

Four Big Theories — and No Winner Yet

Global Workspace

The secret ingredient:

information BROADCAST widely across the brain.

You're conscious of whatever wins the competition and gets 'posted' to the global workspace.

Integrated Information (IIT)

The secret ingredient:

how much a system's parts form an irreducible WHOLE (Φ , 'phi').

Consciousness just IS integrated information — and may exist, faintly, far and wide.

Higher-Order Theories

The secret ingredient:

a thought ABOUT a mental state.

A state is conscious when the mind represents itself as being in it.

Attention Schema / Predictive

The secret ingredient:

the brain's simplified MODEL of its own attention.

Awareness is the story the brain tells itself about what it's attending to.

These are rivals, not settled facts. Each captures something; none is agreed to have cracked the hard problem.