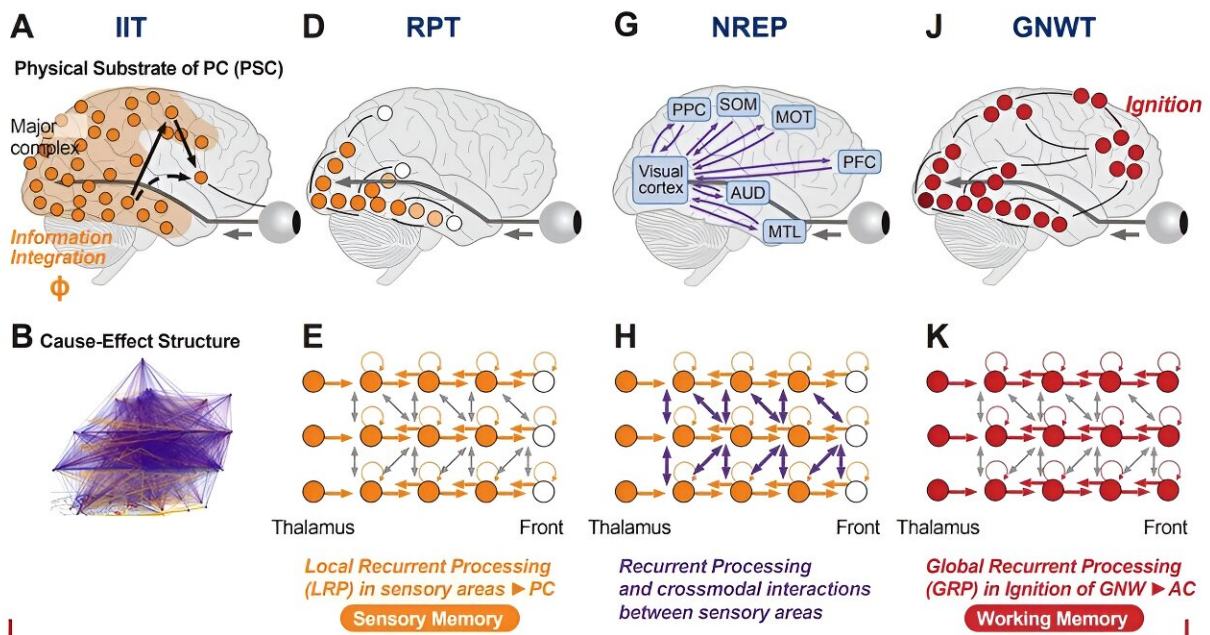


Conflicting theories of consciousness may fit together after all

February 28 2024, by Anne Wennberg



The figure illustrates four of the five theories of consciousness that the authors propose complement each other and can explain different aspects of consciousness. Credit: (2024). DOI: 10.31234/osf.io/9byzu

Professor Emeritus Johan Frederik Storm has led research forming the basis of a [article](#) that aims to uncover an alternative approach to the understanding of how human consciousness functions. It is currently available on the *PsyArXiv* preprint server and in prepress in the journal *Neuron*.

"We suggest how different theories that appear to be conflicting can perhaps be combined after all and complement each other within the framework of a more comprehensive theory of [consciousness](#)," explains Storm.

There are many differing schools of thought about consciousness in the field of brain research and Storm puts forward the factors that have probably led to a lot of apparent disagreement.

"Research has shown that [physical processes](#) in the brain give rise to human experiences such as seeing, hearing and feeling pain and joy. But how this actually happens is only poorly understood and this mystery counts as one of science's greatest unresolved questions. The question is particularly difficult because it involves complex philosophical and scientific problems and there is still a great deal of disagreement as to which theory is the most promising," says Storm.

Scientists use different terminology

In the article, Storm and the other researchers point out how the dispute is probably due to the fact that the theories try to explain different aspects of the complex phenomenon "consciousness" while using divergent terminology and wording.

"We contend that theories which may 'appear' to be highly contradictory can probably nevertheless be amalgamated and complement each other as part of a more comprehensive theory. The article was written by twelve leading scientists in the international field of research on consciousness, together with supporters of various theories.

"It has been very well received and will be published in the journal *Neuron* on 15 May, where it will be the core feature of a special edition devoted to the subject of consciousness," says Storm.

More information: Johan F. Storm et al, An integrative, multiscale view on consciousness theories_Eary version of paper in press in *PsyArXiv* (2024). [DOI: 10.31234/osf.io/9byzu](https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/9byzu)

Provided by University of Oslo

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