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Noetics, a New but Old Understanding of Mind and Reality

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ABSTRACT

Noetics is examined here as an interdisciplinary approach to how lived experience becomes a knowledge claim and informs action. This narrative review brings historical philosophy into dialogue with cognitive science, contemporary theories of consciousness, contemplative traditions, and artificial intelligence. Its contribution is a proposed four-domain framework comprising experience, mechanisms, epistemic justification, and responsible action. The framework makes explicit the transitions between subjective reports, causal explanations, warranted beliefs, and practical decisions, while keeping their evidential requirements distinct. It incorporates competing theories without treating them as mutually confirmed and distinguishes the construction of experienced reality from claims that consciousness creates the physical world. Applications are proposed for education, mental health, organizational decisions, and AI governance, with observable outcomes and safeguards against overconfidence and anthropomorphism. The synthesis is conceptual rather than experimentally validated; its incremental value must be tested against established metacognitive and neurophenomenological approaches.

1. Introduction

Noetics is used in this article as an interdisciplinary inquiry into knowing: the relation among lived experience, cognitive mechanisms, justification, and action. The term is associated with the Greek nous (intellect) and noesis (intellection or understanding). Plato and Aristotle provide historical antecedents, rather than evidence that a single continuous scientific discipline has existed since antiquity (Aristotle, 2016; Plato, 2004).

However, noetics is more than an academic discipline. It also represents a way of thinking that encourages individuals to transcend the limitations of everyday assumptions and engage with fundamental questions of human existence. In this sense, the study of consciousness is simultaneously the study of ourselves.

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Over recent decades, the question of consciousness has moved from the margins of philosophical discourse to the center of scientific and social debate. Advances in neuroscience, artificial intelligence, cognitive psychology, and contemporary physics have generated new questions concerning the nature of mind, perception, and reality. Despite remarkable scientific progress, one fundamental question remains unresolved: What is consciousness, and what role does it play in our understanding of the world? (Chalmers, 1995; Dehaene, 2014).

The article asks what a noetic perspective adds to already interdisciplinary consciousness studies and cognitive science. Neither subjective experience nor interdisciplinary research is exclusive to noetics. The proposed contribution is a structured account of transitions from experiencing something to claiming to know it and acting on that claim. This focus connects consciousness research with epistemic evaluation and practical accountability; it does not introduce a new neural mechanism or claim to solve the hard problem.

The roots of noetic thought can be traced back to ancient Greece. Greek philosophers distinguished between different forms of knowledge. While sensory perception (aisthesis) and discursive reasoning (dianoia) represented lower levels of cognition, noesis referred to direct intellectual insight into truth. Such insight was believed to enable an understanding of the fundamental structures of reality (Aristotle, 2016; Plato, 2004).

Among the earliest thinkers to develop this perspective was Plato. In his dialogues, he argued that genuine knowledge does not arise solely from sensory experience but from the mind's capacity to apprehend eternal Forms or Ideas. According to Plato, the sensory world is merely an imperfect reflection of a higher realm of immutable truths. Through philosophical contemplation, the human intellect can transcend the limitations of ordinary perception and attain the highest form of knowledge (Plato, 2004).

Aristotle approached the concept differently. Although he emphasized empirical observation and experience, he also acknowledged the existence of intellectual intuition, which enables the understanding of universal principles underlying particular phenomena. In this way, Aristotle established an important bridge between empirical inquiry and rational reflection (Aristotle, 2016).

These traditions establish a historical vocabulary of insight and understanding. The following review evaluates their relationship to modern research without assuming that ancient metaphysical commitments have been empirically confirmed.

2. Research Methodology

This article employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary, and conceptually oriented research methodology to examine noetics as a field concerned with consciousness, cognition, subjective experience, and the relationship between mind and reality. Because noetics intersects with philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, cognitive science, artificial intelligence, and contemplative studies, no single empirical method would adequately address the full complexity of the subject. The research therefore combines a structured literature review, conceptual analysis, historical interpretation, comparative examination of theories, and interdisciplinary synthesis.

The study is based primarily on qualitative desk research. It does not involve original experiments, clinical interventions, surveys, interviews, or the collection of personal data. Instead, it analyses and synthesises previously published academic literature relevant to the principal themes of the article. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the central research questions concern concepts that cannot be examined exclusively through quantitative measurement. Consciousness includes first-person experience, self-awareness, intentionality,

cognition, personal identity, and subjective qualities of experience. Although neuroscience can identify neural correlates of conscious states, philosophical and conceptual analysis remains necessary when considering why physical processes are accompanied by subjective experience (Nagel, 1974; Chalmers, 1995; Chalmers, 1996).

The methodology is therefore interpretative rather than merely descriptive. The objective is not only to summarise existing theories but also to determine how different disciplines conceptualise consciousness and whether their explanations can be integrated within a coherent noetic framework. The analysis is guided by the following research questions:

- How can noetics be defined and situated within contemporary scientific and philosophical inquiry?
- How have historical philosophical traditions influenced modern understandings of consciousness and knowledge?
- What contributions do neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and consciousness studies make to the explanation of subjective experience?
- How does consciousness influence perception, cognition, identity, and the construction of experienced reality?
- What is the relationship between intelligence, information processing, and consciousness in the context of artificial intelligence?
- To what extent can scientific, philosophical, psychological, and experiential perspectives be integrated within contemporary noetics?

These questions provide the analytical framework for the selection, classification, and interpretation of the literature. The study draws on books, peer-reviewed journal articles, philosophical works, interdisciplinary studies, and institutional documents. Sources were selected according to four principal criteria: relevance to the research questions, academic authority, historical importance, and contribution to the development of a particular concept or theory. The selected literature was examined through thematic content analysis. Relevant arguments, concepts, theories, and research findings were organised into several thematic categories:

- the historical and philosophical foundations of noetics;
- the nature and definition of consciousness;
- cognition, perception, memory, and reasoning;
- subjective experience and qualia;
- consciousness and the construction of reality;
- psychological development and self-awareness;
- meditation and contemplative experience;
- artificial intelligence and machine consciousness;
- ethical and social implications of consciousness research.

Within each category, the study compares different theoretical positions. For example, the Global Workspace Theory explains consciousness through the global availability of information, whereas Integrated Information Theory associates consciousness with the degree of integrated information present within a system (Baars, 1988; Tononi, 2004). Predictive-

processing approaches describe perception as an interaction between sensory input and internally generated models of the world (Friston, 2010; Clark, 2013). These theories were compared according to their explanatory scope, assumptions, strengths, and limitations.

The analysis also distinguishes between empirical findings and philosophical interpretations. Evidence that particular brain regions or networks correlate with memory, attention, emotion, or conscious access does not by itself resolve the philosophical question of why neural processes produce subjective experience. Maintaining this distinction prevents empirical correlation from being treated as a complete explanation of consciousness (Chalmers, 1995; Dehaene, 2014).

The methodology has several limitations. First, the study is based on secondary analysis and does not provide new experimental evidence. Its conclusions depend upon the quality, scope, and interpretation of the existing literature. Second, the interdisciplinary character of noetics creates conceptual difficulties. Terms such as consciousness, awareness, mind, intuition, cognition, and reality may have different meanings across philosophy, neuroscience, psychology, and spirituality. Complete conceptual uniformity is therefore neither possible nor necessarily desirable. Third, the study primarily reflects intellectual traditions and academic literature available in English or through widely available English translations. Non-Western philosophical and contemplative traditions are relevant to noetics but are not examined with the same historical depth as Western philosophical approaches. Fourth, consciousness research remains theoretically unsettled. No universally accepted theory explains the relationship between neural activity and subjective experience. The conclusions of the article must therefore be understood as an interdisciplinary interpretation of current knowledge rather than a final explanation of consciousness (Chalmers, 1995; Seth and Bayne, 2022).

3. Result of Research

3.1 Noetics and Modern Science

The rapid development of science during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has transformed humanity's understanding of consciousness. Advances in neuroscience, cognitive psychology, artificial intelligence, and information science have provided unprecedented insights into the workings of the human mind. At the same time, these discoveries have revealed the extraordinary complexity of consciousness and highlighted how much remains unknown (Dehaene, 2014; Seth & Bayne, 2022).

While modern science has achieved remarkable success in explaining numerous aspects of perception, memory, learning, and decision-making, the fundamental nature of conscious experience continues to challenge researchers. This challenge has become one of the central motivations behind contemporary noetics, which seeks to integrate scientific knowledge with philosophical reflection and experiential understanding (Chalmers, 1995; Seth & Bayne, 2022).

Neuroscience investigates the structure and function of the nervous system, particularly the brain. Modern imaging technologies such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), electroencephalography (EEG), and positron emission tomography (PET) have enabled researchers to observe neural activity in unprecedented detail. Scientific studies have identified several brain regions associated with specific cognitive functions. The prefrontal cortex plays a crucial role in planning, decision-making, and self-control. The hippocampus is essential for memory formation, while the amygdala contributes significantly to emotional processing and threat detection (LeDoux, 2000; Miller & Cohen, 2001; Squire, 2009).

For example, patients with damage to the hippocampus often experience severe difficulties forming new memories. One of the most famous cases is that of Henry Molaison (known in scientific literature as H.M.), who underwent brain surgery in 1953 to treat epilepsy. Following the operation, he lost the ability to create new long-term memories while retaining many previously acquired skills. His case revolutionized scientific understanding of memory and demonstrated the importance of specific neural structures in conscious experience (Corkin, 2002; Scoville & Milner, 1957).

Despite these advances, neuroscience still faces a profound challenge: explaining how subjective experience arises from physical brain processes. Scientists can identify neural activity associated with seeing a color, hearing a sound, or experiencing an emotion, but the subjective quality of these experiences remains difficult to explain (Chalmers, 1995; Nagel, 1974).

One of the most influential contemporary philosophers of mind, David Chalmers, introduced the concept of the "hard problem of consciousness". According to Chalmers, science has made considerable progress in explaining what the brain does. Researchers can describe mechanisms of attention, perception, memory, and behavior. These questions are sometimes referred to as the "easy problems" of consciousness—not because they are simple, but because they can, in principle, be explained through physical processes (Chalmers, 1995, 1996).

Cognitive science combines psychology, neuroscience, computer science, linguistics, and philosophy to investigate information processing and embodied activity. Computational accounts and enactive approaches offer different models of cognition. The latter emphasize relations among brain, body, environment, and lived experience, demonstrating that cognitive science already includes perspectives sometimes presented as uniquely noetic (Baars, 1988; Varela et al., 1991).

The emergence of artificial intelligence has introduced new perspectives on consciousness. Modern AI systems can perform tasks that were once considered uniquely human, including language translation, image recognition, strategic planning, and creative content generation. These achievements have prompted an important question: could machines eventually become conscious? (Searle, 1980; Turing, 1950).

The complexity of consciousness increasingly encourages collaboration across scientific disciplines. Neuroscientists investigate brain activity, psychologists study behavior and cognition, philosophers examine conceptual foundations, and computer scientists develop computational models. For example, meditation research provides a useful illustration of interdisciplinary inquiry. Neuroscientists examine changes in brain activity during meditation, psychologists investigate its effects on well-being, while philosophers explore what such experiences reveal about the nature of self-awareness (Lutz et al., 2008; Tang et al., 2015).

The overlap among these disciplines therefore creates a demanding test for noetics: integration alone cannot establish novelty. Its proposed value lies in specifying how experiential descriptions and mechanistic accounts constrain knowledge claims and how those claims guide accountable action.

3.2 The Problem of Consciousness

The problem of consciousness is one of the oldest and most challenging questions in philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience. Despite centuries of intellectual inquiry and decades of scientific research, there is still no universally accepted explanation of what consciousness is or how it emerges. Every human being experiences consciousness directly

through thoughts, emotions, perceptions, and self-awareness, yet defining this phenomenon remains remarkably difficult (Chalmers, 1995; Seth & Bayne, 2022).

The study of consciousness occupies a unique position among scientific and philosophical problems because the investigator and the object of investigation are fundamentally intertwined. Human beings use consciousness itself to study consciousness. Consequently, research in this field raises not only scientific questions but also profound philosophical and existential issues concerning the nature of reality, identity, and human existence.

In everyday language, consciousness is often understood as awareness of oneself and one's surroundings. However, philosophers and scientists generally recognize that consciousness encompasses a much broader range of phenomena. Consciousness includes the ability to perceive external stimuli, experience emotions, remember past events, imagine future possibilities, reflect upon one's own thoughts, and maintain a sense of personal identity. These capacities collectively create the subjective world each individual inhabits (Block, 1995; Dehaene, 2014). Qualia refer to the subjective qualities of experience, such as the following examples (Chalmers, 1996; Nagel, 1974):

- the redness of a red rose,
- the taste of coffee,
- the sensation of pain,
- the sound of music,
- the feeling of happiness.

Although these experiences are familiar to everyone, they are difficult to describe objectively. A scientist can explain the physical properties of light associated with the color red, but such explanations do not fully capture what it feels like to experience redness (Chalmers, 1996).

An influential contribution to this debate was made by Thomas Nagel in his famous essay *What Is It Like to Be a Bat?* Nagel argued that every conscious organism possesses a subjective perspective on reality. Even if scientists could fully understand the biology and neural mechanisms of a bat, they would still not know what it feels like to experience the world through echolocation. Bats navigate by interpreting reflected sound waves rather than relying primarily on vision. Humans can study this process scientifically, but they cannot directly experience the bat's subjective perspective. Nagel's argument demonstrates a fundamental distinction between objective knowledge and subjective experience. Understanding the mechanisms underlying consciousness does not automatically provide access to the experience itself (Nagel, 1974).

Contemporary philosophers often distinguish between two forms of consciousness: phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness. Phenomenal consciousness refers to subjective experience itself. It concerns what it feels like to have an experience (Block, 1995). Access consciousness concerns the availability of information for reasoning, verbal report, and behavioral control. The distinction matters because a measure of reporting or task performance may not isolate phenomenal experience (Block, 1995).

One remarkable characteristic of consciousness is its apparent unity. Human experience appears as a coherent whole despite being generated by numerous independent neural processes. Vision, hearing, memory, emotion, language, and bodily sensations are processed by different brain regions. Nevertheless, individuals experience them as parts of a single conscious reality. This phenomenon is often referred to as the binding problem. Researchers continue to investigate how distributed neural activity becomes integrated into unified

conscious experience. An everyday example can be observed while watching a film. The brain simultaneously processes moving images, spoken dialogue, music, emotional reactions, and narrative meaning. Despite the complexity of these processes, viewers experience the movie as a single coherent event rather than as separate streams of information (Dehaene, 2014; Treisman, 1996).

Consciousness is closely connected to the concept of personal identity. Most people experience themselves as the same individual throughout their lives despite continuous physical and psychological change. Memory plays a crucial role in maintaining this sense of continuity. By connecting past experiences with present awareness, memory creates the narrative structure through which individuals understand their lives (Conway et al., 2004).

One of the central questions in modern science concerns the relationship between consciousness and the brain. Most researchers agree that conscious experiences are closely associated with neural activity. Brain injuries, neurological disorders, and pharmacological substances can dramatically alter conscious states (Dehaene, 2014; Seth & Bayne, 2022).

One influential scientific explanation is the Global Workspace Theory developed by cognitive scientists such as Bernard Baars. According to this model, consciousness functions as a central workspace where information from different brain systems becomes globally available. Most neural processing occurs unconsciously. Only a small portion of information enters conscious awareness at any given moment (Baars, 1988; Dehaene, 2014).

3.2.1 Competing Explanations and Their Limits

Higher-order theories hold that a mental state becomes conscious through a suitable higher-order representation of being in that state. They connect consciousness to self-representation, but should not be equated with deliberate introspection or accurate metacognition. Lau and Rosenthal (2011) discuss evidence for this approach and responses to objections about prefrontal activity. The noetic relevance is an epistemic distinction: reporting awareness of a state and correctly evaluating that state are separate achievements.

Lamme's (2006) recurrent-processing approach assigns a central role to recurrent interactions in sensory systems rather than requiring global broadcast for every conscious percept. It allows a distinction between perceptual experience and access for report. This competes with, rather than merely supplements, global-workspace explanations where they specify different conditions for consciousness. The comparison requires controls for attention, task demands, and reporting; confidence and verbal availability cannot automatically substitute for experience.

Integrated information theory proposes that consciousness corresponds to a system's intrinsic causal organization, whereas workspace approaches emphasize the availability of information across processing systems (Baars, 1988; Tononi, 2004). Predictive processing explains perception through inference and prediction error, but is not by itself a complete criterion of consciousness (Clark, 2013; Friston, 2010). Recent adversarial testing challenged selected predictions of both global neuronal workspace and integrated information theories; it did not establish a universally accepted winner (Cogitate Consortium et al., 2025). Noetic synthesis must preserve such disagreements rather than portray all theories as converging on one explanation.

Panpsychist proposals treat experiential properties as fundamental and widespread, rather than emerging from wholly nonexperiential ingredients. Strawson (2008) argues for this position within realistic physicalism. A central objection concerns how putative elementary experiences could constitute a unified subject. Neutral monism, exemplified by Russell (1921), instead treats mind and matter as constructions from a more basic neutral domain. Neither proposal

follows simply from neural correlations or contemplative reports. These are ontological alternatives whose explanatory commitments must remain separate from experimentally supported mechanisms.

Illusionism challenges the assumption that introspection reveals the intrinsic phenomenal properties posited by many philosophers. Frankish (2016) proposes explaining why cognitive systems judge themselves to have such properties. This does not deny that people make experiential reports or undergo pain-related processing. It questions the interpretation of those reports. For noetics, the position is a necessary counterweight to treating felt immediacy as epistemic certainty: the experience of knowing can itself require explanation.

3.2.2 Contemplative Traditions and the Study of Experience

Buddhist and Indian contemplative traditions contribute differentiated accounts of attention, selfhood, and awareness. Buddhist analyses often challenge a permanent self and examine how identification arises; Advaita Vedanta places greater emphasis on witnessing awareness and nonduality. These traditions differ internally and should not be collapsed into a single "Eastern" theory. Thompson's (2014) comparative study brings Indian philosophy and contemplative experience into dialogue with neuroscience, while Varela et al. (1991) connect Buddhist reflection with embodied cognition.

Their methodological contribution is the cultivation of careful attention to experience, not automatic authority about metaphysics. Descriptions of reduced self-boundaries can motivate hypotheses about attention and self-modeling without proving that individuality or the external world is unreal. Neurophenomenology seeks reciprocal constraints between disciplined experiential descriptions and experimental measures (Varela, 1996). Practice type, training, language, social context, and expectations must be documented. Mindfulness research also requires careful definitions, credible comparison conditions, and attention to adverse experiences (Van Dam et al., 2018). The present coverage is selective and does not represent all non-Western traditions.

3.3 The nature of Cognition

Cognition is one of the fundamental capacities of the human mind. Through cognitive processes, individuals acquire knowledge, interpret experiences, solve problems, make decisions, and navigate the complexities of everyday life. Every aspect of human activity—from perceiving the external environment to engaging in ethical reflection—depends upon the ability to process and understand information (Neisser, 1967).

Within the framework of noetics, cognition is understood as far more than the simple acquisition of facts. It is a multidimensional process involving perception, memory, reasoning, imagination, intuition, reflection, and conscious awareness. Through these interconnected processes, human beings construct meaningful representations of reality and develop increasingly sophisticated forms of understanding (Neisser, 1967; Piaget, 1936/1952; Varela et al., 1991).

The study of cognition has occupied philosophers, psychologists, neuroscientists, and educators for centuries. Different intellectual traditions have emphasized different aspects of the cognitive process. Empiricists stressed the importance of sensory experience, rationalists emphasized the role of reason, while various spiritual and philosophical traditions highlighted the significance of intuition and direct insight. Contemporary noetics seeks to integrate these perspectives into a comprehensive framework capable of explaining the complexity of human understanding (Kant, 1781/1998; Varela et al., 1991).

Understanding cognition is essential because it lies at the heart of all human knowledge. The ways in which people perceive, interpret, and evaluate information influence their beliefs,

values, decisions, and actions. Consequently, the study of cognition is not merely an academic exercise but a crucial component of understanding human nature itself (Nickerson, 1998; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973).

To understand how cognition operates, it is necessary to examine the various processes that contribute to the formation of knowledge. These include perception, memory, reasoning, intuition, imagination, and critical reflection. Together, these processes create the dynamic system through which human beings engage with reality and construct their understanding of the world (Evans, 2008; Kahneman & Klein, 2009; Neisser, 1967).

Every act of cognition involves a relationship between a subject and an object. The subject is the knower—the individual who perceives, thinks, and understands. The object is that which is known. At first glance, this relationship appears straightforward. However, closer examination reveals numerous philosophical complexities. Does the human mind perceive reality exactly as it exists? Or does it actively construct its own representation of reality? This question has occupied philosophers for centuries. Immanuel Kant argued that human beings never experience reality directly. Instead, experience is mediated through cognitive structures that organize sensory information into meaningful patterns. For example, when two people witness the same event, they may interpret it differently based on prior experiences, beliefs, emotions, and expectations. This suggests that cognition is not merely passive observation but an active process of interpretation (Kant, 1781/1998).

Perception represents the starting point of most cognitive activity. Through the senses, individuals receive information about the external world. Visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory experiences provide the raw material from which knowledge is constructed. However, perception is far more complex than simple sensory reception. Modern neuroscience demonstrates that the brain actively interprets sensory signals rather than merely recording them. Consider a familiar example. When reading a sentence, individuals do not consciously analyze every individual letter. Instead, the brain rapidly recognizes words, predicts meanings, and constructs coherent understanding. In many cases, people can even read sentences containing minor spelling errors because the brain automatically fills in missing information. This ability allows efficient interaction with the environment but also reveals that perception involves interpretation rather than direct replication of reality (Clark, 2013).

One of the most compelling demonstrations of the constructive nature of cognition is found in optical illusions. The famous Müller-Lyer illusion consists of two lines of identical length. Because of the orientation of arrow-like markings at their ends, one line appears longer than the other. Even after learning that the lines are equal, many observers continue to perceive the illusion.



Figure 1. The Müller-Lyer illusion

Note. Both horizontal shafts have the same physical length. Opposite fin orientations may produce an apparent length difference. Original schematic created for this revision from the standard geometric configuration; no external artwork reproduced.

Another example is the Rubin Vase illusion. Observers may perceive either a vase or two faces looking at each other, depending on how the brain organizes visual information (Gregory, 1997).

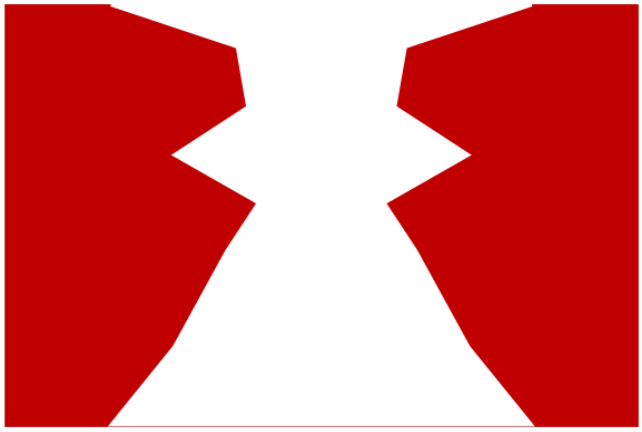


Figure 2. A vase and faces figure

Note. The white central region can be seen as a vase, while the red side regions can be seen as opposing facial profiles. The shared contours illustrate reversible figure–ground organization. Original schematic created for this revision; no external artwork reproduced. See Gregory (1997) for discussion of perceptual interpretation.

Memory plays a crucial role in cognition because it allows individuals to retain information and connect past experiences with present understanding. Without memory, learning would be impossible. Every experience would disappear immediately after occurring, preventing the formation of knowledge, identity, and personal continuity (Baddeley, 2000; Squire, 2009).

Reasoning enables individuals to analyze information, identify relationships, and draw conclusions. It forms the basis of science, mathematics, philosophy, and everyday problem-solving. Two major forms of reasoning are commonly distinguished: Deductive reasoning proceeds from general principles to specific conclusions. Inductive reasoning moves from specific observations toward general principles (Evans, 2008).

Although rational analysis is often considered the hallmark of cognition, intuition also plays a significant role in human understanding. Intuition refers to the ability to arrive at judgments or insights without conscious step-by-step reasoning. Many decisions are made intuitively, particularly in situations requiring rapid responses. An experienced physician may sometimes recognize a medical condition almost immediately upon seeing a patient, even before conducting detailed analysis. Similarly, a chess grandmaster can often identify strong moves intuitively after years of experience (Kahneman & Klein, 2009).

Contemporary noetics views cognition as a dynamic interaction between perception, memory, reasoning, intuition, and consciousness. Knowledge is not merely accumulated but actively constructed through engagement with the world. This perspective recognizes both the strengths and limitations of human understanding. While cognition enables remarkable achievements in science, technology, and culture, it is always influenced by subjective perspectives and cognitive structures (Clark, 2013; Varela et al., 1991).

3.4 Consciousness and the Construction of Reality

In this article, the construction of reality refers to the construction of experienced representations and socially shared meanings. Predictive processing concerns how perception is organized through interactions between incoming signals and prior models; it does not imply

that conscious thought creates physical reality (Clark, 2013; Friston, 2010). This distinction separates an empirical account of perception from an unsupported metaphysical inference.

The reality experienced by individuals is therefore not a direct copy of the external world but a meaningful representation constructed by consciousness. This idea has profound implications for understanding perception, identity, culture, and human behavior (Varela et al., 1991).

Human beings continuously create mental models that help them understand and navigate the world. These models consist of beliefs, expectations, memories, concepts, and assumptions that organize experience into coherent patterns. Mental models serve an important adaptive function. Without them, every encounter with the environment would require complete reinterpretation. Instead, the brain uses previously acquired knowledge to predict and understand new situations efficiently. For example, when a person enters a classroom for the first time, they immediately recognize desks, chairs, a teacher, and students. This recognition occurs because the brain already possesses a mental model of what a classroom typically represents (Johnson-Laird, 1983).

Modern neuroscience increasingly supports the view that perception is an active process rather than passive observation. The brain constantly receives enormous quantities of sensory information. Because processing every detail would be impossible, it selectively interprets data and constructs a coherent representation of reality. A useful example is visual perception. The retina contains a natural blind spot where the optic nerve exits the eye. Yet individuals do not perceive a hole in their visual field because the brain automatically fills in missing information using surrounding visual cues (Clark, 2013).

Expectations can affect subjective symptoms and some physiological responses through learning and contextual mechanisms. Placebo research illustrates these effects, but does not establish that belief cures disease or that all treatment outcomes are mentally constructed. Effects vary by outcome and context, and clinical decisions still require condition-specific evidence (Wager & Atlas, 2015).

Reality is not constructed solely at the individual level. Human societies also create shared systems of meaning that shape collective experience. Sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann argued that many aspects of social life are products of collective agreement rather than objective physical facts. Money provides a clear example. A banknote possesses value not because of its physical properties but because individuals collectively agree to assign it economic significance (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

One of the most significant constructions produced by consciousness is personal identity. Most individuals experience themselves as stable and continuous persons. Yet psychological research suggests that identity is continuously shaped and reshaped through experience (Conway et al., 2004).

Culture provides another powerful example of reality construction. Every society develops values, beliefs, symbols, traditions, and norms that influence how members interpret the world. These cultural frameworks shape perceptions of morality, success, beauty, authority, and social relationships (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The relationship between consciousness and reality remains one of the most fascinating subjects in noetics. While scientific research continues to investigate the mechanisms underlying perception and cognition, growing evidence indicates that reality as experienced by human beings is shaped by expectations, beliefs, cultural frameworks, memories, and conscious interpretation. This does not imply that objective reality does not exist. Rather, it suggests that human access to reality is always mediated through consciousness (Clark, 2013; Friston, 2010).

3.5 Noetics and Psychology

Noetics and psychology overlap in their study of mind, experience, and behavior. Psychology already investigates subjective reports, meaning, and self-awareness. The proposed noetic framework therefore makes no claim to own these topics; it organizes the relationship between experience, explanations, the warrant for beliefs, and decisions (Varela et al., 1991).

The relationship between noetics and psychology has become increasingly significant in recent decades. Advances in cognitive science, neuroscience, positive psychology, and psychotherapy have revealed that human development involves more than the acquisition of knowledge or the modification of behavior. It also involves self-awareness, meaning-making, personal transformation, and the development of consciousness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Silvia & O'Brien, 2004).

Psychology emerged as a scientific discipline during the late nineteenth century, focusing on the systematic study of mental processes and behavior. Since then, numerous schools of thought have developed, each offering different perspectives on human nature. Behaviorism emphasized observable behavior and learning processes. Psychoanalysis explored unconscious motivations and internal conflicts. Humanistic psychology focused on personal growth and self-actualization. Cognitive psychology examined information processing, memory, and decision-making (Neisser, 1967; Rogers, 1961).

One of the strongest connections between psychology and noetics can be found in humanistic psychology. Psychologists such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers emphasized the inherent potential for growth and development within every individual. Maslow proposed a hierarchy of human needs culminating in self-actualization—the realization of one's fullest potential. According to his theory, individuals who satisfy basic physiological and psychological needs become increasingly capable of pursuing creativity, authenticity, and personal fulfillment (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1961).

Positive psychology emerged as a response to the traditional focus on psychological disorders and dysfunction. Rather than concentrating exclusively on mental illness, positive psychologists investigate the factors that contribute to well-being, resilience, happiness, and personal fulfillment. For example, studies consistently demonstrate that individuals who cultivate gratitude often report higher levels of life satisfaction and psychological well-being. Similarly, people who perceive their work as meaningful tend to experience greater motivation and fulfillment. Noetics shares this interest in understanding the conditions that support human development and expanded awareness (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Self-awareness represents one of the most important capacities of human consciousness. Through self-awareness, individuals become capable of observing their own thoughts, emotions, motivations, and behaviors. This capacity enables intentional personal development. Individuals who understand their strengths, weaknesses, values, and habitual patterns are better equipped to make conscious choices and pursue meaningful goals (Silvia & O'Brien, 2004).

One of psychology's most influential contributions to understanding human behavior is the concept of the unconscious mind. Although people often perceive themselves as rational decision-makers, research indicates that many cognitive and emotional processes occur outside conscious awareness. For example, individuals frequently form impressions of others within seconds of meeting them. These impressions may influence subsequent interactions even when the underlying processes remain unconscious. Noetics recognizes the importance of understanding these hidden dimensions of consciousness because greater awareness of

unconscious influences can promote personal freedom and self-mastery (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999).

Creativity occupies a special place at the intersection of psychology and noetics. Creative activity involves generating novel ideas, solutions, and forms of expression. Research indicates that creativity emerges from the interaction of multiple cognitive processes, including imagination, intuition, memory, and analytical thinking (Runco & Jaeger, 2012).

Human life inevitably involves adversity, uncertainty, and loss. Psychology has increasingly focused on understanding resilience—the capacity to adapt and grow in the face of challenges. Research demonstrates that resilience is influenced by factors such as social support, emotional regulation, optimism, and a sense of purpose. Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl argued that meaning plays a crucial role in human survival and psychological well-being. Based on his experiences during the Holocaust, Frankl concluded that individuals are often capable of enduring extraordinary hardship when they perceive a deeper purpose in their lives (Frankl, 2006; Southwick et al., 2014).

Empathy can contribute to cooperation, but its relation to morality is complex and can include partiality toward familiar individuals or groups. Greater awareness does not automatically produce justice or responsible conduct. A noetic application must therefore assess behavior and explicit ethical reasons rather than infer moral improvement from a report of expanded consciousness (Decety & Cowell, 2014; Kohlberg, 1981).

The relationship with psychology is complementary only if noetics supplies useful analytical structure beyond existing approaches. The four-domain proposal below identifies evidence requirements and practical consequences; whether it improves judgments beyond established self-awareness and metacognitive methods remains an open empirical question (Silvia & O'Brien, 2004).

3.6 Consciousness and Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence systems increasingly perform language, vision, and problem-solving tasks. The 2025 AI Index documents gains in benchmark performance and expanding applications, alongside continuing limitations. Such capability measures establish task performance rather than subjective consciousness (Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, 2025).

These achievements have generated excitement as well as profound philosophical questions. Among the most significant is whether artificial systems could ever develop consciousness. This question lies at the intersection of computer science, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology, and noetics. Understanding the relationship between consciousness and artificial intelligence has therefore become one of the central challenges of contemporary thought (Searle, 1980; Turing, 1950).

One of the most common misconceptions is the assumption that intelligence and consciousness are identical phenomena. Human intelligence refers to the capacity to learn, reason, solve problems, and adapt to changing circumstances. Consciousness, by contrast, refers to subjective awareness and experience. A calculator can perform mathematical operations far more quickly than most humans, yet few would argue that it possesses conscious awareness. Similarly, modern AI systems can analyze enormous amounts of information and perform highly sophisticated tasks without necessarily experiencing anything subjectively (Chalmers, 1995; Searle, 1980).

Turing (1950) proposed the imitation game as a behavioral approach to the question of machine intelligence. Success in such a test concerns conversational indistinguishability under specified conditions; it is not a sufficient test of understanding, sentience, or consciousness.

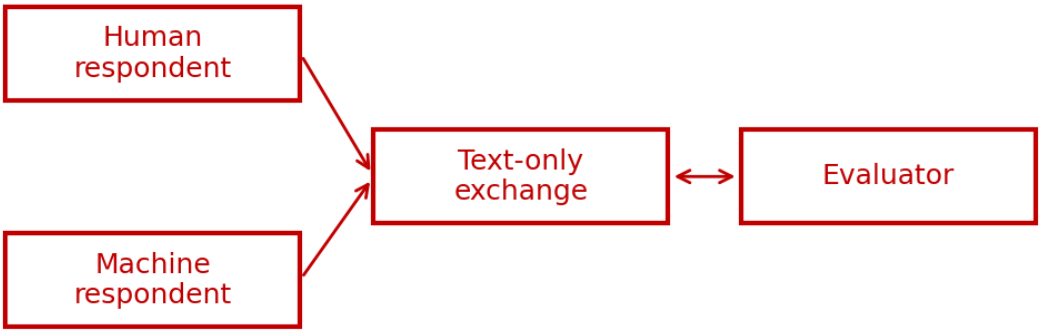


Figure 3. The Turing test

Note. An evaluator communicates through text with a human and a machine respondent and attempts to distinguish them. The arrows represent text communication, not neural processing. Original schematic created for this revision based on Turing (1950); no external artwork reproduced. Behavioral indistinguishability does not establish consciousness.

While the Turing Test remains influential, critics argue that successful imitation of human behaviour does not necessarily demonstrate understanding. One of the most famous criticisms of strong artificial intelligence was proposed by philosopher John Searle. Searle's thought experiment imagines a person sitting inside a room who does not understand Chinese. By following detailed instructions, the individual can manipulate Chinese symbols and produce appropriate responses to questions written in Chinese. Searle argued that computers function similarly. They manipulate symbols according to rules but do not necessarily understand their meaning. Consequently, information processing alone may be insufficient to produce consciousness (Searle, 1980).

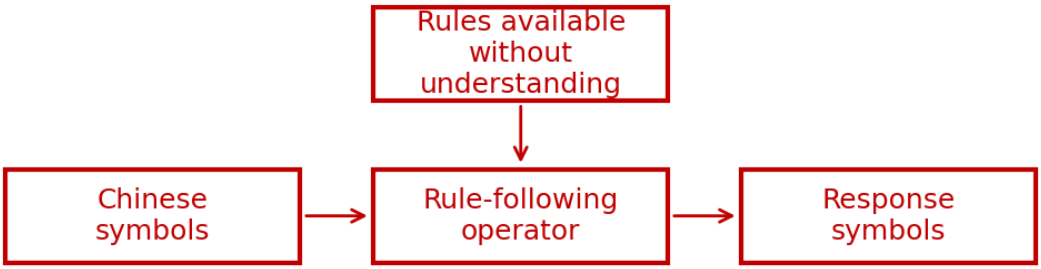


Figure 4. The Chinese room thought experiment

Note. An operator uses formal rules to transform Chinese input symbols into output symbols without understanding Chinese. Arrows indicate symbol handling and rule consultation. The figure illustrates Searle's argument, not an experimentally established conclusion about all AI. Original schematic created for this revision based on Searle (1980); no external artwork reproduced.

Many modern AI systems are inspired by the structure of biological neural networks. Artificial neural networks consist of interconnected computational units that process information collectively. Through training, these networks learn to recognize patterns and improve performance. The inspiration for these systems comes from the human brain, which contains approximately 86 billion neurons connected through trillions of synaptic relationships (Azevedo et al., 2009).

There is no consensus on sufficient conditions for machine consciousness. Butlin et al. (2023) derive computational indicators from several consciousness theories and apply them to AI architectures. Their report is a preprint and its indicators are theory-dependent: satisfying them would not prove consciousness, while fluent language alone is weak evidence. This distinction connects mechanism assessment to the justification of claims without prematurely settling the ontology of artificial experience.

AI systems can generate outputs conventionally described as creative, including text, images, and music. Output novelty or usefulness does not establish experienced intention or awareness. Evaluation should specify the task and avoid inferring phenomenology from anthropomorphic descriptions (Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, 2025).

The relationship between consciousness and artificial intelligence remains one of the most fascinating intellectual challenges of the modern age. While AI continues to demonstrate increasingly sophisticated forms of intelligence, subjective consciousness remains uniquely mysterious. Machines can process information, solve problems, and generate creative outputs, yet the existence of genuine machine awareness remains uncertain. For noetics, this uncertainty is particularly significant. The debate surrounding artificial consciousness forces researchers to clarify what consciousness actually is. Understanding whether machines can become conscious ultimately requires a deeper understanding of consciousness itself (Searle, 1980; Seth & Bayne, 2022).

4. Discussion

4.1 A Four-Domain Noetic Framework

The review supports a modest, explicit definition: noetics concerns how experience becomes a claim to knowledge and how that claim informs action. Its proposed contribution is a four-domain taxonomy: experience, mechanisms, epistemic justification, and responsible action. These are analytical domains, not stages of a fixed neural sequence. Relations are reciprocal: mechanisms constrain experience, reports guide research, reasons revise beliefs, and outcomes feed back into subsequent judgments.

Experience asks what is lived or reported: perceptual content, affect, bodily awareness, felt insight, or changes in self-experience. First-person descriptions and carefully elicited interviews are relevant evidence, but reports are affected by vocabulary, memory, and demand characteristics. Buddhist phenomenological distinctions, embodied cognition, and the phenomenal/access distinction help specify what is being described (Block, 1995; Thompson, 2014; Varela et al., 1991).

Mechanisms asks what processes could explain the report or performance. Workspace, recurrent-processing, higher-order, and integrated-information accounts propose different conditions; predictive processing and memory research explain related cognitive functions. Behavioral, neural, and computational measures are required here. A neural correlate does not establish an ontological interpretation, and competing mechanisms must be tested rather than combined indiscriminately (Lamme, 2006; Lau & Rosenthal, 2011; Seth & Bayne, 2022).

Epistemic justification asks why an experiential or theoretical claim deserves acceptance. It requires attention to calibration, alternative explanations, external verification, and domain-specific reliability. Intuition may be trustworthy where environments contain learnable regularities and feedback, but the feeling of certainty alone is insufficient (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). Illusionism supplies a critical account of introspective error; panpsychism and neutral monism expose background ontological commitments. These positions test the interpretation of knowledge claims rather than function as equivalent empirical confirmations (Frankish, 2016; Russell, 1921; Strawson, 2008).

Responsible action asks what follows from accepting a claim, who is affected, and how outcomes will be assessed. Educational practice, clinical choices, organizational decisions, and AI policies belong here. Descriptive findings cannot alone determine what ought to be done; explicit values, proportional safeguards, and evaluation are needed. This domain connects epistemic responsibility to ethical responsibility without claiming that awareness necessarily improves conduct (Decety & Cowell, 2014; UNESCO, 2021).

The distinctive proposal is the joint assessment of transitions between these domains. Three recurring errors become visible: treating vivid experience as proof, treating a mechanistic correlate as a complete account of subjective meaning, and treating a plausible theory as sufficient justification for an intervention. Consciousness studies, cognitive science, neurophenomenology, and epistemology already address parts of these issues. The novelty claimed here is their organization into a reusable appraisal procedure, not discovery of previously unknown subject matter or an exclusive theoretical territory.

For example, a manager's felt insight belongs initially to experience; expertise and affect offer candidate mechanisms; historical forecasting accuracy and contrary evidence bear on justification; a documented decision and its effects establish accountability. A contemplative report of reduced self-boundaries can be analyzed in the same way, while clinical benefit and metaphysical conclusions remain separate claims. This shared procedure integrates the reviewed strands without requiring agreement on a single ontology.

4.2 Practical Implications and Evaluation

In education, the framework suggests pairing learning reflections with confidence ratings, retrieval exercises, feedback, and transfer tasks. Students would describe how certain they feel, identify possible cognitive sources, compare confidence with correctness, and explain how they will revise their study decisions. A pilot should compare this procedure with an established metacognitive teaching approach, using confidence–accuracy calibration, retention, and transfer as outcomes. These are proposed applications rather than demonstrated effects of noetics; participation in contemplative exercises should be voluntary and culturally responsive.

In mental health, the domains distinguish a person's report of distress or meaningful experience from a clinical explanation and from an intervention claim. Reflective or mindfulness practices may be examined as adjuncts within established care, with consent, qualified oversight, and monitoring of symptoms, functioning, acceptability, and adverse experiences. They should not be presented as a substitute for indicated treatment. The framework's potential contribution is to clarify evidence and patient meaning, not to establish a new therapy or universal benefit (Van Dam et al., 2018).

For organizational decisions, decision journals can record initial intuitions, confidence, relevant expertise, alternative hypotheses, dissenting views, and expected outcomes before a choice is made. Subsequent review can measure forecast calibration, reversal in response to evidence, and decision quality. This extends the taxonomy into an auditable process and

directly addresses confirmation bias. Added value would require comparison with existing structured decision protocols rather than merely documenting increased self-reported awareness (Kahneman & Klein, 2009; Nickerson, 1998).

For AI governance, experience claims concern what users attribute to a system and what the system says about itself; neither proves machine experience. Mechanism assessment examines architecture and theory-specific indicators; justification records uncertainty and competing interpretations; action specifies disclosure, human oversight, escalation, and review. Governance should distinguish human risks such as manipulation and overreliance from the unsettled question of possible artificial moral status. The proposal favors documented evidence and proportionate review rather than assigning consciousness from fluent dialogue or withholding human safeguards until consciousness is settled (Butlin et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2021).

4.3 Limits and A Research Agenda

The taxonomy is conceptual and has not been validated as a measurement instrument. Its categories may overlap; introspective reports, neural measures, and ethical reasons are not interchangeable evidence. English-language selection and selective treatment of contemplative traditions constrain coverage. No new finding establishes that noetics explains consciousness more successfully than its neighboring disciplines, and no claims about paranormal causation follow from this review.

A testable next step is to compare four-domain appraisal with an active control using a standard metacognitive or decision framework. Preregistered studies could assess whether explicit separation of experience, mechanism, justification, and action reduces unwarranted inference, improves calibration, and increases revision after disconfirming evidence. Interviews could examine usability and cultural interpretation, while decision tasks assess behavior. If the procedure provides no incremental benefit, the claim of distinctive practical value should be weakened or abandoned. Such testing would turn a descriptive interdisciplinary label into an accountable research proposal.

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