

Conscious AI: A Buddhist-Inspired Cognitive Framework and a Semantically Aware Reasoning Model for Advancing Beyond Data-Driven Intelligence

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Abstract

The Buddhist-inspired cognitive framework for advancing artificial intelligence beyond data-driven pattern generation is recently investigated. Although large language models exhibit remarkable fluency and serve as highly efficient information compressors, they lack the metacognitive functions required for reliable reasoning. Preliminary evaluations confirm that LLMs can retrieve stored correlations accurately but cannot determine whether they possess relevant knowledge or apply it deliberately, leading to hallucinations and logical inconsistencies.

Buddhist cognitive philosophy provides a structured account of human thought processes through stages of knowledge-understanding, mindfulness (*Sati*), clear comprehension (*Sampajañña*), and insight. These higher stages clarify the essential cognitive functions missing in current AI. *Sati* represents the ability to recognize what one knows, as when a person is immediately aware that a fact is stored in memory. *Sampajañña* represents the ability to access and apply that knowledge appropriately, as in deliberate retrieval of a learned rule for reasoning. AI systems lack both capacities, functioning solely through intuitive pattern generation.

To address this limitation, the investigation exhibits Semantically Aware Reasoning (SAR), a dual-process model that integrates the intuitive generative strengths of LLMs with a semantic evaluation mechanism capable of assessing meaning and selecting contextually appropriate information. Experiments using FAQ datasets show that SAR improves accuracy and reduces hallucinations by introducing a reflective, reasoning-oriented layer. Although SAR does not yet create new knowledge, it represents a meaningful step toward integrating the higher cognitive capacities described in Buddhist theory. The combined framework provides a coherent theoretical and technical foundation for developing future AI systems capable of awareness, deliberate reasoning, and eventually insight-like knowledge creation.