

## Community Reaction

[Exceptionally positive comments highlighted in **green**.  
Exceptionally negative comments highlighted in **red**.]

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[Prof. Boris Kotchoubey](#) July 2005

**" [Your article](#) belongs among the best scientific jokes in the literature — surely the best parody I have ever read in scientific journals."**

[Lehar responds](#)

Thank you Professor Kotchoubey for bringing a spark of merriment into all of our lives!

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[Prof. Ned Block](#)

Dear Steve,

yes I liked your [cartoon history](#). But **you will never get philosophers to pay attention to your epistemological views. They are both familiar and entirely counter to currently accepted lines of thought.**

best

Ned Block

[Lehar responds](#)

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[Daniel C. Dennett:](#)

**I'm afraid you have simply misconstrued the whole issue.**

Lehar: If I have misconstrued the argument of direct perception, would you perhaps care to enlighten me?

**I don't have time for a debate, Steve. I've been over all this many times.**

Lehar: Yes you have, and I am familiar with your argument. But there is a fatal flaw in your reasoning with respect to the information content of experience that you will have to account for at some point.

Your argument has two prongs: Visual experience is less detailed and filled-in than it appears to be, and: You can represent space non-spatially in an implicit or abstracted representation.

But experience is necessarily exactly as detailed and filled-in as it is experienced to be (under critical introspection by informed observers), and visual experience is experienced as an explicit reified spatial structure.

And yes you can represent space non-spatially, but you need a reified representation (every "pixel" filled-in with color as it is experienced) if you are to capture the information content of experience.

### [Dan Dennet Responds?](#)

[\(See whole brief exchange\)](#)

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### [Screenhead.com funny comics](#)

Steven Lehar's pencil drawn peek into questioning the world around you. Feels like our brain does when we shove a medium sized pencil in there and watch the Matrix, which, this being Friday, is going to happen in few hours.

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### [Rudy Rucker's Blog](#)

Take the red pill -- read Steven Lehar's A Cartoon Epistemology.

1 Comments:

At 12:19 AM, W.M. Bear said

An interesting but **totally fallacious take on reality**. However, the Hacker's Dictionary tells me that this is the way virtually all computer programmers (and those who wish they were) view the world and themselves. Frankly, I find this view limiting and more than a bit depressing if you really start thinking about it. Read some Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty et al. and the come back to this. (Heidegger is especially good at logically demonstrating that the world as we experience it is not a representation of anything.)

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### [Brent Allsop on the Extropians List](#)

I wish there was a real money Idea Futures out there, and one of these days I'm going to create an idea futures entry on this. I'll bet anyone, anything (that I can afford), that by 2025, **Steven Lehar will be popularly viewed as contributing at least as much to science as Einstein**. The implications of this theory to our

**immediate future and to what we are is much more profound to us than what Einstein theorized about. But for some reason, no one will listen to or read, let alone publish and argue for or even against, the profound plain and simple logic and rational contained in these works. It is very frustrating and unbelievable to me.**

**James Rogers Replies:**

I would be willing to bet against you -- I have very strong doubts that Steven Lehar will ever contribute as much as Einstein did. Without getting involved in yet another discussion on this, most of this work seems to be based on some rather slippery assumptions that don't always follow. Every time I read this stuff my BS meter spikes, largely because the definitions of poorly defined words appear to change to suit the argument of the author. If you nail down all the definitions, the reasoning fails.

Perhaps a lot of people *\*have\** read the "profound plain and simple logic and rational contained" in those works and found it lacking like I have -- you have to at least consider it. For me, the lack of a strong argument serves to support my default position that it is not material to anything I need to care about.

No offense, but you push this stuff like a religious person pushing God(tm). If I don't believe what you are selling me, the product appears to be a weak argument, therefore the obvious solution (from your perspective) is for me to suspend reason and experience The Truth(tm) so that I can believe. While convenient for the person selling, it is an absurd proposition to a potential new buyer (essentially being nothing more than a "free" hit on the dealer's crack pipe).

-James Rogers

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[Brent Allsop](#)

Various philosophers and researchers have argued for various forms of representational theories like this since Descartes and earlier. Steve Lehar[1], a recent independent researcher, has done more work with theories like this one, by far, than anyone else I know. For some reason, completely inexplicable to me, he has had troubles getting much of his work published. Much of the recent popular writings on this topic seem hopelessly lost and confused about what consciousness may or may not be. But what Steve has to say, to me, is so compelling, powerful, and simple in comparison. In my opinion, **when science finally reveals to us what consciousness is, people will realize that Steve has been right all along** and the people that refused to publish his material will be viewed in hind sight as yet more examples of horrible scientific mistakes so many people have made throughout history.

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[Victor Daniels](#)

Very recently (2003) STEVEN LEHAR at Harvard and the Schepens eye institute published The World in Your Head: A Gestalt View of the Mechanism of Conscious Experience. It brings together Gestalt theory, phenomenology, physiological psychology, and experimental procedures that are both painstaking and very clever in a model of visual perception. **I suspect that it may become a profoundly influential work.**

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### [Dave's Diary](#)

Back to Steve Lehar's Plato's Cave. It's the starkest outline I've come across on the Net of a conception of the human predicament which blighted my early youth. Internalise it, and you can feel unutterably lonely, as though condemned to solitary confinement for life and with no prospect of remission, ever. Russell ( "One never sees anything but the inside of one's own head" ) anticipated some such sort of view.

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Email from Emilson Leite

Hi Steven,

**I'd like to thank you for changing my view of the world!**

**The sensation I get while I'm reading your articles is like opening a window and seeing things I've never seen before.** I also have a lot of fun reading them because the cartoons are really funny! Are you the guy that draw those cartoons?

I'm having a hard time discussing your theory with other people.

Some of them don't even accept that there is an external objective reality... Others simply can't think of consciousness as being a physical phenomenon like any other thing in a materialistic point of view... Others argue with me that the reason we see things in 3D, or in other words, the reason we have the notion of depth, is just because we have two eyes. They say that it is really an optical phenomenon.

I know you don't have time to comment on the three points above but can you comment about the third one? I simply told them that even when we cover an eye we still perceive the third dimension of space, even if it is not that good as when we look at things we the two eyes. Is that the only argument? Or I'm missing something...

Emilson.

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Email from Joseph McCard

I am rarely thrilled when I find out something but I can say I am genuinely thrilled to find someone smart enough to be able to write about what I have believed, for the last 27 years, to be the nature of consciousness ... I can say I understand how difficult it may have been for you working alone and feeling like maybe you are crazy. Well, if you are we both are. You

have my genuine and sincere support. Write to me if you feel like it, I would be thrilled again!!! Thank-you

[later email]

The ch.5 you sent me was something I would have written. It's like we were tuned in to the same frequency. It's taken me this long to get over the initial shock of it. It also made me realise no one is going to listen to what I have to say because I do not fit the academic profile. I'm at least pleased that you seem to be getting some air-time. I now know I made the right choice when I initially encountered some of your writings.

Your ideas are seeds and I can't help but think they will grow. Be patient. Good-luck

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Email from [Norm Nason](#)

Hi Steven,

I first heard your name from [Steve Grand](#), with whom I've held a spirited e-mail correspondence for more than a year. He lead me to your web site and your well-constructed theories regarding cognition. I'm simply a curious layman, but I found your work thought provoking. You have obviously worked very hard--and sacrificed a great deal--to formulate and promote your thesis. I've enjoyed your writing very much, and will continue to think about it for some time to come.

I am a graphic and fine artist by trade, and am particularly interested in how your work relates to what I do. You may find my website entertaining, if nothing more:

[Nasonart.com](#)

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Email from Primate Phreak

I've stabled upon your wonderful website through a messageboard link. And wow, with just a peek at it, I can tell you have something going on here. ... I still haven't sussed through all of your papers, but I'm reading throught them now, one by one. I find strikingly similar ideas to other authors that I have read and other theories on how our brains process reality. You are on to something! And do not let the institutions and journals of science beat you down, for it really does seem like you've been declined many times on most of your papers, but I do see a few that made it :).

...

With Love and Gratitude,

primate

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Email from John Smythies

Dear Steven,

Our mutual friend Stuart Anstis suggested that I should contact you. I have just read your web site and adsorbed your excellent theory of perception - very close to mine.

I am much in sympathy with your Harmonic Resonance Theory as an account of what is going on in the brain. Did you ever see my papers on the stroboscopic patterns that fit in very well with your hypothesis?

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Email Response from Thomas Vacy Hightower

Hi Steven,

It is very kind of you to respond to my writings and enlighten me with your brain shaking works. My level on the matter is on your cartoon epistemology! I have looked into your pages and the little I can comprehend with the help of my intuition, I can perceive the outline of an entirely new concept of how the brain works.

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With appreciation, Thomas.

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Email from Cornelius Werner

Dear Mr Lehar,

please allow me a few comments on your ideas.

To put it briefly:

***Fantastic!***

I'm just a beginner in Cognitive Neurosciences, and therefore yet unspoilt by tomes of philosophical thought...so therefore I am easy prey, maybe. But still: **this is by far the most convincing explanation of visual perception I have come across yet.** It coincides with many of my feelings about the workings of the brain, but they have been pre-conscious, pre-reflexive or whatever you would call it, so far. And as for your cartoon: you simply interweave the cognitive basis of sensorimotor and proprioceptive perception en passant, and in a completely convincing and entertaining way. The way the little bald man argues in [cartoonepist30.html](#) is just the way I have been trained to think about the brain - I could recognize myself very much in him!

Apart from my elation over your theory, I noticed a great deal of dissatisfaction among my (also senior) colleagues about the current standing of CogSci, and I believe that this is because they also feel the "epistemological divide", but aren't able to give it a name - and are even more unable to overcome it. You cannot try to understand motor imagination or

motor intention without having a larger concept in which to fit it in. At least that's my opinion.

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Thank you very much for the time you put into your cartoons - I wish more people would put this sort of effort into their work!

Best regards,

Cornelius Werner

[From a later email]

I've almost finished reading your paper. Concerning this central issue, I cannot think of any objections. Although it IS a mind-boggling proposal, it's argumentation is stringent, and more plausible than the opposing thoughts. I also read the open peer commentaries, and I found most of them illogical to the point of confusion. ...

As I got it, you proposed a model of \*perception\* in your Gestalt bubble paper. How come that you are drawing fire from people stating that you ignored neurophysiological models of basic \*neuronal\* functions? Do they really claim to know how perception derives from collateral inhibition by interneurons? I'm astonished that such hubris exists! Apart from that I am surprised that there is still that much debate on the issue of where experience should be located: it can't be anywhere else but in the brain. Where else should it be? I can understand that people have different ideas on \*how\* neurons do it, but THAT they do it, and that they can't project the results of their computations back into the "physical world" should be obvious. Or is it me who is naive, now?

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Email from [Migel](#)

I spent about 4 hours today reading thru your site again ... you are a tenacious mofo! Keep rocking. The discussion threads were hilarious - had me laughing! How can people be so confused about something that seems so obvious to us? Fine details aside - your homunculus explanation and representational model are how i've intuitively assumed it to be. I didnt articulate this even to 1/1000 of the level of detail you are on, but i've always known about the bubble in the head in your drawings and the inverse force/attraction-mapping without the mathematical and logical details. That's why I love reading your work - you have grown mature towering logic trees from these little seedling thoughts i've also sprouted. Your theories feel intuitively 'right' and are in accord with my subjective experience and the most cutting-edge discoveries in physics, complex systems science, cognitive research, chaos and the general shift from newtonian to wave/harmonic matter paradigms. No wonder you have trouble getting people to understand ... all in due time.

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Email from James Digital@MySpace.com

I must email you on your wonderful contributions. They have greatly inspired me for some time now. Ever since reading your paper on "Quantification of spatial percepts". Formerly I worked solely on physics and never saw the true implications nor purpose of psychological phenomenon that accompanied physical understand. I was aware of its exist and influence but disregarded it as mere philosophical fruit for the brain. I must say these past few years of keeping up with your work has influenced me to change various belief structures that has improved greatly my understanding of the fundamental reality we adhere too. I only hope you come closer to finding the truth(s) you are seeking.

Sincerest Wishes and hopes  
-James

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Review of my book on Amazon.com by

**David H.Peterzell**

**So why isn't this a classic yet?**

May 24, 2007

I don't know Steven Lehar. We've corresponded a couple times about other matters via e-mail, but that's it. I don't write solicited reviews, and this is no exception. At some point, I searched online and found Lehar's website, with its interesting text and beautiful graphics. **It was obvious to me that Lehar is doing something unique, creative and important, albeit way out of the current mainstream.** That led me to purchase his book here (Oops. Apparently you can get it for less by ordering from the publisher).

**I'm wondering why this isn't a classic yet.** OK, well, honestly, I'm just getting started with this book, but what I'm finding is amazing. **The text seems crisp and well-written. Lehar is addressing issues that I've wondered about for years. The figures are beautiful and informative.** (Take a look at the color images at the author's website). I'll have more to say once I get deeper into the text.

**Make sure to take a look at Lehar's online material. His "cartoon epistemology" is brilliant for its simplicity, humor, artistic flair and importance.** You can read about Lehar's theory online, and gain access to color illustrations that resemble the black and white ones from the book.

This is truly the best of times and the worst of times for the perceptual and neural sciences. The toys (like fMRI and multi-electrode EEGs) have become more sophisticated and powerful, and there have been many new discoveries. If you are a workhorse who can churn out data, publications, and grant proposals, you are relatively safe. But at the same time, the field has not been kind to rogue scientific thinkers, no matter how brilliant. Many modern academics seem not to give themselves much time to think, or to pay attention to thinkers. This book may well be a gem, waiting to be discovered.

(My only complaint is that the text in the book is SMALL. I actually purchased some reading glasses to make it easier to read this book. Is this what it feels like to be.... old???)

At least one other person seems to share my assessment of this book -- Hellmuth Metz-Glockel (Universitt Dortmund). He writes, "The theory that LEHAR presents here is unusually stimulating, and can certainly be seen as the most important contemporary contribution to Gestalt theory and its further development. Much of it is - as the author concedes - speculative, but when one considers the facts, his considerations are characterized by a high plausibility and rigor. If one wishes to clear up the manifold phenomena, there remains only one possibility, as the presented theory offers. It remains to be seen which and how much resonance the resonance theory will find in the scientific literature. It has certainly earned it."

I think we may be ripe for a rediscovery of Gestalt ideas. I've written some reviews of other three recent Gestalt offerings. See my profile/reviews.

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Email from **David Aaron Holmes** author of [Psyche's Palace: How the Brain Generates the Light of the Soul](#).

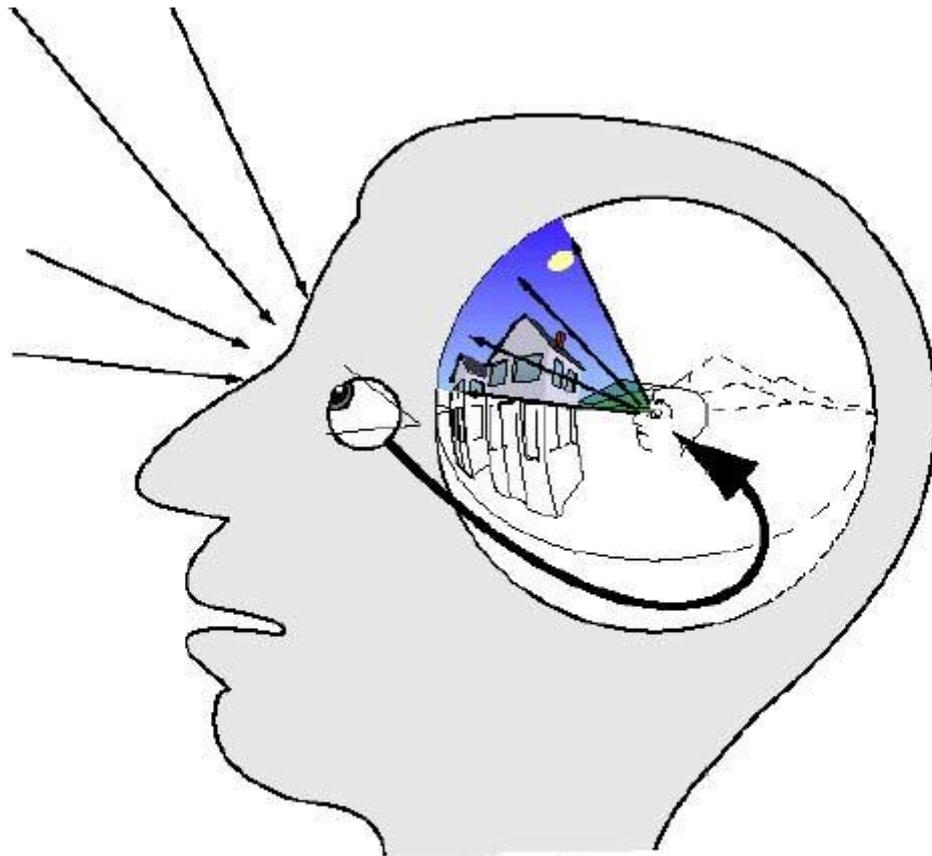
July 2008

I came across your Gestalt Isomorphism paper online a week or so ago and have thoroughly enjoyed clicking through the labyrinth of links, landing this morning **in the  Cartoon Epistemology.  I am in full accord with the Conan O'Brien character in the pink shirt; while his George Costanza-esque foil s rantings capture perfectly the pompous and oblivious tone of the tiresome AI-besotted cognitive neuroscience orthodoxy. I was also terrifically amused by your cantankerous responses to the peer review panel s benighted imbecilities. What a load of horse punky!**

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Found on [Justin Boland's Brainsturbator site](#)

On an individual level, what mechanisms could possibly explain synchronicities and High Weirdness? I find myself returning to the work of Stephen Lehar, who has written two truly excellent and mind-expanding papers I d like to share with you: [Gestalt Isomorphism and the Primacy of Subjective Conscious Experience: A Gestalt Bubble Model](#)—the foundation of Lehar s theory and work. The title might sound intimidating but it s actually a very enjoyable paper, including **one of the best summations of the past 2 centuries of brain/consciousness theories I ve ever found, so it s worth reading for that alone.** The Gestalt Bubble Model  can be quickly summed up by the image below



**Figure 15**

The image from the retina is projected into the perceptual sphere from the center outward in the direction of gaze, as an inverse analog of the cone of light that enters the eye in the external world, taking into account eye, head, and body orientation in order to update the appropriate portion of perceptual space.

the world we perceive is literally contained inside our heads. But how? Here ♦s Lehar ♦s take: [Harmonic Resonance Theory: An alternative to the "neuron doctrine" paradigm of neurocomputation to address Gestalt properties of perception](#)—because the brain doesn ♦t compute like mainstream neurology says it does.