

Symmetry Theory of Valence “Explain Like I’m 5” Edition

Michael Edward Johnson

Qualia Research Institute

San Francisco, CA

MIKE@QUALIARESEARCHINSTITUTE.ORG

When someone on Reddit says “ELI5”, it means “I’m having a hard time understanding this, could you explain it to me like I’m 5 years old?”.

Here’s my attempt at an “ELI5” for the Symmetry Theory of Valence (Part II of Principia Qualia [1]).

-

We can think of conscious experiences as represented by a special kind of mathematical shape. The feeling of snowboarding down a familiar mountain early in the morning with the air smelling of pine trees is one shape; the feeling of waking up to your new kitten jumping on your chest and digging her claws into your blankets is another shape. There are as many shapes as there are possible experiences.

Now, the interesting part: if we try to sort experiences by how good they feel, is there a pattern to which shapes represent more pleasant experiences? I think there is, and I think this depends on the symmetry of the shape.

There’s a lot of evidence for this, and if this is true, it’s super-important! It could lead to way better painkillers, actual cures for things like Depression, and it would also give us a starting point for turning consciousness research into a real science (just like how alchemy turned into chemistry). Basically, it would totally change the world.

But first thing’s first: we need to figure out if it’s true or not.

References

- [1] M. Johnson. Principia Qualia. URL <https://opentheory.net/2016/11/principia-qualia/>.