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CONSCIOUSNESS

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In the conventional view, consciousness consists of a flow of sensations produced by the brain. In the new paradigm view there is more to the world than systems that survive under the guidance of their internal displays. The systems are in-formed by a cosmic intelligence, and that intelligence is a factor in their existence. The emerging insight is that mind and consciousness are fundamental elements in the universe.

Classically, the debate among philosophers is centered on the priority of matter and mind. Which is prior, and truly fundamental? Are we bodies with an internal display called consciousness, or are we minds associated with physical bodies? In the popular spiritual formulation, are we material beings having a spiritual experience, or spiritual beings having a material experience? Our consciousness could be a kind of illusion, sensations that are the effects or side-effects of the workings of our brain. But we could also be entities stemming from the higher spiritual reality of the cosmos, with bodies that channel and transmit that cosmic consciousness into space and time. The world could be material, and mind could be an illusion. Or the world could be consciousness, and the materiality of the world could be the illusion.

Both of these possibilities have been explored in the history of philosophy, and today we have new evidence to decide which of them is likely to be true. There are new

and relevant insights emerging at the frontiers where new physics meets advanced consciousness research. On the basis of a growing series of observations and experiments, the insight that emerges is that my consciousness is not just “my” consciousness—it is not that any more than a program transmitted over the air would be the program of my TV set. Consciousness appears to be a fundamental part of the real world. Our brain does not produce it; it only displays it. Consciousness can exist beyond the brain, and can persist beyond the life of the body.

Religious and spiritual people have been speaking of an immortal soul, temporarily associated with a mortal body. Scientists, engineers, business people, and pragmatic people in general opted for the materialist view that reality is confined to material bodies. Consciousness is a product or by-product of the workings of the brain.

The materialist concept makes sense on first sight, but on a second look, encounters major problems. How could a material brain give rise to a stream of immaterial sensations? How could anything material produce anything immaterial? In modern consciousness research, this is known as the “hard problem.” It has no reasonable answer. As researchers often point out, we do not have the slightest idea how “matter” could produce “mind.” One is a measurable entity with properties such as hardness, extension,

force and the like, and the other is an ineffable sensation without definite location in space and an ephemeral presence in time.

Fortunately, the hard problem does not need to be solved: it is not a real problem. There is an alternative possibility: that consciousness is not *produced* by the brain but is *transmitted* by the brain.

The transmission theory overcomes the hard problem of consciousness research, but it does more than that: it accounts for a whole array of phenomena that the brain production theory cannot. These are phenomena of mind or consciousness beyond the brain. William James, the renowned founder of pragmatism, was so impressed with the cogency of mind-beyond-brain phenomena that in his Ingersoll Lecture of 1899 he suggested that we should replace the brain-production theory of consciousness with the brain-transmission theory.

If consciousness is not, or not entirely, produced by the brain, it can exist also without association with the brain. This does not require embracing the idealist/spiritual hypothesis. Consciousness could be a specific kind of vibration the universe. The vibrations that at one frequency produce the phenomena of physical entities such as quanta, atoms, solar systems and galaxies, could produce the phenomena of nonphysical entities such as mind and consciousness at other frequencies.

The phenomena produced by vibrations at certain frequencies need not be illusory: they could be rooted in reality. The assumption of a higher intelligence in the universe is a widespread hypothesis; it is endorsed by leading scientists. Einstein wrote: “Everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe—a spirit vastly superior

to that of man...” Planck said that behind the force that holds the vibrations of particles in the nuclei of atoms together “we must assume the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind.” That intelligence, he added, is the matrix of all matter. The intelligence that holds the proton and the neutron in the nuclei of the atom together holds atoms together in molecules, and molecules in the multimolecular structures that are the physical entities we find in the universe. It is the intelligence that in-forms all vibrations and creates both ourselves, and the phenomena around us.

How a cosmic intelligence beyond space and time could in-form entities in space and time can be understood. It calls for considering the hypothesis that the beyond-spacetime intelligence is a hologram. The information that constitutes the hologram could be the cosmic intelligence beyond space and time, and the “in-formation” that conveys that intelligence to the universe can be in space and time. Our own consciousness would be in-formed by that hologram. This is a plausible hypothesis: there are elements of our consciousness that are best described as “transcendental.” They appear at the fringes of our everyday awareness, but are the substance of experiences in altered states of consciousness. While our everyday consciousness is furnished by the sights and sounds, textures, odors, and tastes conveyed by the bodily senses, there are images and intuitions, experiences and feeling-tones that cannot be ascribed to sensations conveyed by our eyes and ears. Transcendental experiences surface in traumatic, uplifting, or otherwise life-transforming events. As near-death experiences (NDEs) show, they emerge when the everyday operations of the brain are impaired or shut down. According to researchers on past-life experiences, they also appear in after-death experiences (ADEs). This is a plausible hypothesis, since when the sensory elements of consciousness are withdrawn, it is logical that the transcendental elements should dominate.

Transcendental experiences are traces of the in-forming intelligence of the cosmos in our consciousness. They appear in states in which our brain is open to receiving them. These are meditative, prayerful, esthetic, or otherwise altered states, in which the brain scans the low-frequency domain of the EEG spectrum: the domain of Theta and Delta waves ranging from next to zero to 7 Hertz.

As consciousness evolves in the lifetime (or succession of lifetimes) of individuals, more and more of the transcendental varieties of their experience emerge into prominence. Consciousness becomes transparent to its cosmic in-formation. This is shown by the mindset of persons who already possess a highly evolved consciousness. Their mindset is remarkably similar notwithstanding diverse social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Its key feature is the apprehension of a deep connection to and love for the world. Einstein, who we can assume had a highly evolved consciousness, said that our separateness is “a kind of optical illusion.” Carl Jung, another highly evolved mind, wrote that consciousness is part of the *unus mundus*, the universe’s generative and creative principle. The spiritual naturalist and animal intelligence researcher Jane Goodall remarked that in her life in the jungle she learned that nature and herself are one consciousness. Erwin Schrödinger was unequivocal in declaring that all mind manifests from a common source. “To divide or multiply consciousness is something meaningless [he wrote]. In all the world, there is no kind of framework within which we can find consciousness in the plural; this is simply something we construct because of the spatio-temporal plurality of individuals, but it is a false construction. . . . In truth, there is only one mind.”

The above insights conform with, and substantially confirm, the hypothesis that the intelligence of the cosmos is a hologram. There is only one consciousness in the universe, and that consciousness is a cosmic hologram. Its reception and read-out appears in our individual consciousness. It links our individual consciousnesses and, because that hologram is essentially one, its reception testifies to oneness in the world. And it fosters love for that oneness.

To conclude: consciousness is not produced by the brain, and is not confined to the brain. It is a fundamental phenomenon. The universe is constantly and seamlessly in-formed by a hologram from beyond space and time. Our individual consciousness is a localized reception and read-out of that hologram.

From the perspective of entities in the universe, the in-forming hologram is a cosmic intelligence. It is the intelligence proclaimed in the religions and spiritual systems of the world—the intelligence apprehended by mystics, prophets, artists, scientists, and all sensitive people through their transcendental experiences.