Modelling Cognitive Brain Processes

CS298 Master's Defense

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Presentation Roadmap

Project Overview

Motivation, Project Goals and Impact

Background

Related work, multimodal models, agent orchestration

Preliminary Work

CrewAl baseline, Topology Manager design, Housefly simulation

Implementation

- Phi-3.5-mini-instruct finetuning
- Multimodal processing
- Visual cortex modeling (dorsal-ventral, V2-V4-V5 pathways)
- Saliency visualizer

Experimental Results

- Reasoning benchmarks
- CLEVR + COD10K Experiments
- Visual Saliency evaluation

Conclusion & Future Work

Key findings, impact, and research directions

Project Overview

Motivation

- Simulate complex cognitive and perceptual brain processes using AI agent systems
- Leverage Large Language Models (LLMs) to model human-like reasoning and multimodal perception

Project Goals

- Build modular agent-based simulations of the visual cortex using LLM topologies
- Enable cognitive functions like contour detection, motion, and color perception via coordinated agents
- Develop the Topology Manager framework for flexible deployment and interaction of LLM agents
- Fine-tune advanced models (Phi-3.5-mini-instruct) for logical reasoning and integrate with multimodal tasks

Impact

- Demonstrates the potential of multi-agent LLM systems to provide interpretable, human-inspired cognition
- Lays groundwork for future developments in brain-like Al architectures and multimodal understanding

Background - Related Work

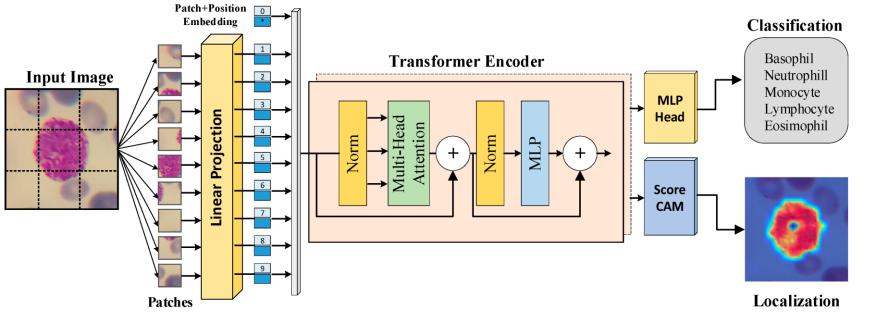
- Dennett et al. [1] Proposed the Multiple Drafts Model (MDM) of consciousness
 Rejects a single "central observer"; consciousness arises from parallel, competing narrative
 drafts. Explains subjective experience via distributed, heterarchical processing rather than a
 unified stream; accounts for phenomena like temporal illusions, confabulation, and posthoc editing through decentralized interpretive processes
- Chen et al. [5] built a large-scale V1 model integrating anatomical + neurophysiological data. Replicated visual processing traits: robustness to noise, temporal stability, distributed feature detection
- Wang et al. [6] CLIP-trained ResNet50 explained ~79% of voxel response variance in holdout brain data. Outperformed models trained only on images or text
- Wang et al. [8] Video saliency model trained on DHF1K dataset (1,000 clips, 250Hz eyetracker). Improved spatio-temporal saliency predictions with DeepLabV3; analyzed agerelated fixation patterns (20–28 yrs)
- Hulse et al. [9] → Mapped the full synapse-level connectome of the Drosophila central complex. Revealed circuit motifs supporting flexible navigation & action selection Identified recurrent loops, fan-in/fan-out pathways, and compass-sensory integration channels enabling context-dependent behavior; provides a high-resolution neural architecture for biologically grounded navigation models

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 $E = mc^2$

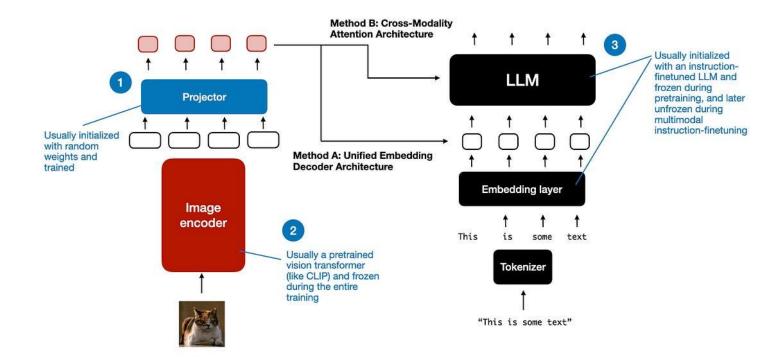
Background -Multimodal Language Models

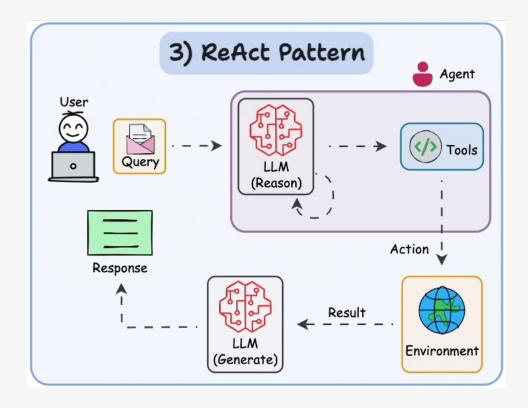
- From text-only → Vision + Language reasoning
- Key systems: GPT-4, Gemini, LLaVA → combine pretrained LLMs with Vision Transformers (ViTs)
- Applications: Image captioning, VQA, multimodal reasoning
- 0• Impactful models:
 - **DALL-E** → Generates realistic images from text prompts → simulates "mental imagery."
 - Flamingo → Few-shot multimodal model → learns cross-modal tasks with minimal supervision
 - Scientific Relevance:
 - Replicates dorsal (where) + ventral (what) streams of the visual cortex
 - Provides better saliency prediction & scene understanding than unimodal approaches



Vision Transformer

Multimodal Architecture





Background - Agent Orchestration

 Multi-agent LLMs = multiple specialized models collaborating

Frameworks:

- Crew AI, AutoGPT → agents with specific roles & goals
- Limitation: Communication often opaque

Advances:

- LangGraph, ReAct, Chain-of-Thought (CoT) → structured, step-by-step reasoning flows
- Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)
 → connects agents to external vector DBs (FAISS, LanceDB) for dynamic domain knowledge

Why it matters:

- Supports modular, interpretable, distributed reasoning
- Enables brain-inspired systems where agents = cortical regions with controlled pathways

Preliminary Work - Dennett's Multiple Drafts Model

Core Ideas

- Proposed by Daniel Dennett in Consciousness Explained (1991)
- Denies any central "Cartesian Theater" (no single place or moment in the brain where consciousness "happens")
- Instead, there are **parallel**, **multitrack** processes: different subsystems of the brain make content-fixations (detecting features, interpreting sensory inputs, etc.) at different places and times

Mechanisms & Implications

- These content-fixations are continuously edited ("drafts")—new interpretations, revisions, additions—across time
- Not all "drafts" reach what we consider full conscious awareness; only some become "famous" or influential enough to affect behavior, memory, report
- Consciousness is thus dynamic, distributed, and emergent—tied to behavior and the capacity of content to influence actions rather than to the presence of a single, fixed observer

Why It Matters for Cognitive Modeling

- Motivates designing systems with modular, parallel sub-agents rather than monolithic sequential pipelines
- Suggests focus on how drafts (partial interpretations) are generated, edited, and selected
- Offers a framework to compare artificial systems to human-like consciousness in terms of integration, revision, and competition among representations

Preliminary Work – CrewAl Implementation

- Create a baseline system that follows Dennett's model: multiple agents ("drafts")
 working in parallel, then integrated, to simulate aspects of conscious processing
- Framework: CrewAl multi-agent LLM system
- Agents:
 - LLM1 (Quantitative Focus) extracts and summarizes numerical/quantity information
 - LLM2 (Logical Relationships Focus) identifies logical relations, interactions, structures in the input
 - Primary LLM (Integrator) takes outputs from LLM1 and LLM2 and produces final answer

Procedure

- Feed 20 input questions/tasks: arithmetic (quantities), logic, everyday reasoning
- Agents work in parallel, produce their "drafts," then integrator synthesizes into final output
- Observe and document not just correctness, but how partial interpretations differ, what is preserved or discarded, whether context or realism enters into the integrator's answer (beyond raw logical quantity)

Preliminary Work - CrewAl Implementation

Task	Quantitative Agent (LLM1) Output	Logical Agent (LLM2) Output	Final Answer (Integrator)
"I have 100 apples. I gave 20 to my sister and 10 to my brother. How many are left?"	Summarized quantities: 100, 20, 10	Logical: gave away, subtract, remaining	70 apples
"There are 10 crows on an electric line. If a hunter shoots the leftmost crow how many remain?"	Quantities: 10 initially, 1 shot	Relations: removal, context of noise scaring away others	0 crows (realism); or 9 if only raw subtraction considered
Logical syllogism ("All trucks fly" etc.)	Identifies premises' quantities/attributes	Derives relations among categories; checks validity	Correctly rejects invalid conclusions; selects only supported ones

Preliminary Work – Topology Manager

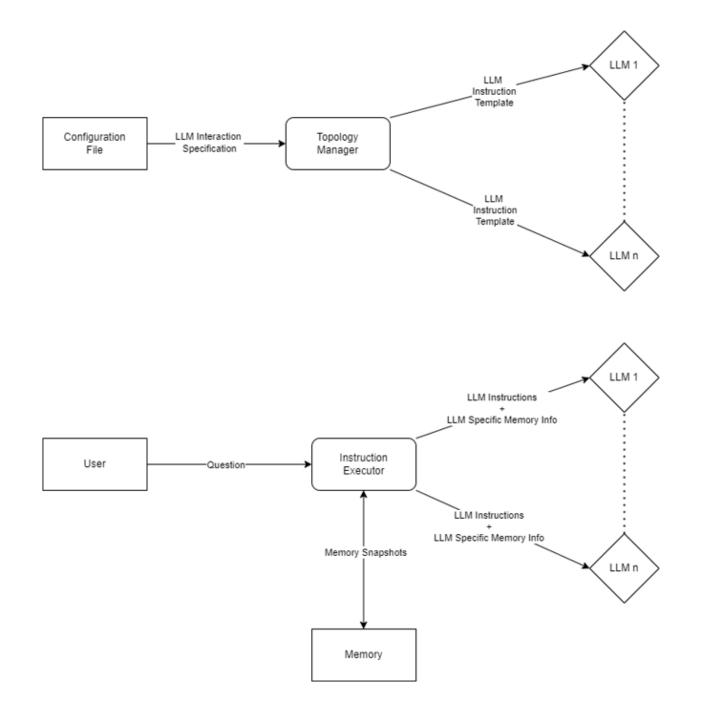
Purpose

- Framework to orchestrate LLM interactions with finegrained control
- Goes beyond CrewAl → lets us decide which agents talk, how data flows, and what is shared
- Inspired by Infrastructure-as-Code (IaC) → reproducible, configurable, and scalable

Key Features

- Declarative config → Graph-based agent topologies defined in JSON.
- Version-controlled & reproducible → Easy rollback & deployment
- Automated deployment & scaling → Minimal human intervention
- Consistency across environments → Prevents human error

Preliminary Work – Topology Manager



Preliminary Work – Topology Manager

Architecture

- Configuration File → Blueprint of agents + interaction graph
- Topology Manager → Builds hierarchy, topological sorting, execution order
- Instruction Executor → Central processor, query handler, memory snapshot support
- Memory Module → Context persistence via snapshots
- LLM Modules → Cloud (OpenAI, Gemini, OpenRouter) + local (Ollama, LM Studio)

Supporting Modules

- Config (validation & cycle checks)
- Core (module interaction, async comms)
- DB (RAG, vector DB abstraction)
- Manager (agent orchestration in topological order)
- Model (LLM abstraction layer)

Preliminary Work – Topology Manager (RAG)

Purpose

- Enhance LLM inference with query-relevant retrieval
- Enables offline execution without cloud LLMs
- Improves accuracy, adaptability, and contextual reasoning

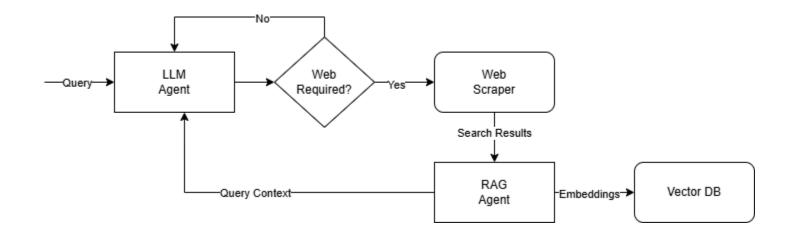
Pipeline Components

- Web Scraping → Async Python crawler for latest info
- Vector DB (LanceDB) → In-memory multimodal storage & retrieval
- Embedding Model → nomic embed v1.5 (384-dim multimodal embeddings)
- On-Device LLM (Ollama) → Consumes retrieved results;
 cloud-free inference

Benefits

- Contextual Understanding via efficient retrieval
- Improved Accuracy using latest, web-backed info
- Adaptive Learning → continuously updating knowledge base

Preliminary Work – Topology Manager (RAG)



Preliminary Work – Topology Manager

Question	LLM 1	LLM 2	Primary	Answer
I have 100 apples. I gave 20 apples to my sister and 10 apples to my brother. How many apples do I have left?	You started with 100 apples. You gave 20 to your sister and 10 to your brother. Subtracting gives 70 apples remaining.	To find how many apples are left, subtract 20 (sister) and 10 (brother) from 100 → 70 apples left.	You would have 70 apples left. Calculation confirms: 100 – 20 – 10 = 70.	70 apples
There are 10 crows on an electric line. If a hunter shoots the leftmost crow and it falls to the ground, how many crows will be left on the electric line?	The question describes 10 crows. After the hunter shoots one, 9 remain on the line.	Logical relation: one crow is removed, so 9 remain on the line.	There will be 9 crows left on the line.	9 crows
Statements: All trucks fly. Some scooters fly. Conclusions: All trucks are scooters. Some scooters do not fly. Which of the conclusions are correct?	"All trucks are scooters" is not correct. "Some scooters do not fly" is correct as per the statements.	From "All trucks fly" + "Some scooters fly," the correct conclusion is that some scooters do not fly; all trucks are scooters is unsupported.	Correct conclusion: "Some scooters do not fly." Incorrect: "All trucks are scooters."	Conclusion 2 is correct; Conclusion 1 is incorrect

Preliminary Work – Topology Manager

Accuracy on 20 Questions

CrewAl	Topology Manager
80%	75%

Preliminary Work – Housefly Vision Simulation

Goal

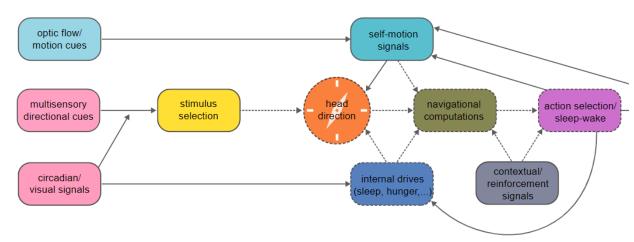
- Model the sensorimotor pathway of a housefly using the LLM Topology Manager
- Proof-of-concept for extending to more complex human-like visual systems

Subsystems Implemented (7 total)

- Stimulus Selection
- Head Direction
- Internal Drives
- Circadian Rhythm Simulation
- Multisensory Integration
- Self-Motion Processing
- Optic Flow Simulation

Key Idea

- Each subsystem = modular LLM agent with **biologically inspired inputs & outputs**
- Collectively simulate decision-making → perception-driven behavior



Housefly Brain Process

Preliminary Work – Housefly Vision Simulation

Implementation

- Added conversational memory to store previous outputs as dictionaries
- Used summarization to prevent cascading context overload
- Enabled episodic generation → agents aware of past states, not just current stimuli

Impact

- Simulated continuous & adaptive behavior, closer to real insect responses
- Actions depended on history + current input, not isolated events
- More realistic framework for studying how organisms adapt to dynamic environments

Outcome

- Successfully reproduced adaptive fly-like behavior
- Establishes foundation for modelling higher-order visual systems



Preliminary Work – Housefly Vision Simulation

```
"query": "Behave like you are this subsystem and generate the outputs as specified and provide one of the outputs you are created to
"memory": {
    "4": "Circadian Signals: prepare for sleep",
    "7": "Internal Drives: seek sleep.",
    "3": "Multisensory Cues: head towards the sound, \nMultisensory Cues: orient to light source.",
    "5": "Stimulus Selection: orient to light source.",
    "1": "Optic Flow: turning right",
    "2": "Self-Motion: adjust heading slightly left",
    "6": "Output: Maintain a stable heading, adjust heading slightly left."
}
```

Vision Simulation for a particular Timestep

Implementation - Finetuning Phi-3.5-mini-instruct

Model Details

- Phi-3.5-mini-instruct: Decoder-only transformer, 3.8B parameters
- Pre-trained for instruction-following, reasoning, and multimodal tasks
- Trained on high-quality reasoning datasets, synthetic data, and image-caption pairs

Purpose of Finetuning

- Adapt the model for instruction execution and multimodal reasoning
- Resolve competing outputs from modular LLM subsystems, inspired by biological attention mechanisms
- Serve as the **key reasoning layer** for the overall cognitive modeling framework

Implementation Setup

- Platform: Google Colab, consumer-grade GPU
- Memory Optimization: 4-bit quantization to fit model on limited VRAM
- Optimization Techniques: Unsloth → reduces memory & training overhead without affecting accuracy
- **Pipeline:** Base64 image integration → support visual queries

Implementation - Finetuning Datasets and Metrics

Datasets Used

- ReClor 6,000+ multiple-choice reasoning questions from graduate-level exams
 - Each datapoint: prior context + question + 1 correct answer
 - Trains logical inference & decision-making
- LogiQA 2,442 independent reasoning questions
 - · Used to prevent overfitting to ReClor
 - Ensures generalization beyond one dataset

Training & Monitoring

- Monitored training & validation loss on ReClor; noted potential overfitting
- Validated periodically on LogiQA
- Stopped training around 100 iterations when LogiQA accuracy plateaued

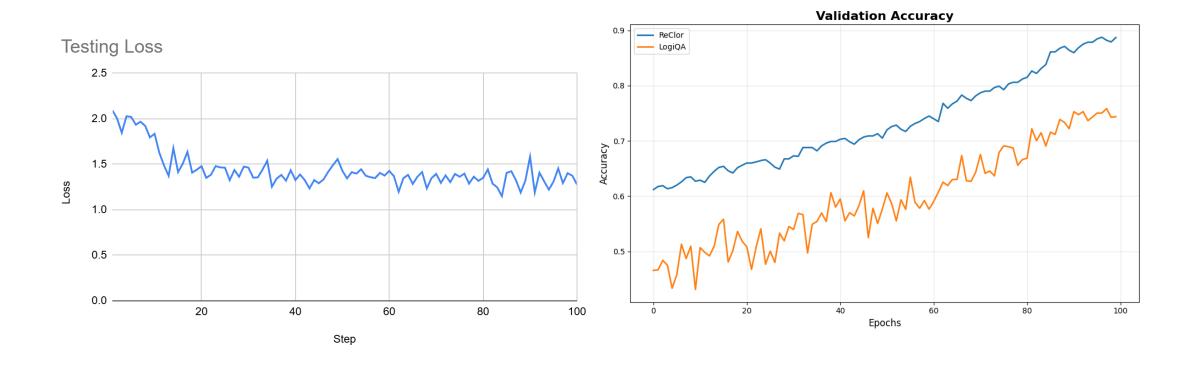
Results

- ReClor: Steady loss decrease, model learned dataset-specific reasoning
- LogiQA: Final accuracy ~72%, indicating balanced reasoning generalization
- Outcome: Phi-3.5-mini-instruct can integrate multimodal inputs and act as a decision arbiter for modular LLM subsystems

Impact

- Provides robust reasoning layer for hierarchical LLM setups
- Supports distributed attention simulation in visual and cognitive tasks

Implementation - Finetuning Phi-3.5-mini-instruct



Implementation - Multimodal Support

Objective

- Extend LLM Topology Manager to handle both text and image inputs
- Simulate visual cortex-inspired networks where agents process multimodal information in parallel

Key Enhancements

- Multimodal Input Handling
 - Queries now accept text + base64-encoded images
 - Encoded images stored in **conversation memory** to avoid recomputation
 - Supports seamless integration with cloud APIs or local LLMs

Instruction & Memory Updates

- Instruction class now supports dict-based text-image objects
- Memory module stores historical multimodal data, enabling context-aware reasoning

Architecture Impact

- Compatible with existing text-based reasoning → backward compatible
- Modular design allows future extensions for other data types
- Enhances LLMs' ability to reason over visual context + textual information simultaneously

Outcome

- Supports multimodal networks for integrated perception tasks
- Enables structured, reusable, and parallel reasoning across text and visual streams

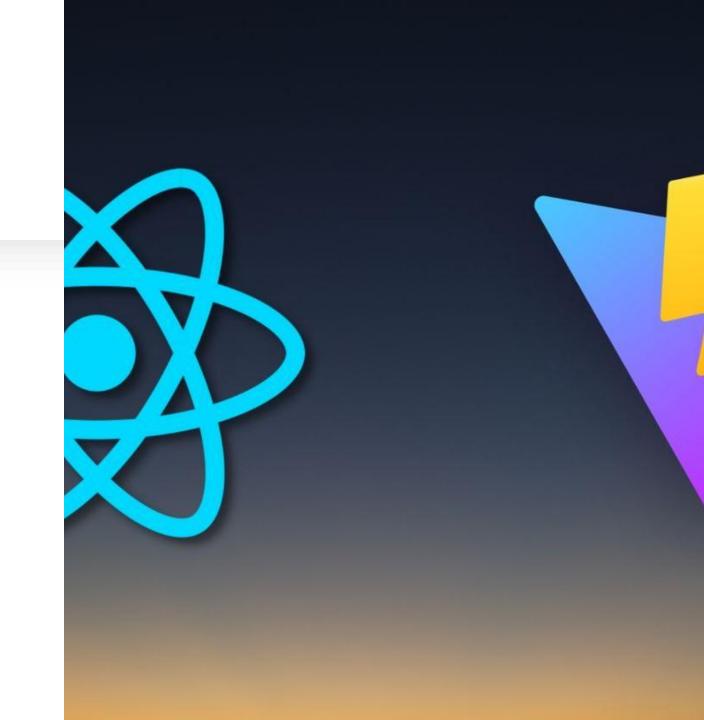
Implementation – Saliency Visualizer

- Built using Vite + React as a single-page application
- Uses reusable components:
 - Image upload
 - Image card with subsystem outputs
 - Description and conversation display

Two-way bound image preview on upload

Service layer:

- Formats input for backend
- Handles multipart requests
- Parses JSON responses for display



Implementation – Saliency Visualizer

Output Structure

- Subsystem name
- Base64-encoded image
- Explanation of focus region

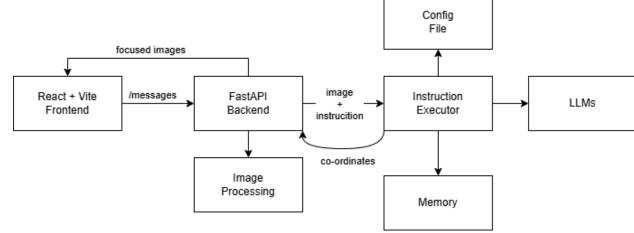
Implementation – Saliency Visualizer

Backend Design

- Built using FastAPI + Uvicorn for asynchronous requests
- Initializes InstructionExecutor on startup with:
 - · Graph-based configuration files
 - Agent communication rules
- Provides /messages endpoint to handle image inputs

Processing Pipeline

- Instruction Execution:
 - Validates inputs
 - Runs image through modular LLM agents
 - Each subsystem predicts regions of focus
- Image Processing:
 - · Circular focus regions extracted based on coordinates
 - Gaussian blur applied to non-focused regions (25x25 kernel)
 - Overlay focused regions onto blurred image to simulate saliency
- Response:
 - · Structured output per subsystem
 - Includes image + explanation
 - Returned to frontend for interactive visualization



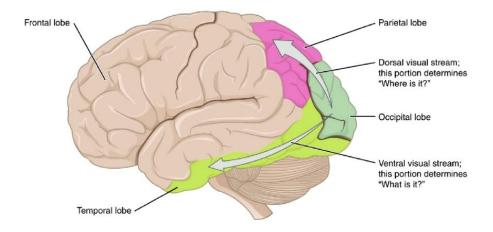
High Level Architecture

System Design

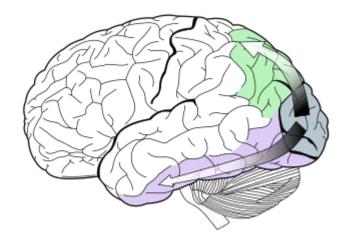
- Integrated previously developed components into a single interactive system
- InstructionExecutor framework:
 - Auto-deploys modular agent-task inference patterns
 - Subsystems are nodes in a directed graph, each producing focused outputs
 - No need to modify LLM internals; functionality is prompt-driven
- Output Processing:
 - Subsystem outputs are visualized via image pipeline to highlight attention
 - Enables a scalable and modular simulation of visual processing
- Key Feature: Parallel, modular, prompt-driven subsystems emulate biologically inspired visual cortex behavior

Dorsal-Ventral Pathway Simulation

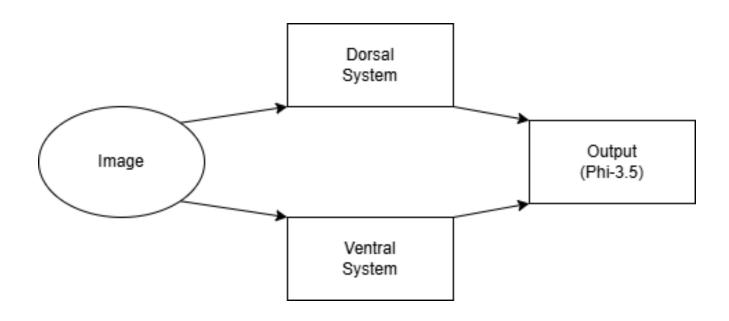
- Objective: Model the classical "what" vs "where" visual pathways
 - Ventral Pathway ("What"):
 - Performs object recognition and feature extraction
 - Detects **textures**, **colors**, **shapes** in the scene
 - Dorsal Pathway ("Where"):
 - Processes spatial relationships, motion, and object trajectories
- Implementation Approach:
 - Separate prompts for dorsal vs ventral tasks
 - Both paths executed in parallel via Topology Manager
 - Modular agents allow flexible downstream integration and attention visualization



Dorsal-Ventral Stream



The dorsal stream (green) and ventral stream (purple) are shown. They originate from primary visual cortex.



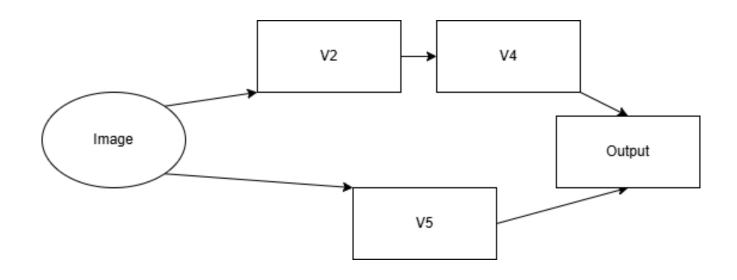
Dorsal-Ventral Subsystem

V2-V4-V5 Hierarchical Subsystem

- Objective: Simulate an agentic visual hierarchy in human cortex
 - V2 Agent:
 - Extracts edges, shapes, contours, and anomalies from input images
 - V4 Agent:
 - Focuses on color, contrast, texture, and object properties
 - V5 Agent:
 - Responsible for motion detection, object tracking, and dynamic scene analysis

Architecture & Flow:

- Prompt-driven, multi-agent setup, comparable in scale to dorsal-ventral system
- Outputs processed via image post-processing pipeline
- Each agent produces focused image + textual description for attention visualization



V2-V4-V5 system

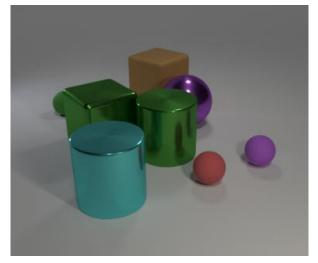
+ Experiments - CLEVR

- The human visual system processes information through two complementary pathways
- Ventral stream object recognition ("what")
- Dorsal stream spatial estimation and motion ("where")
- Hypothesis A dual-stream agent that separates object recognition (ventral) from spatial estimation (dorsal) will produce object distance judgments closer to human annotations (i.e., lower Mean Absolute Error) than a single multimodal LLM that reasons over the whole image jointly.
- Goal Test whether this modular perception architecture leads to more human-like spatial reasoning

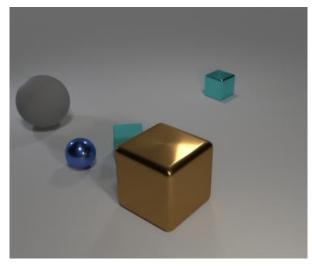
+ Experiments - CLEVR

- ~100,000 Synthetic 3D scenes with simple objects (spheres, cubes, cylinders).
- Each object annotated with shape, color,
 size, material, and position.
- Enables **precise measurement** of object distances and spatial relationships.
- Objects are visually distinct but spatially complex, mirroring the need for both
- Ventral to recognize and identify objects.
- Dorsal to estimate positions and relative distances.
- Controlled nature of CLEVR allows testing modularity of perception — whether decoupling recognition and spatial estimation yields better spatial understanding.
- Sampled 100 CLEVR scenes.
- Collected object distance judgments from
- Single Multimodal LLM (LLaMA 3.2 90B)
- Dual-Stream (Dorsal-Ventral) Agent
- Human annotations

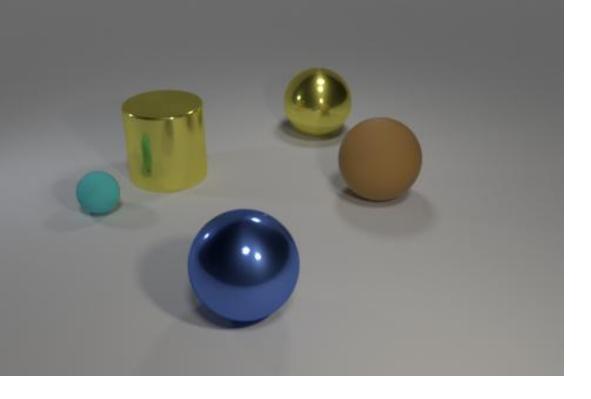
Experiments – CLEVR











CLEVR Dataset

Accuracy for CLEVR 1.2 1 0.8 0.6 0.4 0.2 0 LLaMA 3.2 90B Dual-Stream Agent Human Evaluation Accuracy

LLaMA 3.2 90B Dual Stream Agent Question No, there are no other objects in the image Are there any other things that have the Yes, based on the image, the following same material as the large brown object? objects have the same material: that have the same material as the large The small green sphere brown object. The large brown object has a The large yellow cylinder matte, non-reflective surface, while the They all have a shiny, reflective, metallic other objects have different materials several are shiny and metallic, and one is appearance. matte but a different color.

Experiments – COD10K

Hierarchical Visual Processing Enhances Camouflage Detection

The **human visual cortex** detects camouflaged or low-contrast objects through a **hierarchical cascade** of visual areas:

- V2 accentuates edges, orientation contrasts, and boundaries, revealing subtle contours.
- **V4** integrates **shape and color constancy**, distinguishing objects from textured or noisy backgrounds.
- V5 (MT) contributes motion and dynamic texture sensitivity, aiding detection when objects or backgrounds have temporal variation.

Hypothesis

 A system modeled on the V2–V4–V5 hierarchy will outperform a generic multimodal LLM baseline in camouflage detection tasks, due to its progressive refinement from low-level to high-level visual cues.

Goal

Evaluate if biologically inspired hierarchical feature extraction yields improved detection accuracy for camouflaged objects.

Experiments – COD10K

MM-CamObj Dataset for Camouflage Detection

Dataset Summary:

- Contains ~12,000 synthetic and real images of camouflaged objects (animals, shapes, or patterns) blended into complex or noisy backgrounds.
- Each image includes ground-truth masks or bounding boxes for object locations.
- Balanced across varied textures, lighting, and motion cues (for temporal sequences).
- Why This Dataset Tests the V2–V4–V5 System:
 - **V2-level features:** Edge enhancement helps in revealing subtle contour discontinuities.
 - **V4-level processing:** Shape and color constancy disambiguate objects from chromatically similar surroundings.
 - **V5-level dynamics:** Detects motion differences between object and background, useful for temporal camouflage.
 - Together, these mimic the **human cortical pipeline**, making the dataset ideal to test **progressive cue integration** in camouflage detection.

Setup:

- Sampled 100 images from the camouflage dataset.
- Measured detection accuracy for:
 - Baseline Multimodal LLM (LLaMA 3.2 90B)
 - V2–V4–V5 Hierarchical Agent
 - Human annotations





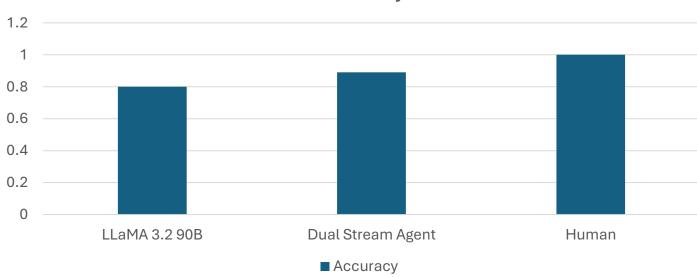


Experiments – COD10K



COD-10K Dataset

Accuracy



Experiments – Visual Saliency

- Dataset: Where People Look Dataset (Eye-Tracking) with ~1000 images
- Type: Eye-tracking dataset with fixation maps
- Fixation Maps: White regions indicate high human attention/intensity
- Evaluation Method:
 - Predicted coordinates from model compared against ground truth fixation maps
 - Weighted precision score computed for predicted regions
 - Single predicted point compared to multiple intensity regions in fixation maps
- **Purpose:** Assess ability of visual subsystems to predict human-like focus points in images
- **F1:** 0.59 (Using V2-V4-V5 Subsystem)

Experiments – Visual Saliency



Experiments – Visual Saliency

- **V2-V4-V5** excels at detecting intricate features, texture, contrast, and fine details
- **Dorsal-Ventral** captures general spatial regions and motion patterns effectively

F1 Scores of the 2 systems

VISION MODEL F1 SCORE

Dorsal-Ventral 0.41

System

V2-V4-V5 0.59

System

Conclusion

- Topology Manager is capable of orchestrating reasoning agents and achieved similar accuracy to CrewAI (~5% difference)
- Phi-3.5-mini-instruct, after finetuning, achieved 89% accuracy on ReClor and 72% on LogiQA reasoning tasks
- Dorsal-Ventral dual-stream agent reached 0.67 accuracy on CLEVR spatial estimation, compared to 0.48 for a baseline model
- V2-V4-V5 hierarchical agent detected camouflaged objects with 0.89 accuracy on COD10K, surpassing Dorsal-Ventral at 0.80
- Visual saliency prediction yielded an F1 score of 0.59 for V2-V4-V5 and 0.41 for Dorsal-Ventral streams

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