

# 24.09 Minds and Machines

## spring 2007

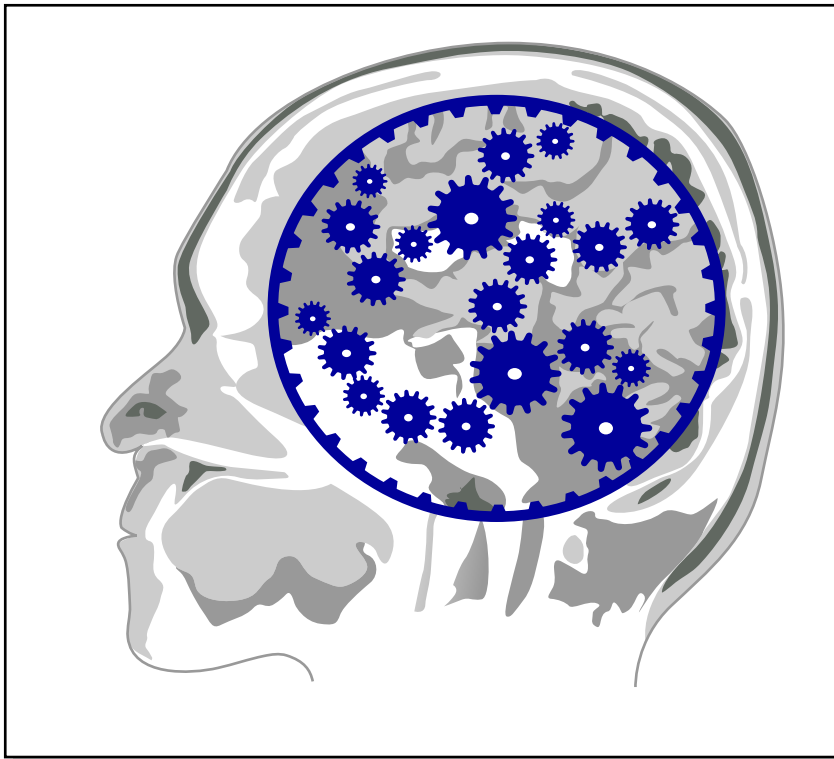


Figure by MIT OCW.

- McGinn's mysterianism, contd.
- consciousness and intentionality

1. brains do not give rise to consciousness by magic, by the power of God, etc. Consciousness is a natural phenomenon; therefore:
2. there is some brain property P in virtue of which the brain is the basis of consciousness (equivalently, there's a theory T, referring to P, which fully explains the dependence of conscious states on brain states)
3. there are two ways we might grasp P: by investigating consciousness directly (this includes introspection and also conceptual analysis); by studying the brain
4. we can't grasp P by introspection, or by conceptual analysis
5. if we can grasp P by studying the brain, then either P is a perceptible property of the brain, or else a property we could introduce to explain perceptible properties of the brain
6. P is not a perceptible property of the brain
7. P could not be introduced as part of an explanation of perceptible properties of the brain; therefore:
8. we can't grasp P (that is, human minds are cognitively closed with respect to P); therefore (from 2, 8):
9. the mind-body problem has a solution, but we are constitutionally incapable of understanding it

- consider part of McGinn's argument for (7):

[I]t seems to me that even a more unconstrained conception of inference to the best explanation would still not do what is required: it would no more serve to introduce P than it serves to introduce the property of consciousness itself. To explain the observed physical data we need only such theoretical properties as bear upon those data, not the property that explains consciousness, which does not occur in the data. Since we do not need consciousness to explain those data, we do not need the property that explains consciousness...No concept needed to explain the workings of the physical world will suffice to explain how the physical world produces consciousness.



Figure by MIT OCW.

- but suppose that we include, in our “data”, facts about consciousness and mentation in general, in addition to physical facts about the brain
- McGinn’s line of argument apparently does not work against the view that we might one day need to introduce  $P$  to explain such psychophysical data



Figure by MIT OCW.

- 3 There are (only) two ways we might grasp P: (i) by investigating consciousness directly (this includes introspection and also conceptual analysis); (ii) by studying the brain [as a purely physical system]
- read this way, as McGinn seems to intend, (3) is false
  - there is a third way we might grasp P—P could be introduced as part of an explanation of the psychophysical features of the brain
  - what is McGinn's argument against this third way?

# 24.09 Minds and Machines

## spring 2007

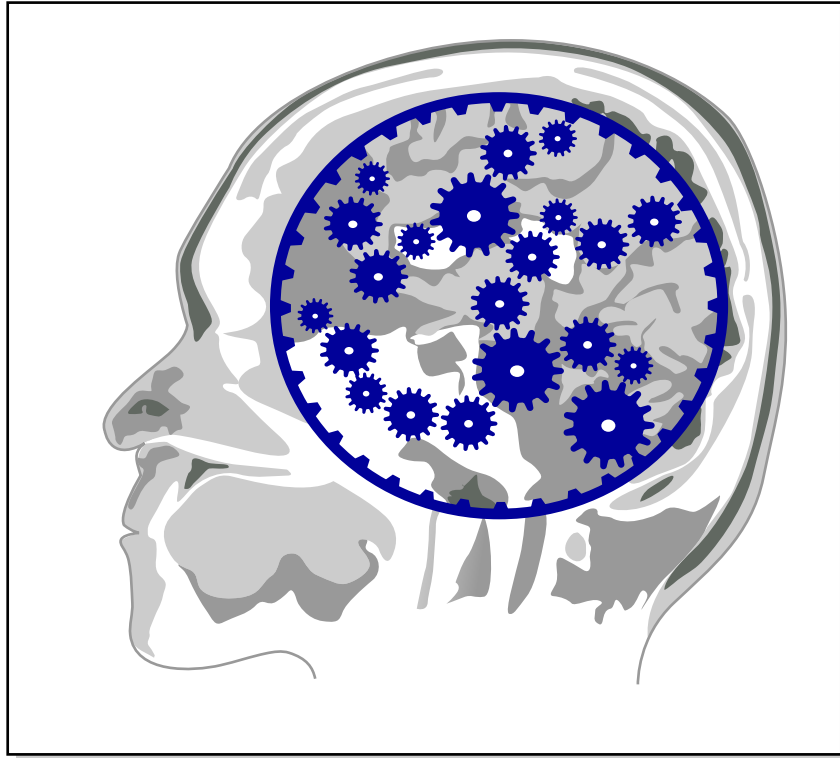


Figure by MIT OCW.

- consciousness and intentionality

# “Visual qualia and visual content revisited”

- “Experiences vary widely”

Images removed due to copyright restrictions.

Pictures of sandpaper, a skunk, a hand, a purple square, and an angry man.

- “In each of these cases, I am the subject of a mental state with a very distinctive subjective character”

# qualia and Qualia

- **qualia** are “the introspectively accessible properties of experiences that characterize what it’s like to have them”
- “in this standard, broad sense of the term, it is hard to deny that there are qualia”
- **Qualia** are the introspectively accessible nonrepresentational properties of experiences that characterize what it’s like to have them
- **Qualia** “are a philosophical myth”



# representational properties

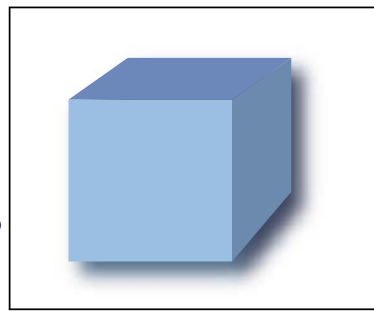


Figure by MIT OCW.

- perceptual (in particular, visual) experiences have representational properties (e.g. the property of representing the perceiver's environment as containing a blue cube)
- so visual experiences have intentionality
- visual experiences also have **qualia**
- they have **Qualia** just in case:
  - two visual experiences can be alike in representational properties but differ in **qualia**
  - But: "I know of no such counterexample"
  - warning: most of the examples Tye considers do not even purport to be cases of two experiences alike in representational content but which differ in **qualia**

- a lightness illusion
  - Anderson, *Nature* 3 march 2005

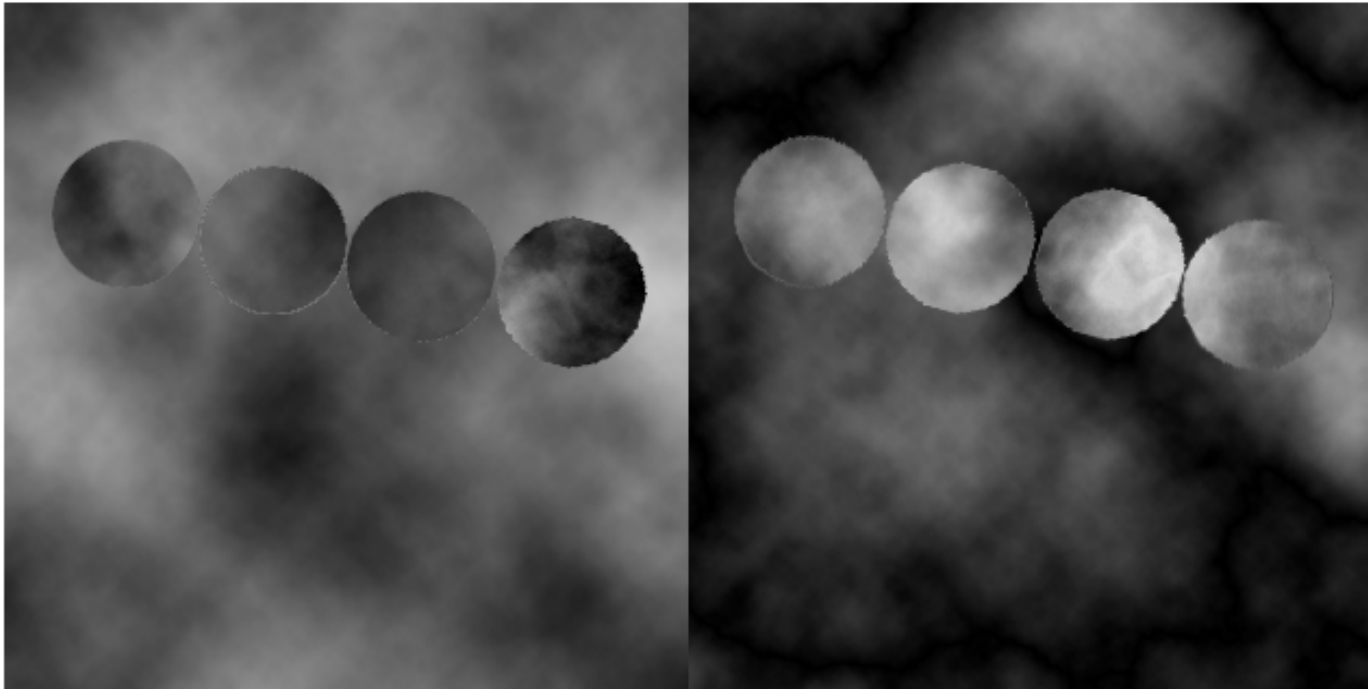


Figure by MIT OCW.

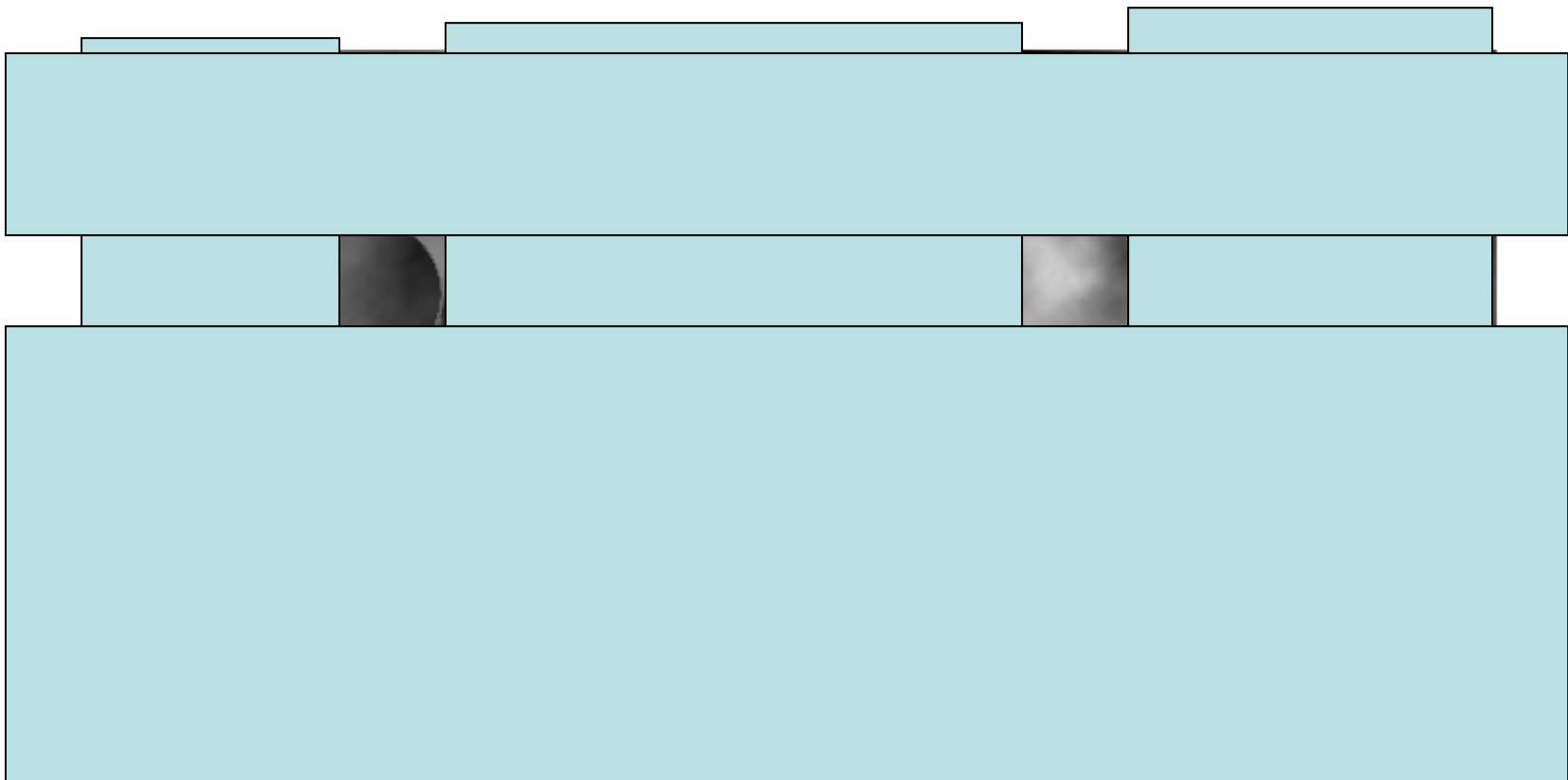


Figure by MIT OCW.

- the “moons” rotated

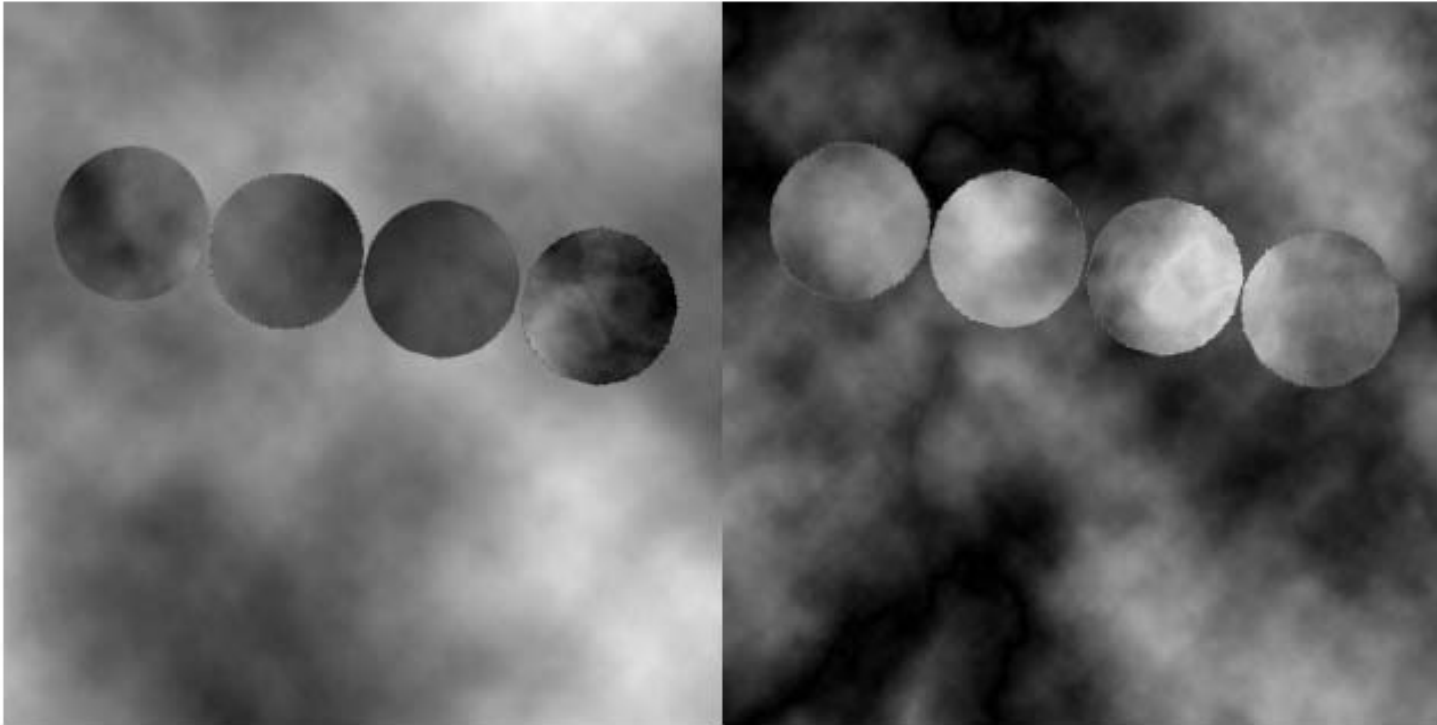


Figure by MIT OCW.

# introspection

- “Was I not here delighting in the phenomenal aspects of my visual experience? And if I was, doesn’t this show that there are visual Qualia?”
- “my experience certainly wasn’t blue. Rather, it was an experience that reresented the ocean as blue”
- “What I was really delighting in...was a quality represented by the experience, not a quality of the experience”

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.  
Aerial of the surface of the ocean.

# Peacocke's puzzle cases

## 1: monocular/binocular vision

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.  
A room with furniture.

- Suppose you look at an array of pieces of furniture with one eye closed...Imagine now you look at the same scene with both eyes. The experience is different. [sensationally but not representationally]” (Peacocke, p. 439)
- “When I view the situation with both eyes, I see a little more at the periphery of my visual field...An appeal to Qualia is not required”

# 2: the Necker cube

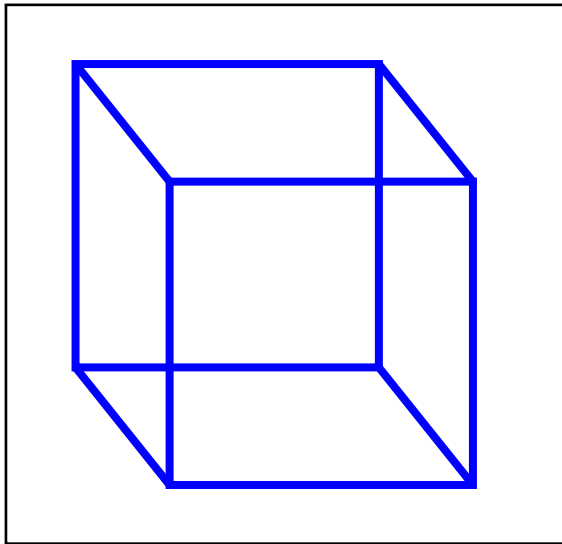


Figure by MIT OCW.

- “there seems to be some additional level of classification at which the successive experiences fall under the same type... We have here another example of apparently nonrepresentational similarities between experiences” (Peacocke, p. 440)
- “before and after the ‘aspect’ switch, the experience represents the cube as having various unchanging spatial properties relative to the given point of view”



# the inverted spectrum

- how the scene looks to us



- how the scene looks to Tom, a victim of “spectrum inversion”





# the inverted spectrum

- 1) since Tom has been “spectrally inverted” from birth, his experience when viewing a red pepper is of “the sort that is usually produced in him when viewing red objects and that usually leads him to believe that a red object is present”
- 2) “so he, like you and me, in viewing the [pepper] has an experience that represents the [pepper] as red”



# the inverted spectrum

- 4) so Tom's experience and your experience of the pepper have the same representational properties but differ in **qualia**
- 3) hence: there are **Qualia**



# the inverted spectrum

- “One might respond to this argument by denying that a behaviorally undetectable inverted spectrum is possible”
  - but Tye finds this implausible
- rather: Tom’s experience of the pepper “represents green”— the pepper looks green to him
- since Tom sincerely says (speaking English) “the pepper looks red to me”, he has “a false belief about the content of his experience”



# the inverted spectrum

- but: it's not obvious what was wrong with the argument that Tom's experience represents red
- and: what if Tom is alone—not in a community of non-inverted English speakers?
  - he might still have beliefs about how things look, and wouldn't they be correct?
  - if Tom-alone believes that the pepper looks green, why would placing him in a community of non-inverted English speakers make that belief vanish?

# Minds and Machines

spring 2007

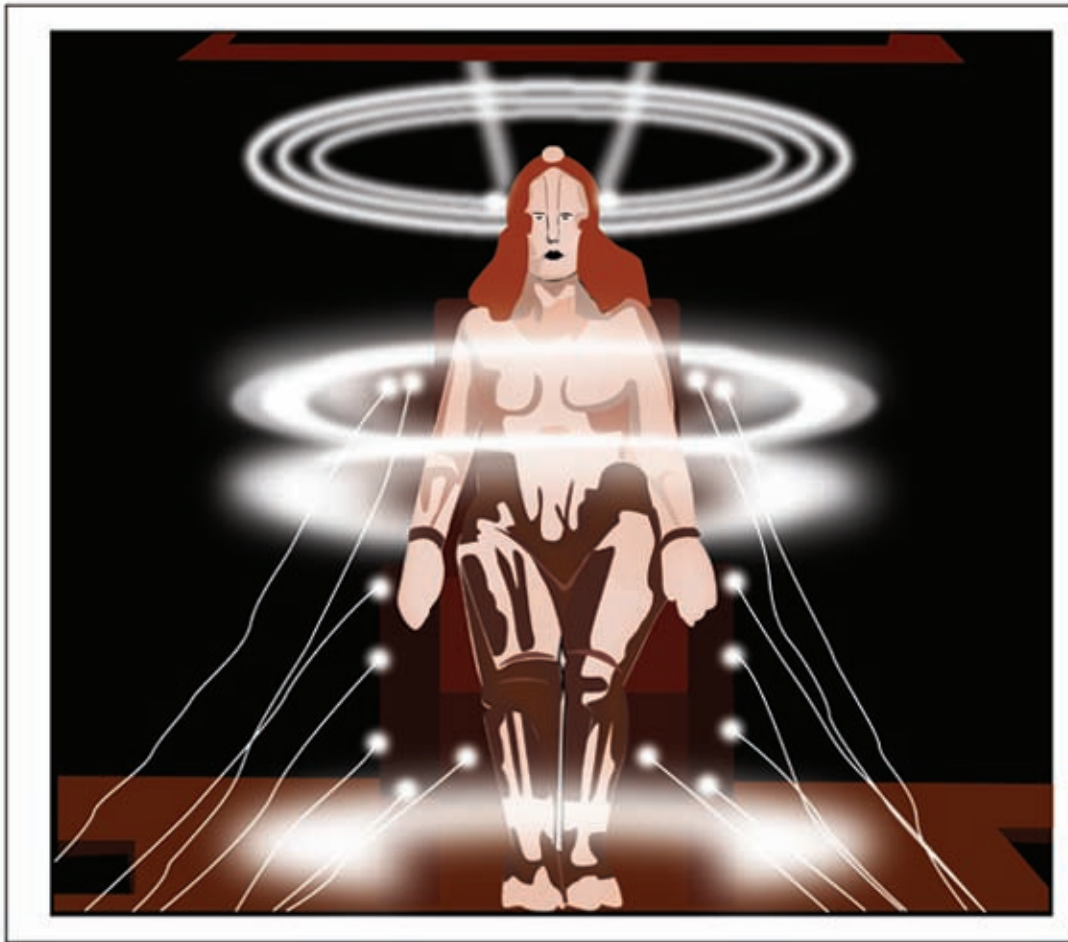


Figure by MIT OCW.

- evaluations and exam essay questions next time