

The Problem of the Unwanted Prediction:

Anomalous Experience
Reconsidered

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Definition of Delusion

- **A false belief based on incorrect inference about external reality that is firmly sustained despite what almost everyone else believes and despite what constitutes incontrovertible and obvious proof or evidence to the contrary. The belief is not one ordinarily accepted by other members of the person's culture or subculture...**
- American Psychiatric Association (2000), *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV-TR* pp. 821-822.

Kinds of Delusional Utterance

- **Capgras** – ‘My wife has been replaced by an impostor’.
- **Frégoli** – ‘People I know are disguising themselves and are following me around’.
- **Thought Insertion** – ‘Someone else’s thoughts are being inserted into my mind’.
- **Alien Control** – ‘Someone else is controlling my actions’.

One Factor

(Maher, 1999, 2003)

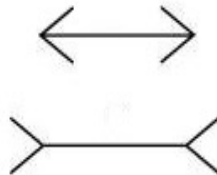
- Anomalous experience is necessary and sufficient for delusion
- Delusions are attempts to explain or justify anomalous experience
- Delusions are rational in the sense that were any of us to have comparable experiences we would develop comparable delusions.

Two-Factors (Davies et al, 2001)

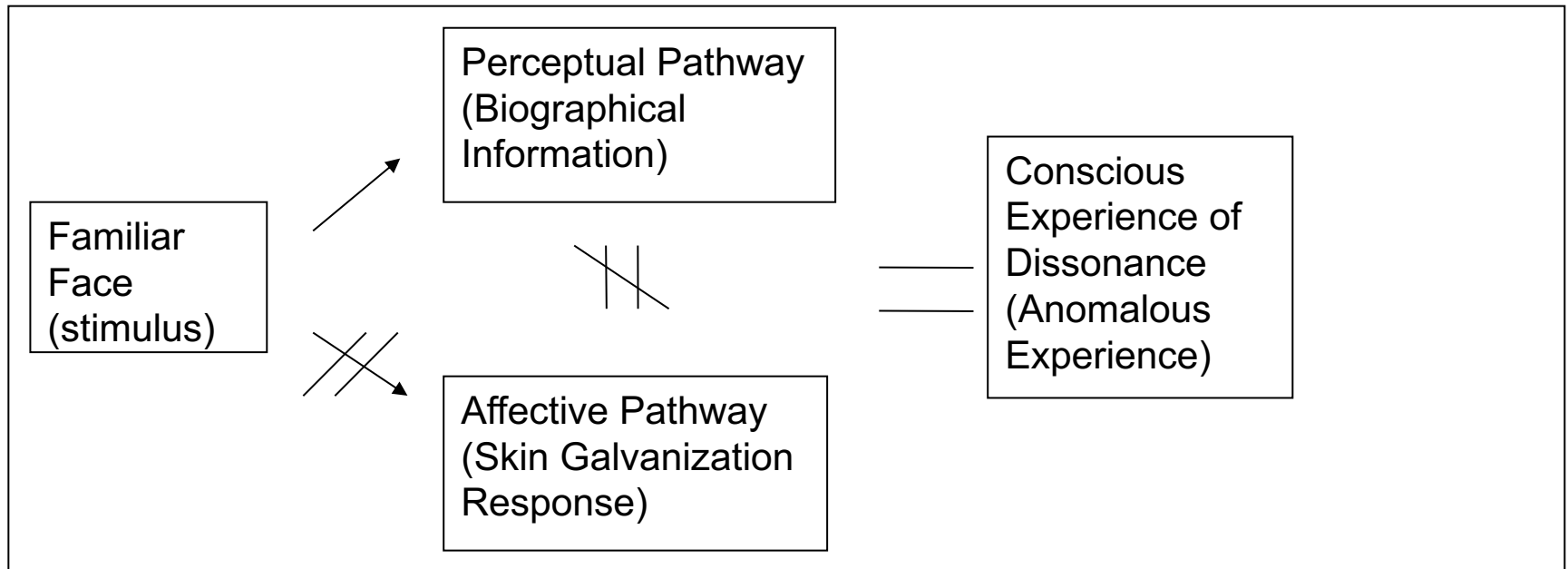
- While an anomalous experience may be necessary for delusion, it is not sufficient
- Maher's account needs to be supplemented with a second factor
- To this end various cognitive biases and / or deficits have been proposed

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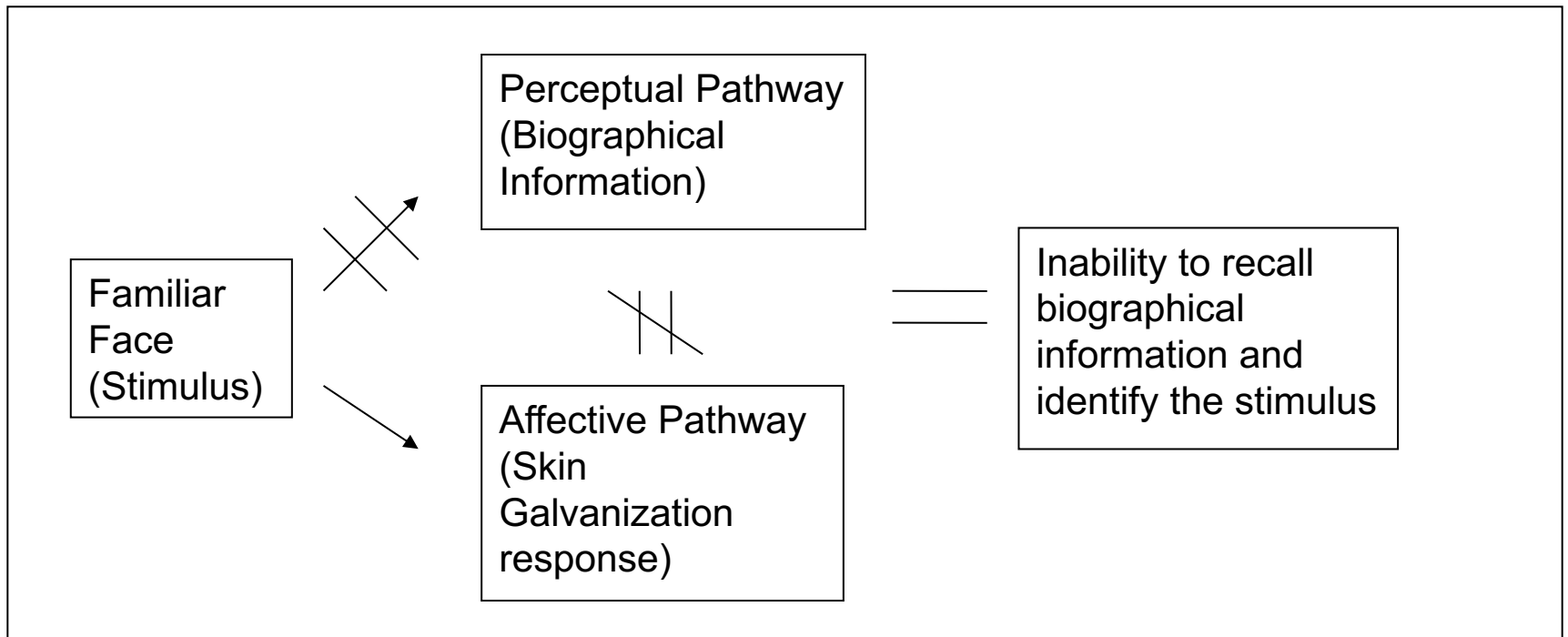
- If the delusional error is in accepting an erroneous perception to be veridical when there is rational grounds to doubt... (Davies et al., 2001)
- ... or in accepting observational adequacy over conservativeness... (Stone & Young, 1997)
- ... then this entails that delusional subjects should accept visual illusions as veridical despite rational evidence to the contrary. They should be routinely fooled despite being able to measure the lines.



Subjects with the Capgras Delusion

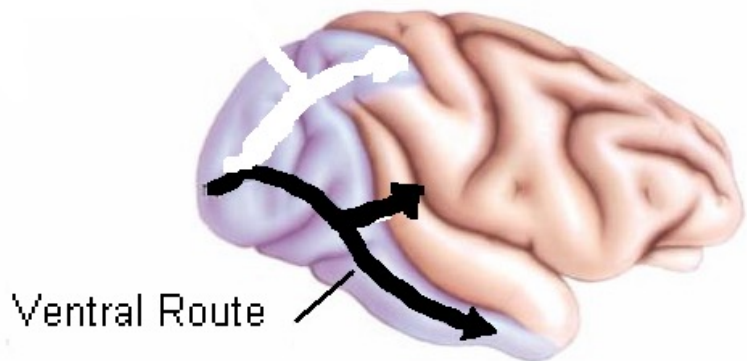
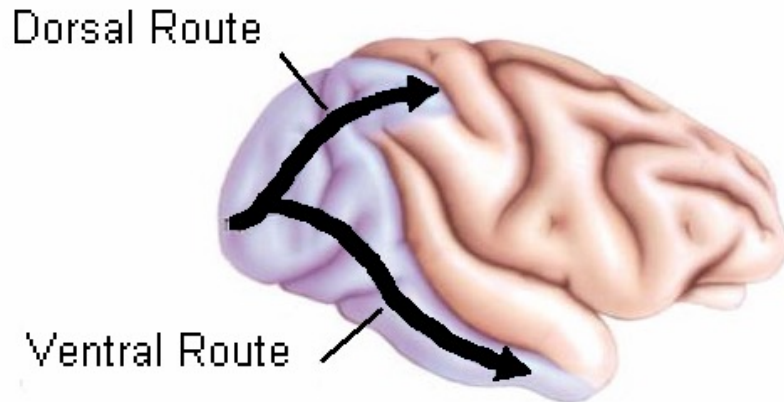


Subjects With Prosopagnosia



The Cognitive Model Realized in the Brain

Two cognitive pathways... realized on a single neural route



The Nature of Anomalous Experience

- ‘unrecognized defects in the sensory system, such as undiagnosed hearing loss, or the endogenous activation or inhibition of the central neural representations of sensory input’ (Maher, 1999 p.3).
- Or... an unusual experience of faces or a sense that “something is different” as a result of flattened affective responses’ (Davies et al., 2002 p.143).

Experiential Content and the Capgras Delusion

- ‘this woman [in front of me] is not that [remembered] woman’.
- Delusional utterances have no content - this is where Campbell ends up.

A Familiarity Mechanism

- There would be an evolutionary advantage to having a fast, unconscious, low level mechanism to register whether people are strangers or familiar
- Such a mechanism would function to inform the subject whether people are familiar or not
- If the mechanism were to malfunction then familiar people may be signaled as unfamiliar (the Capgras delusion) or strangers may be signaled as familiar (Frégoli delusion).

Bridging the Gap Between Experience and Belief

- ‘Suppose, on the other hand, that the patient’s unusual experience represents the situation as follows: This is someone who looks just like my close relative *but is not really her/him.*” If the delusional hypothesis is already part of the *representational content* of the patient’s perception, then the route to a delusional belief involves nothing more than accepting the perception as veridical’ (Davies et al., 2002 pp. 150-151)

The Content of Delusional Anomalous Experience

- **Delusions of Misidentification – A Disconnection Between Perception and Affective Response**
 - **Capgras** – that person is not familiar to me
 - **Frégoli** – that person is familiar to me
- **Delusions of Control – A Disconnection Between Intention (Maybe Unconscious) and Response**
- **Thought Insertion** – I didn't initiate that thought (see chapter 2.)
- **Alien Control** – I didn't initiate that action (see chapter 2.)

Concluding Remarks

- Delusions may not be inferences or attempts at explaining anomalous experience if the content of the delusion is given by the nature of the anomalous experience.
- The delusional subject may be (a) attempting to report on the nature of their anomalous experience in which case their claims would be incorrigible, or (b) they could be accepting their anomalous experience to be veridical (whether or not they have rational grounds to doubt). If they do not have rational grounds to doubt then there is no need to appeal to a second factor.