

Evidence without direct access

Kunjumon Vadakkan, 24th July 2026

A note on scope and method: The semblance hypothesis provides a physical mechanism explaining how the brain generates first-person inner sensations (the "what it is like" of experience) through inter-postsynaptic functional LINKs. Because first-person experience is fundamentally subjective, it cannot be directly read off an instrument like standard third-person neurophysiological signals. This is not a limitation of our tools, but a distinction in kind.

Consequently, validating this mechanism requires the rigorous methodology of indirect inference, which is the same logic historically used to establish unseen entities in physics. The strength of the semblance hypothesis rests on its capacity to unify disparate, previously unconnected observations across neuroscience within a single framework, without introducing arbitrary parameters. This note clarifies the epistemological approach: demonstration of how a specific, testable neural architecture generates first-person semblance, validated through its unified explanatory power and advance empirical predictions.

Third-person science can measure a brain's timing and structure, but it cannot directly reveal what it is like to be that brain. The limitation is one of kind, not merely one that sharper instruments could overcome. A mechanism claiming to explain first-person experience therefore cannot be confirmed the way ordinary neuroscience is confirmed, which is by pointing a better instrument at the subject and reading off a signal, since the phenomenon itself lies beyond any instrument's reach.

What remains is the older, more patient kind of evidence: a mechanism whose explanatory reach extends across many independent, previously unconnected findings, without requiring a new free parameter for each one. That explanatory success itself becomes the strongest reason to search for the structure the mechanism proposes, using the same logic that once made unseen entities credible before direct observation caught up. This is why the distinction between what a mechanism was merely made consistent with and what it genuinely predicted in advance matters so much here. The predictions still unconfirmed are the ones actually carrying the argument's weight; everything else is scaffolding that earns them a hearing, not a substitute for it. If first-person experience is truly a system property irreducible to third-person description, then this explanatory-pressure argument may represent one of the few scientifically viable routes available.