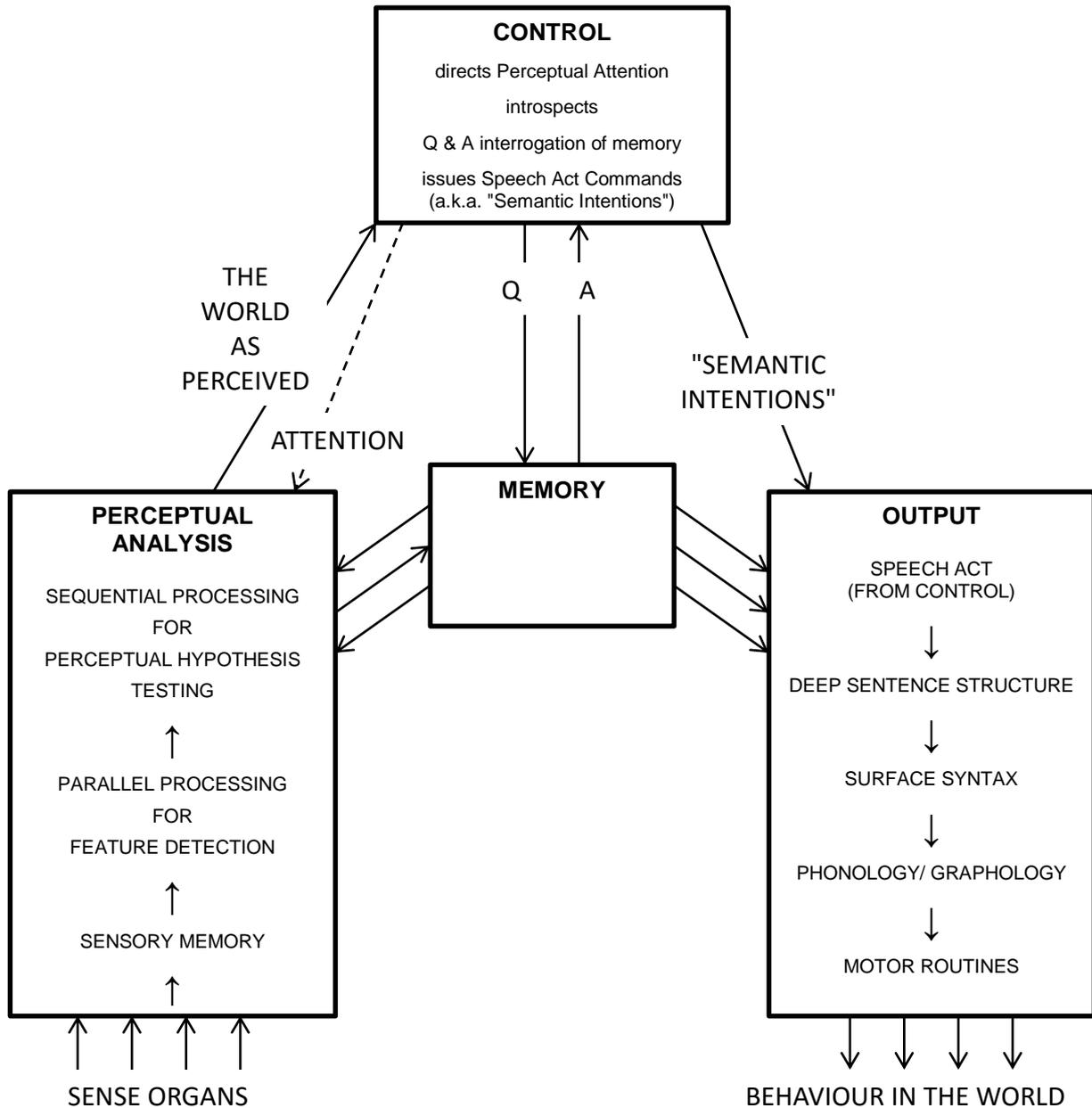


Figure1: Dennett's Hierarchical Model of Cognition. The CONTROL module is responsible for the mind's traditional higher functions. It receives input from the PERCEPTUAL ANALYSIS module, has "executive" access to MEMORY, and can initiate tactical behavioural responses via the OUTPUT module (shown here in sentence production mode). Creative visualisation involves the full architecture, save that overt MOTOR ROUTINES are withheld and sensory input is self-generated (i.e., "imagined") rather than actual. (After Dennett, 1978, p155.)