

The Abstraction Matching Fallacy: A Procrustean Problem in the Science of Anomalous Experiences¹

Jonathan Dinsmore

University of Arkansas

Abstract: The currently expanding science of anomalous experiences is unique, in the sense that it necessarily sits at the treacherous borderlands between the often-opposed ontologies of religion/spirituality and secular physicalism. As might be expected in such an inherently charged position, the scientific study of the hallucinatory neurobiological underpinnings of these experiences has resulted in the emergence of certain biased practices, of which the Abstraction Matching Fallacy is a prominent example. This methodological fallacy involves, on the basis of resemblance, using known hallucinatory phenomena as explanations for what are widely considered to be spiritual experiences, despite the alleged resemblance depending entirely on an abstraction of both phenomena, to whatever extent is necessary to obscure the incongruent details and render them apparently resemblant. This entails a subtle form of cherry-picking that manipulates or filters the consideration of data in the interests of theoretical/philosophical commitments, thus making it arguably antiscientific, inasmuch as the primary goal of science is the adaptation of theory to reality, via data collected and analyzed as rigorously and objectively as possible. Examples and further discussion of this fallacy are provided, along with a call for researchers to cease this scientifically problematic practice.

Keywords: anomalous experiences, methodological problems, ideological bias, explanatory models, materialism, physicalism, phenomenology

¹ Address correspondence to: Jonathan Dinsmore, M. S., University of Arkansas, jdinsmor@uark.edu

Highlights

- The Abstraction Matching Fallacy (AMF) refers to the misapplication of hallucinatory explanations to spiritual experiences based on high-level abstractions of both.
- This fallacy entails ignoring critical phenomenological differences and selectively emphasizing abstract similarities.
- The AMF is especially prevalent in attempts to explain NDEs, likely because they resist naturalistic explanation without such abstraction.
- The AMF is an iteration of a broader Procrustean pattern of forcing anomalous experiences into ill-fitting models through cherry-picking convenient details.
- These errors likely reflect ideological pressures within the physicalist orthodoxy that detract from objective scientific inquiry.

Research in the field of anomalous experiences has expanded greatly over the past two to three decades, particularly since the lifting of prohibitions on psychedelic research around the turn of the 21st century (Cardena et al., 2017). As with the expansion of any scientific frontier, such proliferation of research is necessarily accompanied by a proliferation of theories and explanatory approaches. However, unlike most other areas of research in psychology and neuroscience, this subfield pertains to a category of experiences that are arguably at the foundation of nearly every religious or spiritual (R/S) belief system, if we take the sacred texts at their word as records of such accounts. Further, they often inherently contradict the default physicalist worldview typically regarded as a given in the scientific community, and for the most part in the larger secular subculture, by virtue of their phenomenological content and qualities; for instance, consciousness seeming to exist outside of the body temporarily. This contradiction is generally apparent to both the experiencers themselves, including many from a secular background, as well as to many non-experiencers who take them seriously as actual *glimpses* of a world beyond the one that is consistently available to the senses, including the R/S majority of the world's population.

Because of this unique position, it is arguably problematic for researchers to approach this category of experiences as if they were merely examining another relatively mundane aspect of psychological life, such as dreams or perceptual illusions. It should be apparent to anyone involved in this field that this class of experiences exists at the treacherous ontological borderlands between the secular subculture and the larger R/S culture, and their competing worldviews. It should be uncontroversial

to acknowledge that those who are invested in maintaining the physicalist paradigm have ample motivation to establish the non-veridical or hallucinatory nature of any anomalous experiences which are seen as a challenge to it. Although the distinction between hallucination and pathology is more complex than it is often assumed to be, with the former existing along a dimension that extends beyond the latter (Bentall, 2014), it is nevertheless true that the question of hallucination vs. veridical perception is central to the ontological implications or claims made on the basis of anomalous experiences, which to some extent includes not just contemporary forms of spirituality but nearly all religions.

This also means that, from a philosophical and methodological standpoint, this field is at perhaps a greater risk than any other for implicit bias, and the methodological mistakes that often result from such biases (Michalski, 2022). This article aims to be an exposition of one such error, which is here dubbed the *Abstraction Matching Fallacy* (AMF). This is presented in the hope that naming and explicating this fallacy may result in the reduction of its problematic use among researchers, as with bringing attention to *p*-hacking or the file drawer problem.

The nature of the AMF is relatively simple and easily explained, yet it is common in the field of scientific anomalous experience research. It may be described as the use of pathological or hallucinatory phenomena as explanatory models for anomalous/spiritual experiences *based on* phenomenological resemblance, despite the former *only* bearing a resemblance to the latter when compared at a level of abstraction that renders them *apparently* alike, making such claims of resemblance fallacious. In other words, it is the attempt to explain spiritual experiences (Yaden & Newberg, 2022) in terms of allegedly phenomenologically similar hallucinatory phenomena that do not in fact resemble those spiritual experiences, except when compared at whatever level of abstraction renders them apparently resemblant. Incidentally, this also involves a subtle element of cherry-picking (Andrade, 2021), by selectively ignoring whatever details make the difference apparent.

Theoretical Context

In a sense, the AMF could be considered a special case of what has been discussed by Maraun and Gabriel (2013) as illegitimate concept equating. By their account, this type of error is particularly liable to occur in psychology due to both the disregard of the differentiation between construct and latent variable referent, and the resultant “devastating extinction of definitional work as a precursory step in empirical investigations” (p. 35). The argument for the role of selective attention in the abstrac-

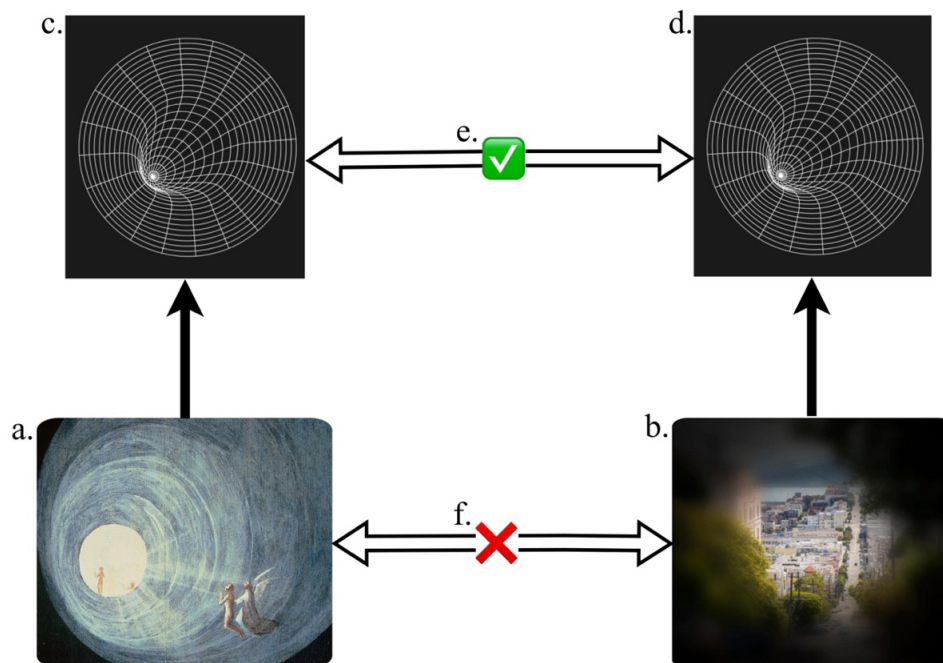
tion implicit in operationalization has also been made by Portides (2018). Combining these concepts, the AMF could be understood as a tendency to engage the selective attention implicit in the abstraction of operationalization to focus on those aspects of an anomalous phenomenon that match another phenomenon more widely accepted as hallucinatory, resulting in illegitimate concept equating, which seems to support a hallucinatory explanation for the anomalous phenomenon. An element of motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990) behind this process is also highly probable, because of the perceived threat posed by the anomalous phenomenon to the existing framework of physicalism, which in many cases cannot adequately explain it in its more robust, pre-abstraction form.

The broader preference for and acceptance of incomplete explanations despite their frequently obvious implausibility extends beyond the case of the AMF and likely motivates it, and therefore also deserves a title. This broader tendency may be aptly characterized as the *Procrustean Razor Bias*, being the preferential acceptance of reductive naturalistic explanations of phenomena that contradict physicalism, ostensibly in the name of parsimony, whose explanatory adequacy is only plausible if a substantial portion of the associated facts or details to be explained are selectively ignored. This phenomenon, discussed in greater detail by Cardeña (2022), is also related to Popper's concept of promissory materialism (Popper & Eccles, 1977), and so requires only brief mention here as a broader pattern of which the AMF is one iteration, and to point out its Procrustean nature.

Just as the mythical Procrustes's guests were made to fit his bed via amputation or stretching, this perhaps willful blindness to any ill-fitting details makes the amputated phenomenon *seem* to fit the procrustean bed of the explanatory model. However, it does so only by doing conceptual violence to the phenomenon at hand, that is, to the observed phenomenological data. Notably, this involves a selective attention on observations that align with the preferred explanation, coupled with a disregard for those that do not. This is therefore a broader tendency toward *manipulation of observation and analysis in the interest of theoretical commitments* that is antithetical to the scientific ideal of adjusting theory to fit observed reality, thus making it arguably *antiscientific*. Put another way, it is an effort to metaphorically fit circular pegs into square holes via the "parsimony" of the table saw.

Figure 1

Conceptual Illustration of the Abstraction Matching Fallacy



Note. A simple illustration of the AMF exemplified by the NDE tunnel example. Two phenomena, the NDE tunnel (a.) and anoxic tunnel vision (b.), that are an obvious mismatch at a sufficient level of phenomenological detail, as made obvious by these depictions, based on an abstraction of each (c. and d.), are erroneously alleged to resemble one another (e.), while the incongruent phenomenological details are selectively ignored, but if given their proper consideration, render their claimed resemblance fallacious (f.).

Examples of the AMF

As exemplified by such attempts as that of Mobbs and Watt (2011) and their bias and shortcomings pointed out by NDE researchers (Greyson et al., 2012), the NDE phenomenon is particularly prone to applications of the AMF. One of the clearest and best-known examples is the use of anoxic tunnel vision by Blackmore and Troscianko (1989) as an attempted explanation for the sense of passing through a tunnel in near-death experiences (NDEs) (see Figure 1). In this case, *when details are given* in the accounts, NDErs describe aspects of the tunnel experience such as having walls that may have distinct qualities, such as appearing misty, and sometimes other souls seemingly likewise in transit up and down it; accompanying presences, such as deceased relatives or guiding beings of light; an entrance to another idyllic realm; and many other elements that make it abundantly clear that these experiences do not resemble the phenomenology of tunnel vision to any meaningful degree (Charland-Verville et al., 2014). These critical details easily reveal the erroneous nature of the comparison and others

like it. Far from irrelevant subjective details, these phenomenological incongruencies may aptly be referred to as *phenomenological facts*, and should require accounting for, if such an explanation is to be put forward. This is particularly the case for any claim being made *on the basis of resemblance*.

Yet, for some time this tunnel vision explanation was seriously considered valid, and still is at times referred to by those attempting to dismiss these experiences as hallucinations. To Blackmore's credit, she eventually acknowledged the fact of this non-resemblance (Blackmore, 1999). What is interesting here, beyond the problematic move itself, is the readiness with which such an ill-matching phenomenon was accepted as an explanatory model by the scientific community, and the relative lack of scrutiny it received upon its proposal (e.g., Choi, 2011), outside the niche group of NDE researchers who exhibit less physicalist conviction. Even to an educated layperson not specializing in this field who reads the detailed first-hand accounts of both phenomena, the lack of resemblance is abundantly obvious. So, why is it then that the community of scientists, who are generally regarded as among the most careful scrutinizers of evidence, so readily embraced such an explanation?

Although Blackmore's tunnel vision explanation is particularly implausible, more contemporary alleged phenomenological resemblances prompting explanatory considerations require more careful scrutiny. Because NDEs are subject to this approach particularly often, likely due to being quite difficult to account for naturalistically, *when all the facts are considered* (Facco et al., 2015; Facco & Argillo, 2012; Greyson, 2015; van Lommel, 2007), further attempts at explaining them also serve as some of the best examples. Explanations involving dimethyltryptamine (DMT; Timmerman et al., 2018) or REMS intrusion with other physiological elements and hypothetical quantum accessories (Bókkon et al., 2013) have been offered. Both sound more plausible than the tunnel example, at first glance. Upon closer inspection however, these resemblances likewise only seem to exist at a problematic level of abstraction of the two phenomena.

As pointed out by others, including a case study of an NDEr who had both NDE and DMT experiences (Michael et al., 2023), the extent to which DMT experiences resemble NDEs is imperfect, at best. In the primary study making this comparison by Timmerman et al. (2018), the similarity of the two types of experiences is alleged based on psychometric scores on the NDE scale by DMT experiencers. Although the use of measurement seems rigorous, in this case, it inadvertently conceals the fact that the two categories are *only* a plausible match when viewed in terms of the abstraction required for such operationalized measurement. In a later within-groups comparison with psychedelics more generally, Martial et al. (2024) found these differences even

in measurement, such as the divergence of low-level phenomena (i.e., the details of the experiences) although, arguably, the abstraction of measurement still served to obscure rather than clarify the differences/similarities between the experiences.

Although it is true that both DMT and NDEs typically involve elements that the NDE measure asks about, such as perceptions of otherworldly entities and environs, when one closely examines the descriptions of the environs and entities reported, the sense of resemblance quickly fades. For instance, a brief but prototypical quote representing a common theme of DMT experiences illustrates the point:

A lot of very strange clowns...mechanical entities. Very cartoonistic. And again trying to show me something... It was like a toy ...continuously moving and changing shapes and colors... [they would] push them in my face... and I could see every single detail (Michael et al., 2021)

This illustrates how critical details clearly make DMT a poor fit as a model for NDEs, which rarely if ever include anything remotely like cartoonish mechanical clowns attempting to present enigmatic objects, or many other common DMT themes. Although *some* elements of DMT experiences may *sometimes* resemble those of NDEs, such as the appearance of mystical luminosity experience (Dinsmore, 2024) or other mystical states in both, even a casual side-by-side perusal of DMT and NDE experience reports available on the internet easily reveals that the two are generally almost entirely unlike, *when the phenomenological facts are taken seriously*.

Although the inter-subjective consistency of entities and features across different individuals' DMT experiences *is* certainly quite intriguing, generally their resemblance to NDEs is so minimal as to be negligible. Note that no argument is being made here that *no* DMT experience resembles *any* NDE; indeed, some qualitative study of ayahuasca experiences has found similar characteristics to NDEs (Liester, 2013). However, overall, the two experience types simply do not resemble one another, except in the most abstract descriptions or categorizations. It should also be noted that Timmerman et al. (2018) propose that DMT-induced states model NDEs, emphasizing shared phenomenological features, rather than asserting that NDEs are necessarily DMT hallucinations. The term "model" places the focus of their research on the investigation of underlying neurological mechanisms of altered states of consciousness, in part by their shared subjective features. Ontological claims regarding NDEs are notably absent here, although the hallucinatory interpretation seems implicit, particularly in their concluding remarks, and their remarks on the topic outside the context of their academic writing (Bryant, 2018).

In the interests of ensuring clarity as to how the abstraction of measurement can lead to instances of the AMF via obscuring critical details, as in the above study, consider this more mundane fictional example devised to make it particularly obvious. Imagine administering a survey to test whether those who claim to have experienced a passenger ride in a fighter jet performing aerial maneuvers may in fact be merely confused roller coaster riders. If the survey's questions were worded to assess the presence of vague or abstract phenomenological features such as intense G-forces, rapid directional changes, disorientation, and occasional sensations of weightlessness, the resulting jet passengers' roller coaster ride survey scores would likely be high. However, at a sufficient level of analysis of the incongruent details, it would become abundantly clear that considering such survey results to be substantial support for the "confused roller coaster riders" hypothesis would be grossly misguided. Problems similar to this have also been found in real-world research contexts, such as by Lang et al. (2019), where vaguely worded survey items failed to differentiate adequately between clearly distinct constructs.

Bókkon et al. (2013), to their credit, offer sophisticated explanations, in terms of attempting to account for each component of the experience in the modular way that is typical of neuroscience, and acknowledging the incompleteness of their explanation at the conclusion of the paper (p. 9). Nevertheless, the alleged resemblance of the various neurophysiological components they propose as probable explanatory models for NDEs to the NDE accounts themselves, again, are only presented at a level of abstraction that excludes a great deal of the phenomenological facts. This makes their attempt, sophisticated as it may be, another instance of the AMF.

Here, ocular reperfusion is offered as an explanation for the light aspect of NDEs, but with no adequate account of why it contains such detailed noetic and affective qualities, that extend far beyond mere visual brightness, being frequently described by experiencers as an overwhelming love and wisdom beyond anything they had previously thought possible, nor why or how it often appears as a local light source at a particular location in the space they perceive themselves to exist within in that state, like a kind of sentient sun that they move in relation to. As for the details of encountering deceased relatives or beings of light, Heavenly (or occasionally Hellish) environs, telepathic communication with the light itself or other beings, and many others included in NDE accounts, REM intrusion is offered. In other words, a quasi-dream-state producing imagery is suggested, along with the ocular reperfusion to create the light effect.

However, again, when one does not amputate or selectively ignore the phenomenological facts that are not compatible with this explanation, the mismatch of NDEs with the proposed components becomes clear. If one examines the phenomenological content and qualities of dreams during REM sleep and compares them to the content and qualities reported in NDEs, the tremendously greater variety of content and entirely different subjective quality of dreams is readily apparent. This is clear not least to experiencers themselves, who as human beings have all naturally experienced many dreams throughout their lives, and often go out of their way to emphasize how un-dream-like their NDEs were. Dreams are also highly various within the same person and between people, and often nonsensical, if perhaps at times symbolic, and mostly contain content pertaining to daily life. Compare this to the clear and inter-subjectively consistent pattern of experiences characteristic of NDEs regardless of religious or secular background. Only at a level of abstraction such as “imagery of people, places, and events while apparently unconscious externally, which at the time the individual regards as real,” can the two experiences of REM dreams and NDEs be said to resemble one another. At any greater level of detail than that, again, the apparent resemblance falls away.

Phenomenologically, the light of NDEs is described typically as a point of light in the distance in a void that is then approached via movement through that space. Sometimes, it is accompanied by entities, often telepathically interacted with once arrived at, and radiates a profound love and knowledge that seem to be intrinsic qualities of the light itself, somehow. It sometimes appears almost as if not merely a being, but also a portal to another luminous world, from which deceased relatives may emerge to greet the experiencer. Given the intricate and inter-subjectively consistent details of these experiences, attributing them to mere phosphenes illuminating the retina accompanied by intrusive dream imagery is only plausible if one abstracts the phenomenological description to a superficial caricature, such as “light and imagery of beings or places,” and ignores the strong similarity between experiences.

In relation to the inter-subjective consistency in NDEs just alluded to, some may turn to the differences that have been found in NDEs cross-culturally, to refute this point. Stating briefly something that deserves a much lengthier discussion, often this cross-cultural variability and its significance are both exaggerated. This is because: a) NDEs are not defined by their near-death context but by their phenomenological features and do not always occur near death (Charland-Verville, 2014); b) NDE-dissimilar deathbed visions from non-Western cultures are often compared with Western NDEs, ignoring that experiences that do have the features of NDEs also exist in those other cultures (Belanti et al., 2008), and NDE-dissimilar experiences near death like-

wise occur in Western cultures; c) a level of inter-subjective consistency within even one culture that so greatly exceeds that of any other category of dreams or hallucinations within that same population, and often contradicts the experiencers' beliefs or existential assumptions, still weighs strongly against the hallucinatory hypothesis, regardless of how much they may vary from other populations.

It is worth noting that although unexplained details of spiritual experiences like NDEs are sometimes acknowledged as such in AMF-tainted research, they are typically assumed to be unproblematically awaiting straightforward explanations, much as a complex activity like riding a bicycle might be systematically explained by aspects of brain function one component at a time, (e.g., visual, motor, proprioceptive, etc.), until all are eventually accounted for. However, when each of the proposed explanations added to the model proves to be equally ill-fitting or problematic in some way or another (Greyson et al., 2009; Greyson, 2015; Long & Perry, 2010; van Lommel, 2007), at some point the hope that accumulating multiple implausible explanations will somehow coalesce into a plausible one begins to seem less like a matter of patient inquiry and more like an act of wishful thinking or even faith. Again, the concept of promissory materialism is pertinent here.

Critically, it is not only the *presence* of details that require explanation, but the striking *specificity and inter-subjective consistency* of those details. Moreover, the fact remains that the specific details occasionally pertain to verified external or even distant physical events impossible to have been perceived by the flatlined body's sensory organs, known to researchers as Apparently Nonphysical Veridical Perceptions during NDE (Holden, 2009), or simply veridical NDEs. Although attempts to verify this phenomenon under experimental conditions have been unsuccessful (Parnia, 2014), the conditions used were highly questionable, it is not at all clear why one finding oneself newly removed from their body and gazing down upon their own corpse would be particularly inclined to notice cards left atop cabinets. Given that the phenomenon is widely-enough reported, and often-enough verified by trustworthy third parties such as doctors and other medical professionals, it still represents a deeper mystery to which skeptics have no compelling response, but merely allegations that the witnesses inadequately scrutinized the alleged occurrence, or perhaps a psi-based hypothesis as an absolute last resort. In the latter case, why we might think it likely that psi would be operating in a near-completely inactive brain would also require explanation. More examples could be given, but these are hopefully sufficient for the current purpose.

Discussion

The elephant in the room is, of course, that these experiences and others like them are regarded as veridical perceptions or glimpses of a metaphysical domain of existence by many if not most people, if religious origins are included, and yet are being studied in the subculture that is generally most opposed to such beliefs, the academy with its orthodox view of physicalism. Failing to explicitly acknowledge this unique cultural positioning may render researchers more vulnerable to inadvertently employing problematic approaches like the AMF, which are otherwise easily recognized as such. The tacitly apologetic role of these hallucinatory explanations within the secular orthodoxy may, in fact, be the ultimate source of researchers' vulnerability to this methodological error. This may also be why the wider secular public is likewise blind to this emperor's proverbial nudity, despite no special training being required to see the dissimilarity of the phenomena being compared. Although naturalistic or physicalist explanations are inevitable in a scientific community that operates primarily within that ontological framework, explanations should be judged by their adherence to the principles of sound reasoning and consideration of all the relevant facts, not their ability to artificially shore up the prevailing paradigm against problematic anomalies.

As a closing note, this article critiques what the author sees as ideologically driven scientific practices in an admittedly confronting way, but it is not intended to defame or single out individual researchers who have inadvertently employed the AMF, some of whose works are mentioned here. The aim is constructive: to bring attention to the problematic nature of this approach. The hope is that this will contribute to a much-needed neutrality and long-overdue acknowledgement of the charged nature of this research, and how it can give rise to significant biases, such as the AMF. It is important to mention that bias in the opposite direction is also possible, so a circumspect awareness of these tendencies should be practiced by all researchers, whatever their personal beliefs. Quite unlike scientists studying relatively innocuous topics, such as the effects of certain smells on memory or the neural mechanisms of facial recognition, researchers in this field occupy a precarious position within one of the greatest debates in modern culture. Navigating such a socially complex pursuit demands a conscious recognition of this position, and a circumspect awareness of our unfortunate tendency to sacrifice the principles of truth and scientific inquiry to the influences of prevailing cultural narratives, professional validation, or even simply certain psychological comforts we may derive from believing we have a firm grasp on what is and is not real (Kastrup, 2016), and perhaps the social validation that comes with having provided some reassurance to others in that regard.

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Biais de Rapprochement par Abstraction: Un Problème Procrustéen dans la Science des Expériences Anomales

Jonathan Dinsmore

Résumé: La science des expériences anormales, actuellement en pleine expansion, est unique en ce sens qu'elle se situe nécessairement à la frontière instable entre les ontologies souvent opposées de la religion/spiritualité et du physicalisme séculier. Comme on pouvait s'y attendre dans une position aussi controversée, l'étude scientifique des fondements neurobiologiques hallucinatoires de ces expériences a donné lieu à l'émergence de certaines pratiques biaisées, dont l'erreur d'abstraction est un exemple frappant. Cette erreur méthodologique consiste à utiliser, sur la base de ressemblances, des phénomènes hallucinatoires connus pour expliquer ce qui est largement considéré comme des expériences spirituelles, alors même que cette ressemblance repose sur une abstraction des deux phénomènes, suffisamment généralisée pour masquer leurs différences et les faire apparaître similaires. Il s'agit d'une forme subtile de biais de sélection qui manipule ou filtre la prise en compte des données au service d'engagements théoriques/

philosophiques, ce qui peut être jugé antis scientifique, puisque l'objectif premier de la science est d'adapter la théorie à la réalité à partir de données recueillies et analysées aussi rigoureusement et objectivement que possible. Des exemples et une discussion approfondie de cette erreur sont présentés, avec un appel aux chercheurs à cesser cette pratique scientifiquement problématique.

French translation by Antoine Bioy

Der Irrtum der Abstraktionsanpassung: Ein Prokrustes-Problem in der Wissenschaft der anomalen Erfahrungen

Jonathan Dinsmore

Zusammenfassung: Die derzeit expandierende Wissenschaft der anomalen Erfahrungen ist insofern einzigartig, als sie sich zwangsläufig in dem heiklen Grenzgebiet zwischen den oft gegensätzlichen Ontologien von Religion/Spiritualität und säkularem Physikalismus befindet. Wie in einer derart konfliktreichen Position zu erwarten, hat die wissenschaftliche Untersuchung der halluzinatorischen neurobiologischen Grundlagen dieser Erfahrungen zur Entstehung bestimmter voreingenommener Praktiken geführt, von denen der Irrtum der Abstraktionsanpassung ein prominentes Beispiel ist. Dieser methodologische Irrtum besteht darin, dass bekannte halluzinatorische Phänomene aufgrund ihrer Ähnlichkeit als Erklärung für das herangezogen werden, was allgemein als spirituelle Erfahrungen angesehen wird, obwohl die angebliche Ähnlichkeit vollständig auf einer Abstraktion beider Phänomene beruht, die so weit geht, dass inkongruente Details verschleiert werden und sie scheinbar ähnlich erscheinen. Dies beinhaltet eine subtile Form der selektiven Auswahl, die die Betrachtung von Daten im Interesse theoretischer/philosophischer Verpflichtungen manipuliert oder filtert, wodurch sie wohl als unwissenschaftlich angesehen werden kann, da das primäre Ziel der Wissenschaft die Anpassung der Theorie an die Realität ist, und zwar anhand von Daten, die so streng und objektiv wie möglich gesammelt und analysiert werden. Beispiele und weitere Diskussionen zu diesem Irrtum werden zusammen mit einem Aufruf an Forscher, diese wissenschaftlich problematische Praxis einzustellen, vorgestellt.

German translation by Eberhard Bauer, Ph. D.

A Falácia da Correspondência entre Abstrações: Um Problema Procrustiano na Ciência das Experiências Anômalas

Jonathan Dinsmore

Resumo: A ciência atualmente em expansão sobre as experiências anômalas é única, no sentido em que, necessariamente, se situa nas fronteiras traiçoeiras entre as ontologias frequentemente opostas da

religião/espiritualidade e do fisicalismo secular. Como se poderia esperar em uma posição tão inerentemente tensa, o estudo científico dos fundamentos neurobiológicos alucinatórios dessas experiências resultou no surgimento de certas práticas tendenciosas, das quais a Falácia da Correspondência entre Abstrações é um exemplo proeminente. Essa falácia metodológica envolve, com base na semelhança, o uso de fenômenos alucinatórios conhecidos como explicações para experiências que são amplamente consideradas espirituais, apesar da suposta semelhança depender inteiramente de uma abstração sobre ambos os fenômenos, na medida em que é necessário obscurecer os detalhes incongruentes e torná-los aparentemente semelhantes. Isso implica uma forma sutil de seleção discriminatória que manipula, ou filtra, a consideração de dados no interesse de compromissos teóricos/filosóficos, tornando-a indiscutivelmente anticientífica, na medida em que o objetivo principal da ciência é a adaptação da teoria à realidade, por meio de dados coletados e analisados da forma mais rigorosa e objetiva possível. Exemplos e discussões adicionais dessa falácia são fornecidos, juntamente com um apelo aos pesquisadores para que cessem essa prática cientificamente problemática.

Portuguese translation by Antônio Lima, Ph. D.

La Falacia de la Equiparación de Abstracciones: Un Problema Procusteano en la Ciencia de las Experiencias Anómalas

Jonathan Dinsmore

Resumen: La creciente ciencia de las experiencias anómalas es única en el sentido de que necesariamente se sitúa en la traicionera frontera entre las ontologías a menudo opuestas de la religión/espiritualidad y el fisicalismo secular. Como cabría esperarse en una posición tan intrínsecamente tensa, el estudio científico de los substratos neurobiológicos alucinatorios de estas experiencias ha dado lugar a la aparición de ciertas prácticas sesgadas, de las que la Falacia de Equiparación de Abstracciones es un ejemplo destacado. Esta falacia metodológica consiste en utilizar, basándose en la semejanza, fenómenos alucinatorios estudiados como explicación de lo que en general se consideran experiencias espirituales, a pesar de que la supuesta semejanza depende totalmente en abstraer ambos fenómenos, en la medida necesaria, para ocultar los detalles incongruentes y hacerlos aparentemente semejantes. Esto supone una forma sutil de selección que manipula o filtra la consideración de la evidencia en aras de predisposiciones teórico/filosóficas, por lo que podría considerarse anticientífica, en la medida en que el objetivo principal de la ciencia es la adaptación de la teoría a la realidad a través de datos obtenidos y analizados de la forma más rigurosa y objetiva posible. Se ofrecen ejemplos y un análisis más detallado de esta falacia, junto con un llamamiento a los investigadores para que pongan fin a esta práctica científicamente problemática.

Spanish translation by Etzel Cardeña, Ph. D.