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# **The proper place for skills and autonomy in conceptualising academic work and development**

4<sup>th</sup> International conference of the Centre for Excellence in Preparing for  
Academic Practice, St Hugh's College Oxford, 4-6 April 2011

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# John White

## Autonomous work:

“is a form of activity whose end-product (X) is chosen as such as a major goal of an autonomous agent”

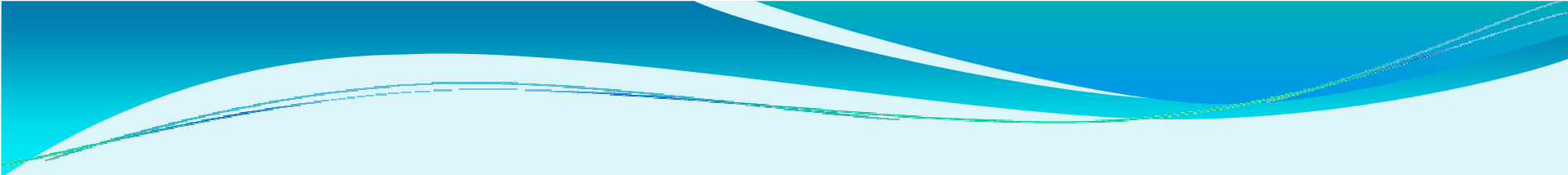
vs

## Heteronomous work

Autonomous work

vs

Autonomy in work



**Skills training requirements for research students: joint statement by the research councils/AHRB (2001)**

- A - Research Skills and Techniques
- B - Research Environment
- C - Research Management
- D - Personal Effectiveness
- E - Communication Skills
- F - Networking and Teamworking
- G - Career Management

# “Skills Agenda”

Stephen Rowland

- lowest common denominator problem

Diana Leonard – leads to infantilisation

And amounts to external interference

- skills for other employers' interests
- top-down imposition and autonomy problem

Rowland, Frank Furedi – misguided Realists

# Competence and 'skills' (knowledge practices)

- **Realism** (ontologically distinct entities):

X is a skill, Y is not a skill

- **Irrealism:**

{A has skill X} = {A is skilled at doing X}

{A is competent at conducting lab work}  
= {A is skilled at conducting lab work}

{A is skilled at conducting lab work}  
= {A has lab work skills}

## Need for re-enchantment of Science

Immanuel Kant: autonomy as freedom of direction, unswayed by incentive, with ethical sensibility

McDowell, J. (1994) *Mind & World*

- Space of Reasons

vs

- Space of Nature

Polanyi – the ‘passion’ of scientific enquiry

The antagonism of Dawkins

# Post-Roberts world

**1) Wise old academic sages' pep-talks**

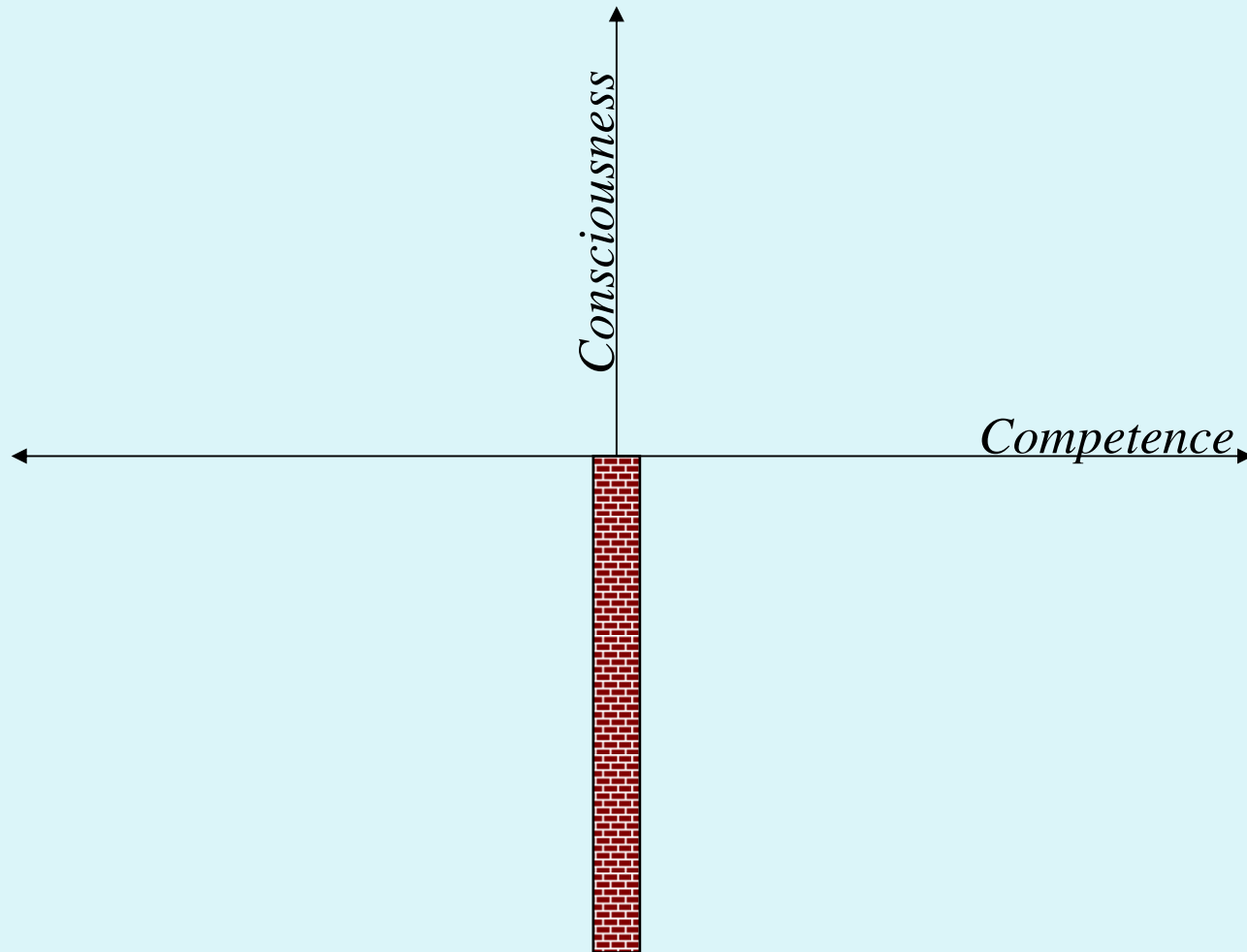
**2) Dynamic new consultants' parachuted-in training sessions**

**3) Professional Development as an academic field**

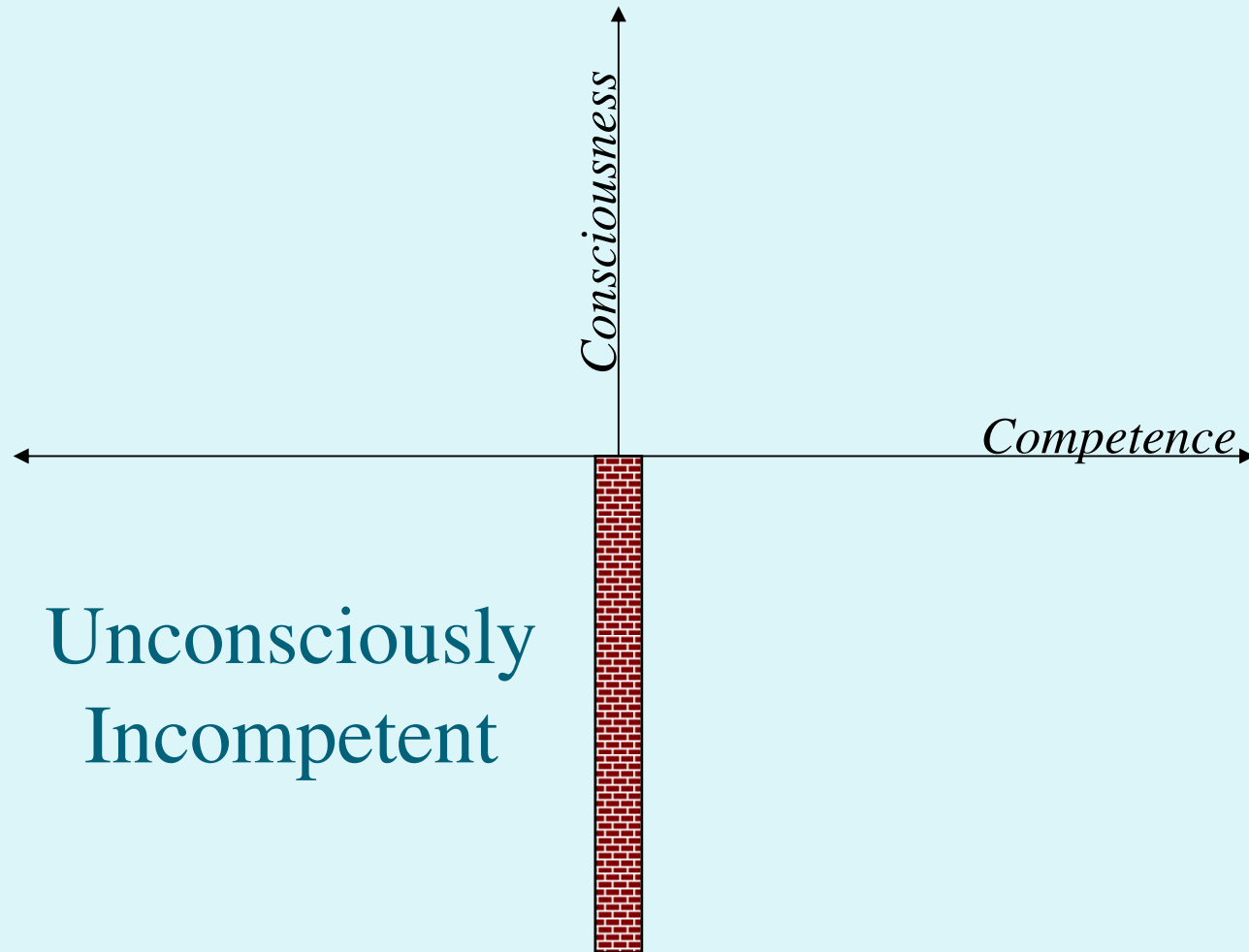
- paradigm of embeddedness
- robust academically grounded programmes
- needed for the new RDF anyway?



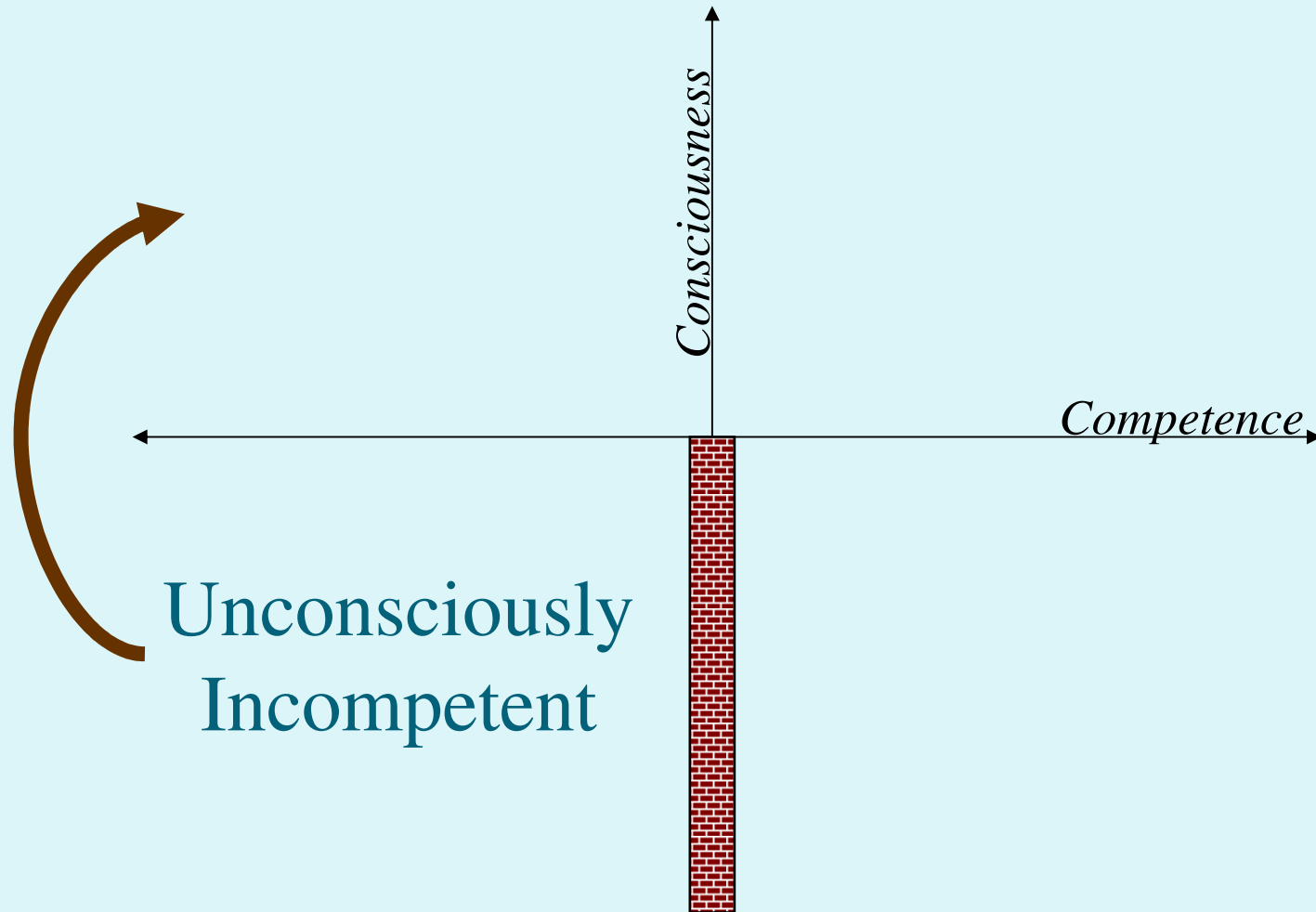
# *A skill development model*



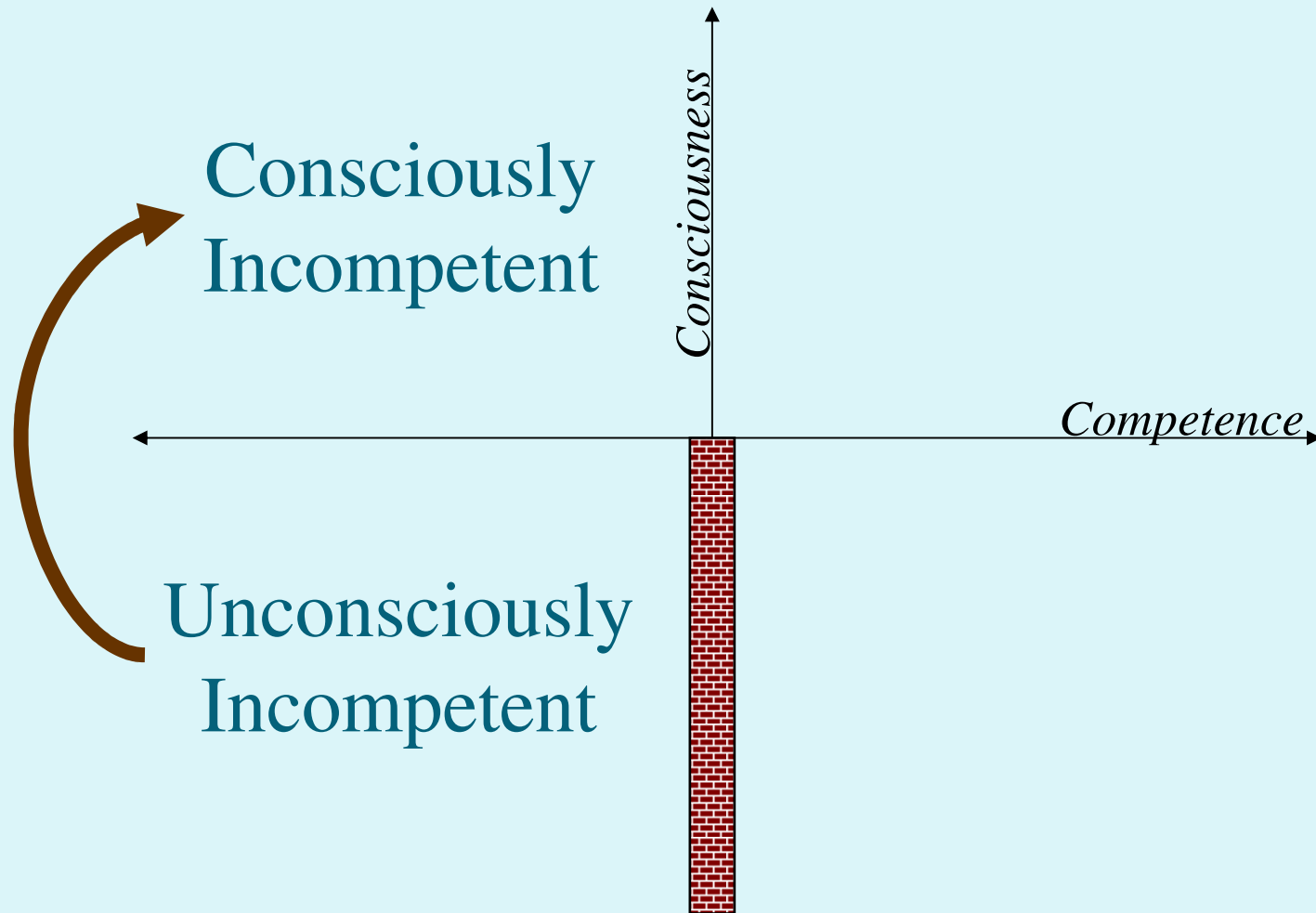
# *A skill development model*



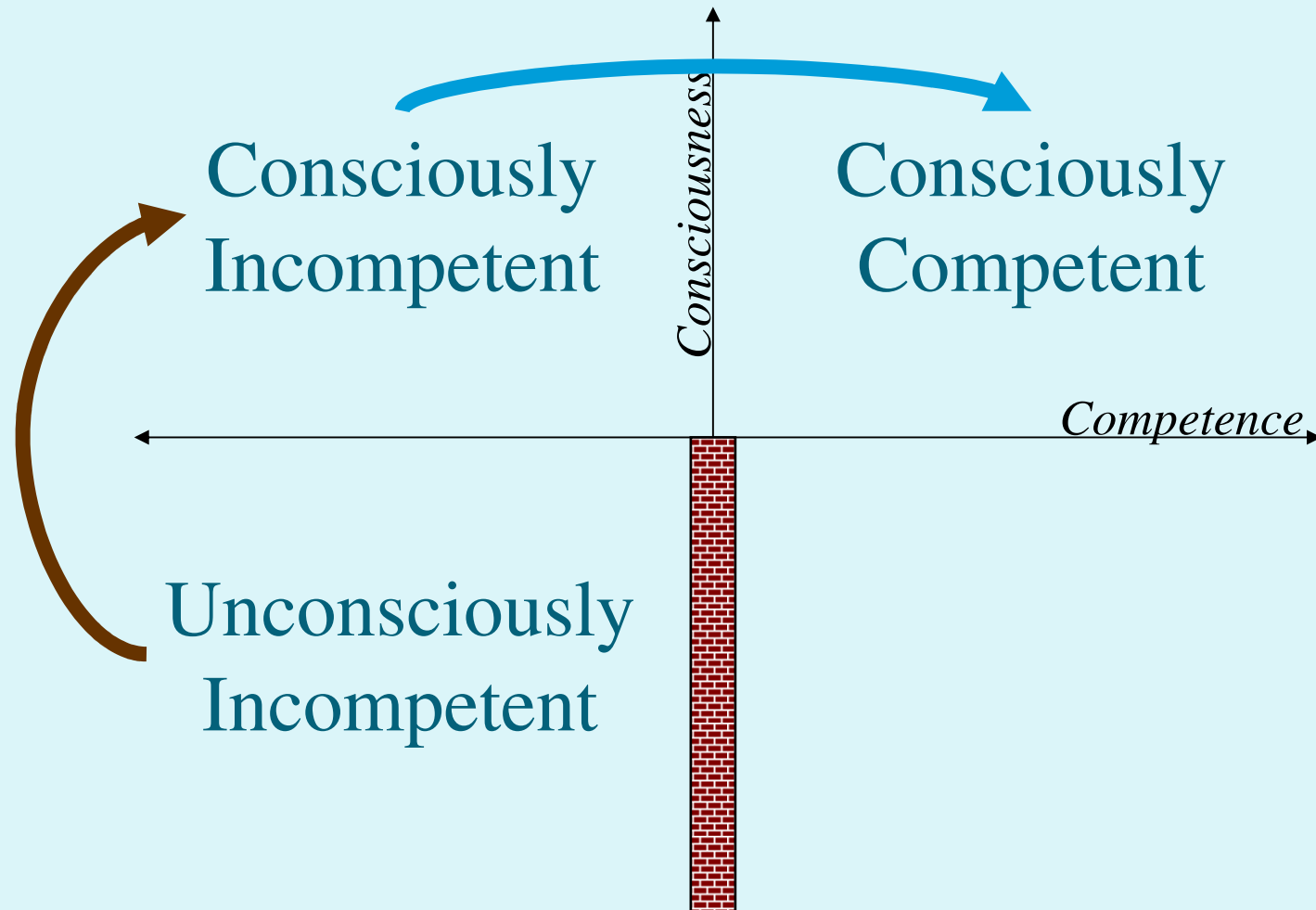
# *A skill development model*



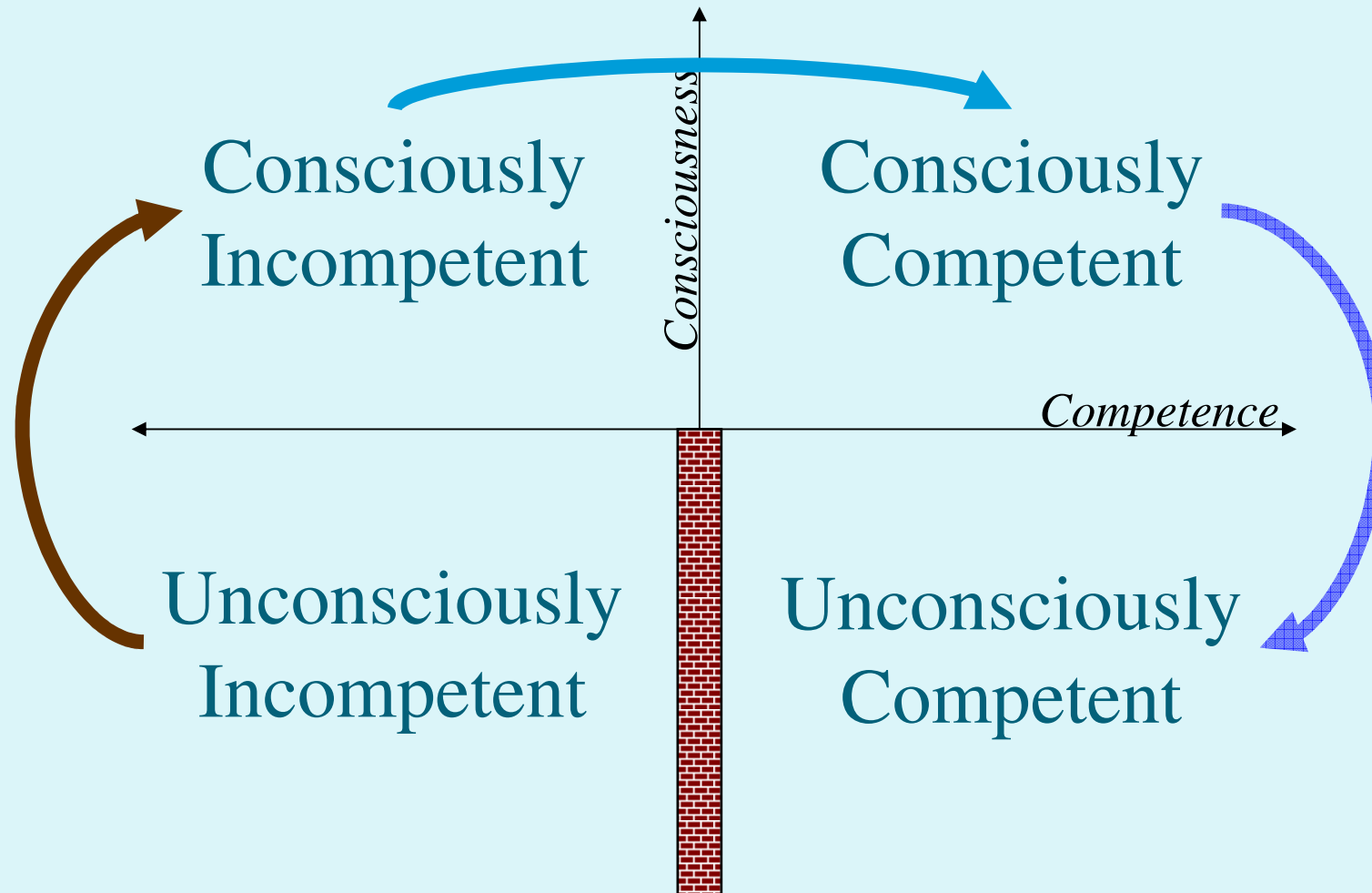
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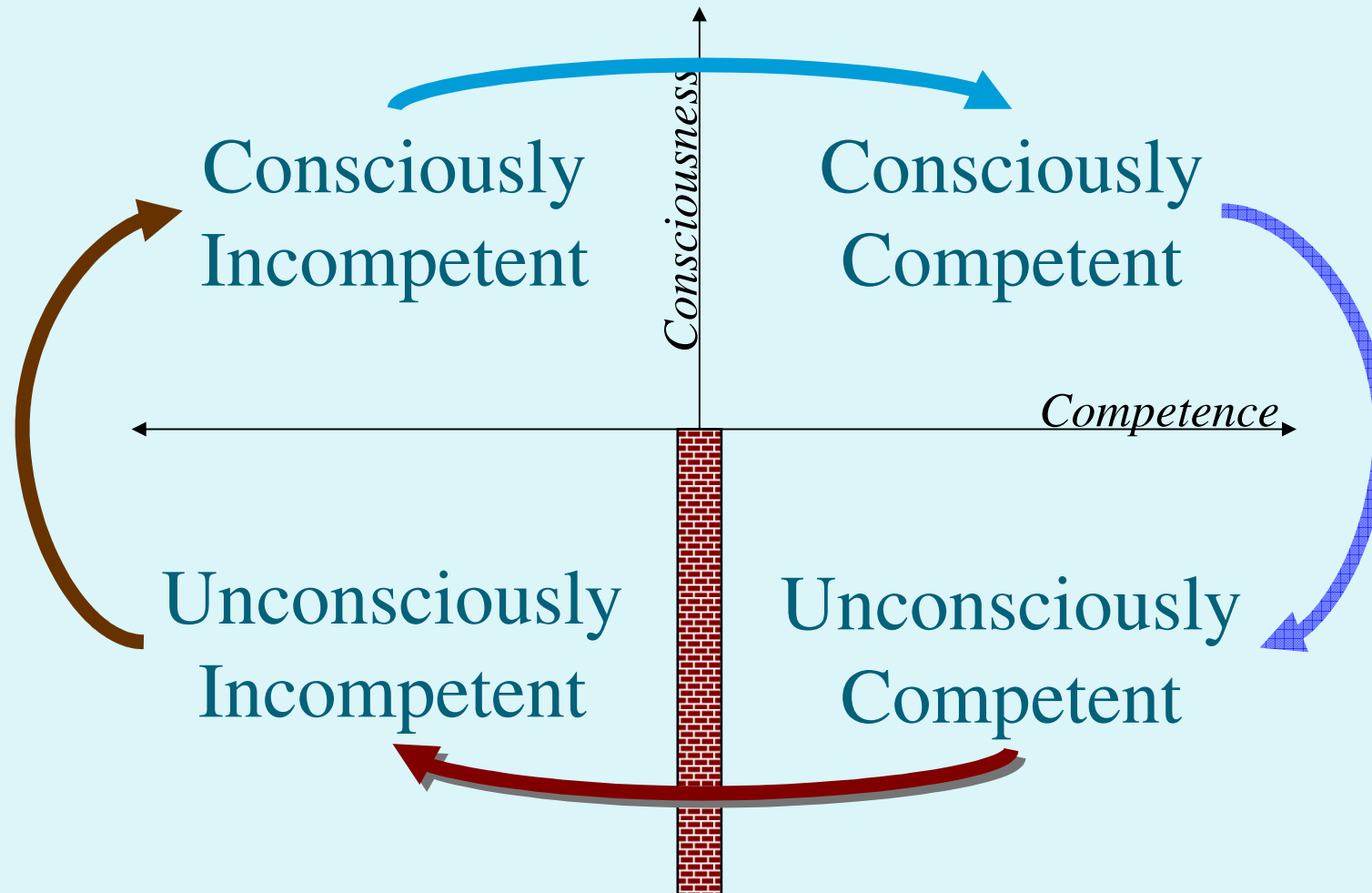
# *A skill development model*



# *A skill development model*



# *A skill development model*



von Kleist, H. (1810) "Über das Marionettentheater": "The Puppet Theatre", in David Constantine (ed. & trans.), *Heinrich von Kleist: Selected writings*, London, J.M.Dent, 1997, pp411-416



- **ack.:** From Animations Online 19 (Spring 2007) - a quarterly online magazine run by the [Puppet Centre Trust](#).