What Is a “Normal” Mind Like; How Is Mine Different?

or

“What Survivors Taught Me Over the Past Thirty Years!”

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A. An Overview of the Current Science of Consciousness

1. "Brain Proves Mind" (Bernard Baars 2003)

- Inner speech
- Mental imagery
- Conscious perception
- Conscious emotional feeling
- Conscious effort
- Fringe experience

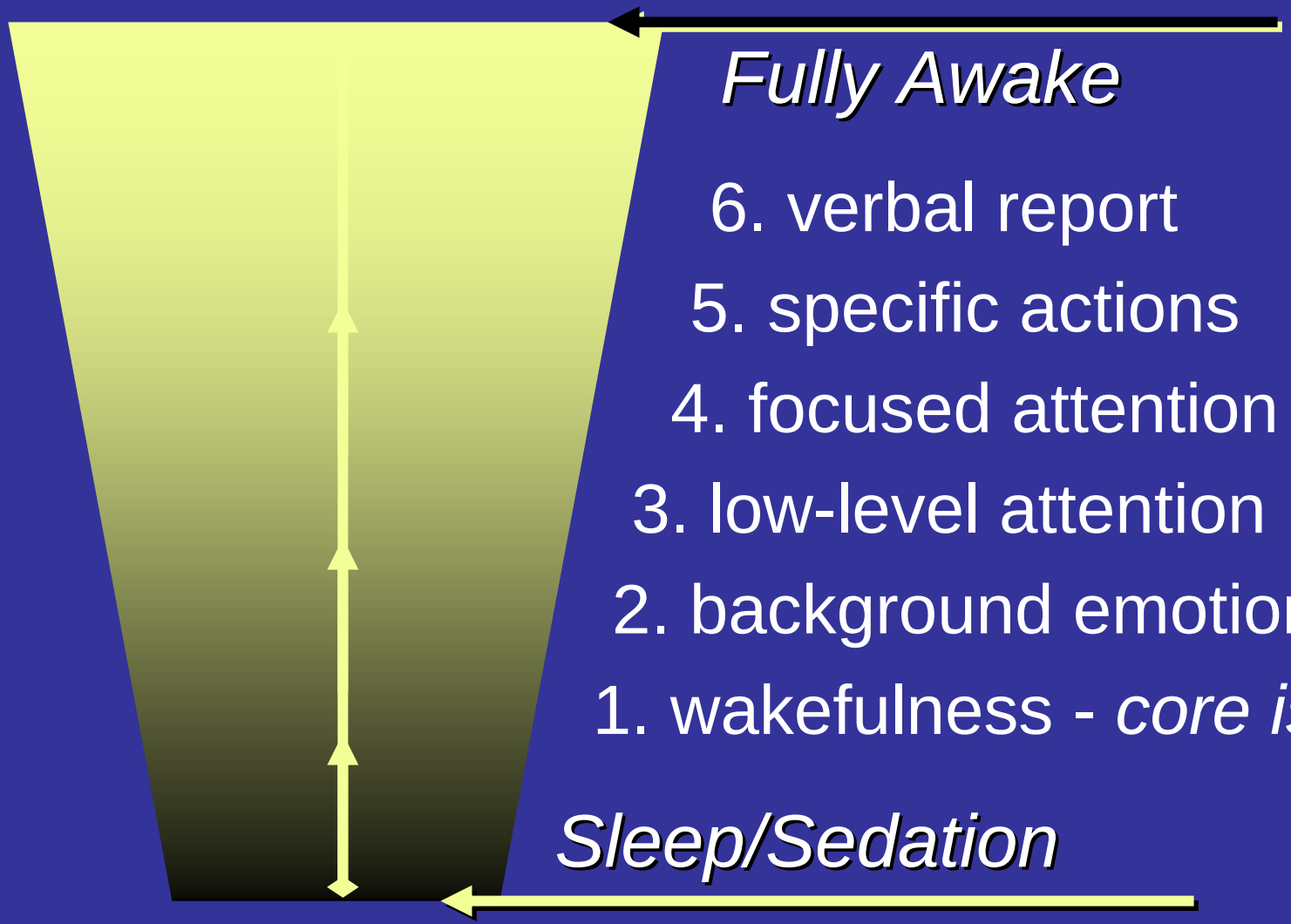
2. There is a Sense of Core Identity

Antonio Damasio (1999)

- The Core is seen as necessary for awareness
- Features of core consciousness:
  - …Is necessary for the range of consciousness
  - …Is separate from its functions (e.g. wakefulness)
  - …Is closely associated to emotion in the brain
  - …Is central to all of one's knowledge and thoughts
- The Core is present upon awaking

a. Manifestations of Core Consciousness

Antonio Damasio



Fully Awake

6. verbal report
5. specific actions
4. focused attention
3. low-level attention
2. background emotions
1. wakefulness - *core is present*

Sleep/Sedation

b. The Core Holds the Sense of Humanity

- Personal - Asserts autonomy
- Social - Desires affiliation
- Existential - Seeks meaning
- Transcendental - Holds hope
- Spiritual - Lives by values

3. A System Exists to Support the Core

a. Damasio:

The core is supported by

- Autobiographical selves
- Proto selves

b. Baars:

Theorizes aspects of self with specific functions in the awareness process.

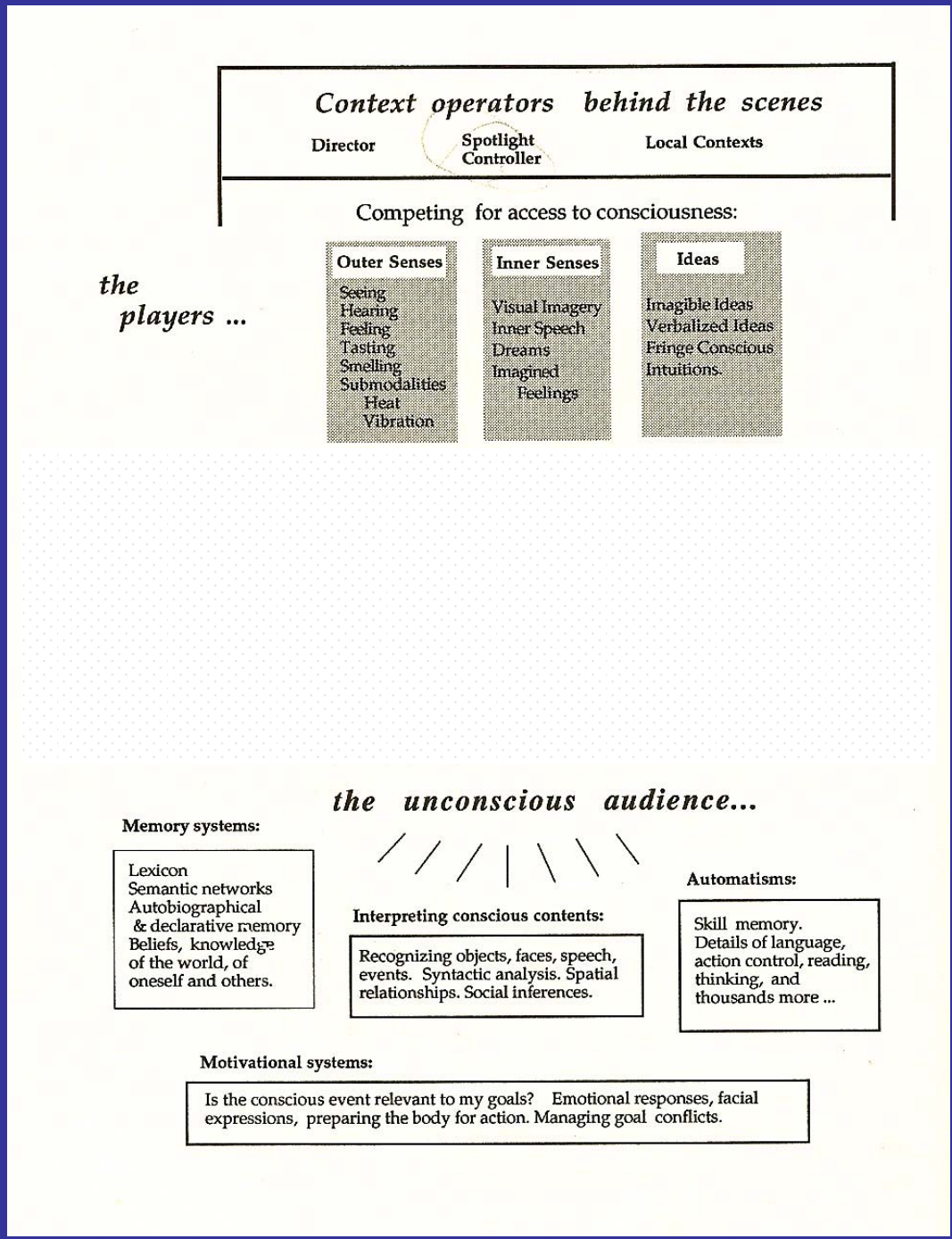
- The Players
- The Spotlight Controller
- The Context Operators
- The Audience

c. Schacter & Tulving:

Different memory dynamics interact implicitly or explicitly in one's consciousness. These can be extrapolated as functions of consciousness and aspects of self.

Parts of Self that Serve Functions in Consciousness

Baars:
"In The Theater of Consciousness"

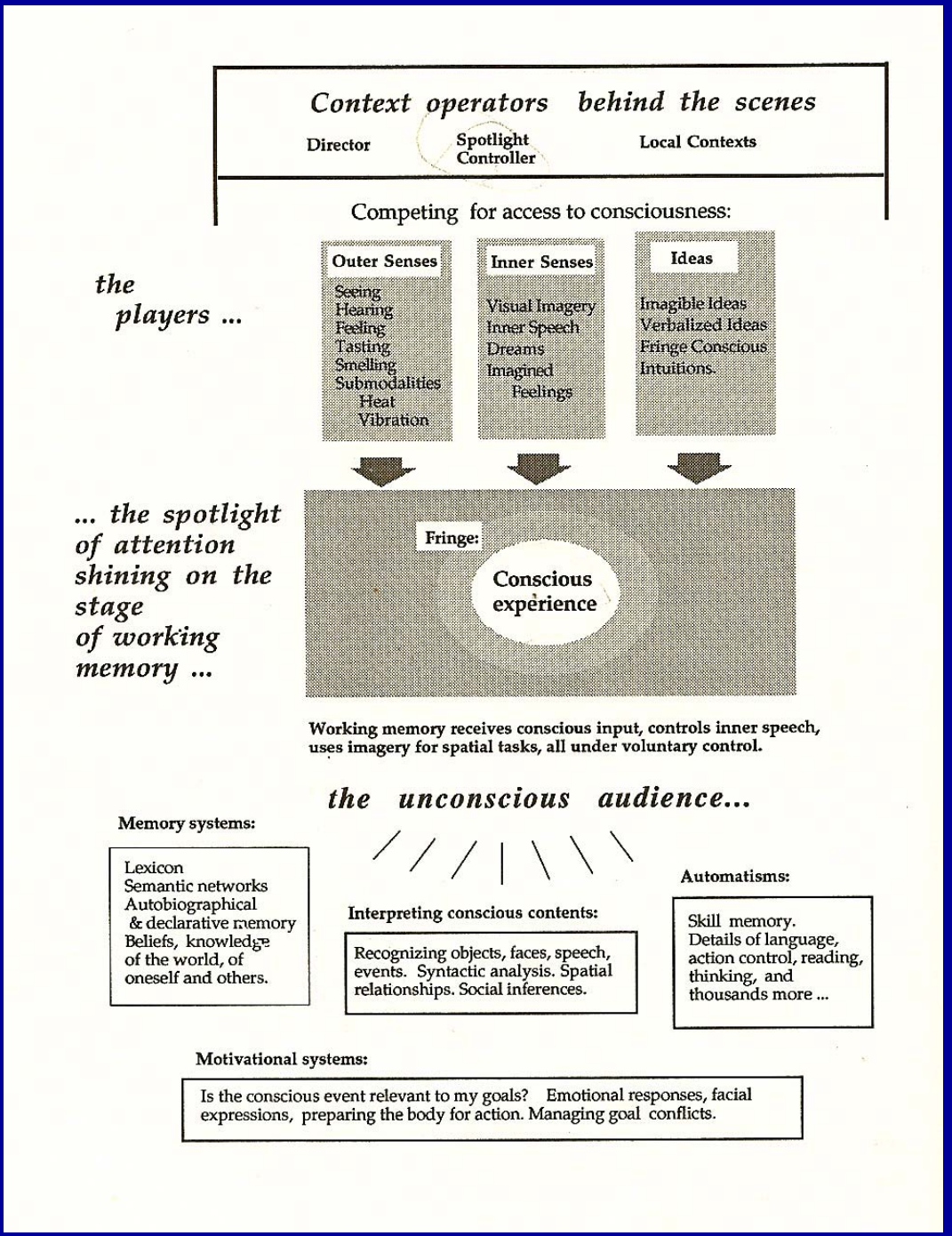


4. A Nexus Serves Core Mindfulness

- Is phenomenological in nature
  - A. Damasio: “Stepping into the Light”
  - B. Baars: “The Spotlight on the Stage”
- Provides interaction between:
  - The past and the present
  - The inner and the outer world
  - The mind and the body
- Is a place in the Core’s mind

The Broadcast Workspace that Parts of Self Use to Manifest Consciousness

Baars:
"In The Theater of Consciousness"



B. What Trauma Survivors Have Taught Us

1. About System Structure:

- A Core self, who hides in the past for safety.
- Outside parts who do jobs based on context.
- Inside parts who help with hope.
- Bridge parts who help with continuity.

2. About The “Blending Place” (i.e. Nexus):

- The place in the mind where parts blend.
- Symptoms correlate to what/who is present.

2. A Voluntary Exercise About the Nexus

- Picture a Purple Cow:

  Is there scenery or just the image?

  Which direction does it face?

  Is there movement?

  Is it solid or spotted, deep or light in hue?

  Can you see the udder?

- Are you aware of the part of you that brought the picture forward? *SB*
- Where did the picture appeared in your awareness? *BP*

3. Practical Applications to Healing

1. Examine beliefs about Core self.
2. Core creates a present-based Safe Place.
3. Develop present-based tools for healing.
4. Develop a healing team to do Nexus work.
5. Keep your Nexus in the present and clear.
6. As scenes come up, rescue parts.
7. Give them reassurance and present day reality.
8. Recognize healing will happen in stages.
9. You will be able to thrive.

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