

Quantum Silliness Debate from the Philosophy Forum, 7/2005

ElsiumFire wrote

There is a cultural mode of thought that states that we have a conscious-mind, a sub-conscious mind, and an un-conscious mind. Myself, following Ockham's advice, prefer to view consciousness in the singular, and that the singular is either excited or non-excited. The non-excited mode I equate with the 'sub-conscious' (ie, memory), and of course, the excited mode I equate with conscious-awareness. There is a possibility of a middle phase that I won't rule out which may come into play during 'thinking' which one could equate with the un-conscious, a kind of halfway tensioning that places information on the 'tip-of-the-tongue', but more on this anon.

I am equating 'consciousness' as a phase characteristic that arises as a 'resonance' when quantum fields of similar frequency interact. Allow me to elucidate my meaning. A condensation of 'energy' (a particle - a node on the ether matrix) that is not being impinged upon by an external energy force will oscillate about its center at its lowest threshold (ie, its resting phase). When an energy force (in the form of a wave-front) begins to impinge upon the field of the particle, it raises the particle out of the resting phase, and sets it resonating at a higher frequency. The particle, however, always returns to resting phase, so the extra energy inputted is released as a lepton (ie, a carrier particle): this is the law of conservation of energy, being Nature's mechanism for pumping energy around to all parts of the universe, omni-dimensionally through all frequency wavelengths. Look at the following tabulation: the italics signify dimensional (ie, interpenetrative) presence.

Condensation of energy = filament = Matter/Mass: force=**gravity**.

Configuration of filaments = particle = Quarks: force = **strong nuclear** and *gravity*.

Configuration of Quarks = Proton/Neutron Particles (Atoms): force = **weak nuclear**, *strong nuclear and gravity*.

Atom/Electron Particles: force = **electromagnetism**, *weak nuclear, strong nuclear and gravity*.

Configuration of Atoms = Molecules: force = *electromagnetism, weak nuclear, strong nuclear, and gravity*.

Physicists contend that there are four known 'forces' (as tabulated above) and have been seeking to unify them for almost a century with very little success, but supposing (and here's a leap of intuition) there is in fact only one force, and that its aspect changes at each successive dimensional configuration: the one 'true' force being that that we term 'gravity', which is energy moving through the 'ether' (i-ther) matrix?

An energy wave propagating through the matrix causes a simultaneous, two-fold effect; a) the condensed energy nodes (ie, the filaments) vibrate at a higher frequency; and b) the wave squeezes the nodes toward each other, causing their fields to interact creating a 'virtual' resonance: This virtual resonance is (proto) consciousness. Locally, each node becomes conscious of its neighbour nodes, and so on. As the energy wave passes, the node returns to its resting phase. However, because another energy wave quickly replaces the one prior, the node again vibrates at a higher frequency, interacts once more with the field of its neighbour node, and a virtual resonance is once more raised. The frequency of energy waves passing through the matrix is so fast, probably an immeasurable frequency, that the virtual resonance would not be deemed to fade, it would be deemed to be permanently present (like the frames of a movie): this is the foundation of memory - a quasi-permanent state of being conscious. There are other aspects to consider here as well. As each node becomes conscious of its neighbour node, it also becomes conscious of 'space', and because the resonance arises and fades, arises and fades, it also becomes 'subliminally' conscious of 'time', a 'now' time.

Elysiumfire, if you want to put forward a theory of consciousness that is robust and falsifiable, I would suggest turning to sources who have actually specialized in the subject, have qualifications in it, and have a proven track record in the peer reviewed academic press. Zohar and Pearson have no scientific credentials

at all in consciousness studies, particularly in neurology. It shows. In fact, if you were to take a good look at what the vast majority of scientists both in cognitive science and physics think about these issues, it would quickly become apparent that theories such as the one you have been discussing in this thread are regarded as pseudo-science without any merit.

Consciousness studies are fascinating enough on their own—there's no need to turn to the New Age fringe to have your mind blown!

By Faustus (Brian Peterson)

Elysiumfire wrote:

I am equating 'consciousness' as a phase characteristic that arises as a 'resonance' when quantum fields of similar frequency interact. Allow me to elucidate my meaning. A condensation of 'energy' (a particle - a node on the ether matrix) that is not being impinged upon by an external energy force will oscillate about its center at its lowest threshold (ie, its resting phase). When an energy force (in the form of a wave-front) begins to impinge upon the field of the particle, it raises the particle out of the resting phase, and sets it resonating at a higher frequency. The particle, however, always returns to resting phase, so the extra energy inputted is released as a lepton (ie, a carrier particle): this is the law of conservation of energy, being Nature's mechanism for pumping energy around to all parts of the universe, omni-dimensionally through all frequency wavelengths.

Classic pseudo-science mumbo-jumbo!

From Steven Novella's Definition of pseudo-science characteristics:

Utilize scientific sounding, but ultimately meaningless, language.

All sciences have their technical “jargon.” The purpose of jargon is simply to express complex technical concepts in precise terminology. Often subtle distinctions can be very important, and colloquial languages may not have the precision necessary to unambiguously convey meaning. Also, as new concepts and entities are discovered, new words must be invented to refer to them. There is also a tendency to render the resulting cumbersome terminology into a more convenient shorthand, which can add an additional barrier to understanding for the public. The most challenging aspect of popularizing science is often translating technical jargon into everyday language while minimizing the loss of precision and accuracy.

Pseudosciences often imitate real science by cloaking themselves in pseudojargon. The result, however, is the frequent use of scientific sounding terminology, but which lacks a precise definition (much like the technobabble in a bad episode of Star Trek).

By Probeman (John Donovan)

Elysiumfire wrote:

Danah Zohar - an American - has a BSc in physics and philosophy, plus 3 years of postgraduate study in philosophy and religion. She is married to a Dr. I.N. Marshall, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, with whom she collaborated on the book 'The Quantum Self'.

She's therefore qualified to write about physics and philosophy. However, any theory tying quantum physics to consciousness is ultimately going to be a theory about the brain. Where are her qualifications in neurology? There isn't even a trace of genuine neurology in the theory you've put forward based on her work. Any theory of consciousness that ignores the brain will fail.

There are even fewer reasons to take Pearson seriously—a quick Google of his name reveals his associations with all kinds of crackpot organizations and causes. For instance, he claims to be able to communicate with the dead. Give me a break! All that stuff has been seriously and completely debunked by the scientific community.

Elysiumfire wrote:

One can follow sheep-like (if you like) the established paradigms, or you can pursue to establish new ones, new ways of thinking on old problems.

One could follow anything in a sheep like manner, and the suggestion that I am guilty of this just begs the question. Established paradigms become established for the reason that they work better than any of the alternatives at explaining the data. Even within the vague umbrella of the “established” paradigms in consciousness studies, there are plenty of disagreements and controversies. Right now, we already have working models of consciousness based on sound brain science and sound research—there is no need to suddenly invent a new physics to fill some gap in our knowledge that doesn’t even exist.

Elysiumfire wrote:

Their theories are often subjected to the most intense obfuscation and censorship.

Can you prove this, or is this merely what they say? I’ve sure every nut case who has ever claimed to have invented a perpetual motion machine in his basement would say that the scientific community is biased against him and just doesn’t “get it”.

Elysiumfire wrote:

Pearson's papers have been peer-reviewed in journals in both America and Russia, but he cannot get published in his own country. Why not?

Maybe because his work is simply dreadful? I’d at least consider that possibility if I were you. I’m also willing to bet that if his work ever made it through the peer review process in Russia or United States, that it was either on subjects the man IS qualified to write about (jet engines), or the “journals” were dedicated to pseudo-science and general quackery, not respectable science. Creationists have their own journals, too. That doesn’t make their ideas valid.

Elysiumfire wrote:

If his theories are new age, they should easily be able to destroy them in public, indeed, he has asked for this very scenario!

And if scientists are ignoring his pleading for attention, it’s probably because they think his ideas are so loopy as to be unworthy of their time. Why should they waste valuable energy answering someone like Pearson when there are plenty of research opportunities and controversies in the field already? If he can come up with a research program that verifies his ideas, he’ll get all the attention he wants. Results have a way of getting people to take you seriously.

Certainly scientists are biased in favor of ideas and paradigms they think are correct, and they tend to overlook and belittle competing ideas when those ideas first appear. It can sometimes take a generation for a new alternative to take hold. Well, the New Age fringe has been going on and on about quantum/mind theories for decades and decades, with not a single successful experimental result or (in most cases) even a suggestion for an alternative research program. That’s the sign of a failed alternative, not an indication that the scientific community is censoring them.

Elysiumfire wrote:

My hypothesis is exactly that..an hypothesis. If you feel that I am wrong, then by all means, tell me how I am so, I welcome the feedback, let's debate the issue.

There are two big problems with the theory sketch you’ve offered: 1) there is no evidence whatsoever that

quantum physics is in any way connected to consciousness, and so far, there is nothing about the theory which could potentially be verified by any conceivable scientific experiment, and 2) we already know enough about how the brain produces consciousness to know that theories such as the one you have offered aren't needed. The consensus model that neurologists use to generate and test predictions is sometimes referred to as the "global workspace". The general idea is that conscious states are states of information content generated as networks of neurons compete for global access to various areas of the brain. You can watch these processes happen and even tell, in limited circumstances, what sort of thing a subject is perceiving by just by scanning her brain.

This is a pretty exciting field, and I recommend you look into it. I can suggest a few books or online papers if you are interested in learning the strengths of the current paradigm. No one is going to change a paradigm without learning the science that lead to its dominance in the first place.

Elysiumfire wrote:

...nor do I feel it to be a deviation, there is only one consciousness with the attribute of two modes: raised (excited, and thus 'aware') and not raised (non-excited, at rest phase at its lowest threshold).

Jeff Lister wrote:

Elysiumfire and i agree here, and it seems we agree with most others who have gone before but; we've all articulated it differently.

"Most others who have gone before"? Who are these people you are talking about? I've been studying the philosophy and science of consciousness for decades, and I can assure you that the claim Elysiumfire makes in the quote above is directly contradicted by the experimental data. Consciousness does not exist in a simple "on" or "off", raised/not-raised state. Instead, it comes in various degrees, from processes in the brain that go on without any conscious awareness, to processes of which you are vaguely aware and which modify thoughts and behaviors slightly, to those that are robust and fully reportable and remembered. There is no magic finish line in the brain that denotes a conscious from an unconscious state.

Jeff Lister wrote:

Equivalencies have occasionally been pointed out, but they haven't been exploited because the current dogma of nothing refuses to say anything pragmatic about consciousness.

What could be more pragmatic than a verifiable or falsifiable experimental claim? A medicine or therapy that works? That's what the current "dogma" focuses on. If you've got a better version of the scientific method, then let's hear about it.

Jeff Lister wrote:

... i think that by propagating the notion of the viability of selfishness the current philosophical community has done humanity and truth a great injustice.

What in the world are you talking about? Can you give an example of what you mean from the real world?
By Faustus (Brian Peterson)

Elysiumfire, I think you might be fairly new to this forum, so before you start lecturing Probeman on science, you should be aware that he himself is a scientist, and has to deal with real life quantum physics every week when he goes to work.

At any rate, you can quote physicists on quantum physics all you want—none of this successfully demonstrates the link you believe exists between quantum physics and consciousness.

Jeff Lister wrote:

So what is awareness then?

You become aware of information content discriminated by various parts of your brain when the “judgments” by those modules become broadcast in the brain with sufficient strength and for a sufficient length of time to register in short term memory and have a potential impact on motor areas. Content that comes close to this but doesn’t quite “make” it can still influence your behaviors even if you can’t report it. You can also devise experiments where a subject herself can’t even say for sure if she was conscious of a particular stimulus. All of this indicates that consciousness or awareness is not an on/off thing but exists in a blurry spectrum.

Jeff Lister wrote:

Most reasonable philosophers seem to be monists and to suggest a panpsychic aspect to being.

Wow, that’s news to me. I can’t name even one prominent modern philosopher who is a proponent of panpsychism. Who are these people?

Jeff Lister wrote:

Then unreasonable philosophers go on about selfishness and ignore the full implications of panpsychism.

Well, since I think very few scientifically literate philosophers take panpsychism seriously, I wouldn’t be surprised at all that they ignore the “full implications” of doctrines they don’t believe. There are much more fruitful ways to spend one’s time.

Jeff Lister wrote:

There are lots of things the current dogma focuses on; curiously, none of which are particularly relevant to understanding consciousness or religion as it presents.

Oh, so brain science isn’t particularly relevant to understanding consciousness?

Jeff Lister wrote:

"Selfish genes, selfish memes" would be one example; I’m referring to the title as an intensely irresponsible signpost. It ignores the question of how the center holds (i.e. where the sense of continuity of self comes from.)

You obviously haven’t bothered to learn what Dawkins actually meant by his selfish gene approach to evolution. He was merely using an anthropomorphic metaphor to describe how genes build phenotypes which favor the odds that they will be replicated in another body, and how this influences patterns of evolution. It has absolutely nothing to do with moral philosophy or politics or truth or justice. Or consciousness, for that matter.
By Faustus (Brian Peterson)

Elysiumfire wrote:

Like you, I do like a good quote. For your future reference, I would much appreciate that your responses are based upon reason, and not prejudice or bias. You can debate the one former, but not the latter two.

You want a reason? Ok, I’ll give you a reason. At the temperatures of the human brain, quantum effects are completely averaged out at the scale of the neuron. The neuron is a classical object not a BE condensate close to absolute zero.

It always amuses me to see people trying to invoke quantum physics to explain biochemistry. Talk about greedy reductionism!

In any case, how would adding quantum indeterminism help brain matter? The brain is an organ for quickly responding to environmental stimuli. In humans it can compute various behavioral responses for decision making based on genetic, (incomplete) sensory, social (memetic) and contingent inputs.

These processes aren't improved by non-deterministic events. In fact, a deterministic universe is more favorable for explaining the evolution of "the Mind as Gadget, an object which one should not expect to be governed by 'deep,' mathematical laws, but nevertheless a designed object, analyzable in functional terms: ends and means, costs and benefits, elegant "solutions" on the one hand, and on the other, shortcuts, jury-rigs, and cheap ad hoc fixes. "

The fact is, evolution shows us how minds are designed from the bottom up. Remember: cockroaches have the same "Penrose" microtubules in their neurons as humans.

By Probeman (John Donovan)

Faustus wote: "However, any theory tying quantum physics to consciousness is ultimately going to be a theory about the brain."

Elysiumfire wrote:

I disagree! Any theory about the brain and the processes therein are ultimately going to depend upon a knowledge of the physics that subsume the brain and its inherent processes. Biology is completely reducible to physics, because physics is the antecedent of biology!

This is where you go wrong.

Science is all about levels of explanation. No doctor examining you is going to resort to quantum physics to explain why you need to take antibiotics. Yes, in principle we can explain all of biology as chemistry, and all chemistry as physics. So why isn't your family doctor a physicist? Why aren't all scientists physicists? Because in practice we need to invoke the appropriate level of explanation for the phenomena we are attempting to explain to yield the most explanatory power. For example, the appropriate level of explanation of water is chemistry and the appropriate level of explanation of the brain is biology. The appropriate level of explanation of the mind is cognitive science, neuro and evolutionary psychology.

Elysiumfire wrote:

most eminent scientists of that time, such as Lodge, Crookes, Faraday, Baird, Barrett, Edison, James, Richet, Rayleigh, the list goes on and on, and the common agreement between them was that post-mortem consciousness is a reality, and they were attacked by the establishment.

And Newton was an alchemist and astrologer. So? Sometimes the same person has good ideas and some bad ideas. In science we don't judge ideas by who said them, we judge them by how well they hold up to scientific scrutiny.

If you believe in ghosts do you believe in evil spirits too? What about witches and wizards? Dragons, fairies, Santa Claus?

By Probeman (John Donovan)

Elysiumfire wrote:

Any theory about the brain and the processes therein are ultimately going to depend upon a knowledge of the physics that subsume the brain and its inherent processes. Biology is completely reducible to physics, because physics is the antecedent of biology!

Well, first off, I don't agree that biology is "completely reducible" to physics unless you mean something to the effect that "physics forms the basis of chemistry and chemistry forms the basis of biochemistry, which forms the basis of biology". Reductionism usually means something much stronger—as in that terms in one domain logically imply those in another.

At any rate, we know for a fact that the brain plays a crucial role in consciousness, more so than any other organ or structure. So any theory which attempts to explain consciousness by making appeals to quantum physics has to at some point show how those quantum effects play a role in brain function. Failure to do this means the theory has nothing to say about consciousness. There is exactly one theory out there which does this, and that's the microtubule theory of Hammeroff. Even this theory is not taken seriously by anything more than a small minority of scientists, but that's more than can be said for the "theory" in this thread.

So until your theory starts addressing brain functions, it will never be a theory of consciousness. It will merely be speculation in which the word consciousness is used with physics-speak, to no effect.

Elysiumfire wrote:

The only thing that will truly debunk a claim for post-mortem consciousness is a solution to the mind/body problem that shows it to be a false claim.

Sorry, that isn't how the scientific method works. The burden of proof is on those who believe in this phenomenon to offer positive evidence proving that it is true. There is none. It is not the job of the rest of us to prove you folks wrong.

Elysiumfire wrote:

After-life communication has not at all been seriously and completely debunked by the scientific community.

I'm afraid it has. That you would even write something like that simply indicates you aren't very familiar with what scientists actually believe. Dualism has been considered a dead and defeated idea in the scientific community for over a century. The rest of us have moved on. Amusingly, you contradicted yourself in your own post when you admitted that your list of scientists doing current, cutting edge work on after life communication (er. . . a hundred years ago! That's sure up to date) were "attacked by the establishment". That proves right there what the establishment believed of the quality—or completely lack thereof—in their work on the subject.

Elysiumfire wrote:

Still, I do not see how Pearson's association and interest in the 'after-life', bars him from having a serious scientific voice. It is purely prejudicial to think otherwise.

It merely demonstrates that the guy is gullible and believes in things—like psychic powers—that don't exist. That's a flag that someone is a crackpot and not worth paying attention to. You really ought to be spending your brain time with quality thinkers instead of fools like this guy.

Elysiumfire wrote:

Current 'physical' models of consciousness are purely presumptive interpretations only, the science may be sound, but how it is interpreted is not; hence, the disagreements and controversies.

Current models are far more than "presumptive interpretations". That would more accurately describe the speculations in this thread. Current models generate predictions, data, solutions, and a research program. Quantum consciousness models have generated nothing but reckless babble.

Elysiumfire wrote:

I offer the following: <http://www.quantummatter.com/tetrode.html> , and as for offering a means for verifiability my first aim is to conceive a foundation for the hypothesis based on factual dynamics.

Trust me, I'm familiar with this guy's work, and he's yet another New Age crackpot who doesn't have a clue what he's talking about. Note the predictable references to ESP and the power of prayer, neither of which has the slightest scientific credibility behind them. If this stuff were real, it would show up in controlled experimental settings. It doesn't. At any rate, those were the only suggestions for verifiability I could find, and since that test has failed, so too does the theory.

Elysiumfire wrote:

. . .you do not know that the brain produces consciousness anymore than that you know that the river bed produces the river. If you did, you would know the solution to the mind/body problem, and clearly you don't, you are merely parroting what others claim.

Actually, the scientific community does in fact know that the brain produces consciousness. We even know enough about the processes involved that we have a theoretical outline of how they work. All that remains of the mind/body problem are conceptual and semantic details for philosophers to work out. These amount to nothing more than house-cleaning activities to figure out how talk of brain events relates to talk of mental events. No resolution of the problem by philosophers has any chance of changing the science.

Frankly, it's really only on Internet debate forums that this idea is controversial or where you find people challenging mind/brain identity. You aren't going to see it happening in the pages of the world's scientific journals, that's for sure. Unless you're going to trot out some sort of evil conspiracy theory, the reason for this has to be that there are no serious competing ideas out there.

Elysiumfire wrote:

Baars 'global-workspace' theory does not in any way describe how consciousness arises. It is more a theory on the computational aspects of what is already in the conscious experience, and the computational aspects of the processing which lie just below conscious experience.

You are only partially correct, here. Decades of abuse from behavioristically inclined scientists compelled many neurologists to think that it was not respectable to say that what they study and describe in their theories is actually "consciousness". Awareness maybe, perhaps domain specific sensory processing, perhaps memory. . .anything but consciousness. One scientist—can't remember his name—declared that the "C" word should be banished from their vocabulary.

This oppressive atmosphere has only recently begun to change. Baars sometimes can be interpreted as suffering from fear of the "C" word, sometimes not. But the workspace theory is more than just a model of computation. It really is a theory about how processes bring information content to bear on behavior and memory—that's what consciousness is.

Here's a helpful essay on how the model does just this, from a respectable publication and a mainstream thinker:

<http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/cognition.fin...>

If you think the model fails, then feel free to address the specifics contained therein. There is simply no other alternative to taking down an established paradigm than learning what it actually is and showing why your alternative is superior.

Elysiumfire wrote:

. . .but it could also equally imply that the brain filters what is already conscious, ie, what is perceived, and thus filtering what is already a conscious experience points to the implication that the brain does not generate consciousness, but merely acts as medium for it.

Then you first need to establish on independent grounds that consciousness is in fact something that exists prior to brain events and model how the brain "filters" it. There is no evidence at all that lends any plausibility to this nutty idea.

By Faustus (Brian Peterson)

Elysiumfire wrote:

Faustus: We agree to disagree...I'll leave you in your closed-minded world, and I'll stay in my open-minded world. Nothing of any discussion between us will reconcile our disparate views. We can throw back responses for ever and a day, neither of us giving quarter.

I have a perfectly open mind, Elysiumfire. The sign of an open mind is that you pursue knowledge, pay close attention to what the best and brightest scholars think (including those who disagree with you), and are ready to change your mind once you realize the evidence does not support your views.

I started out believing in psychic powers. I entered college to study the philosophy and science of consciousness because I was convinced by a number of writers that quantum physics was about to revolutionize the field and provide explanations for the paranormal that were grounded in science.

Then, when I started looking into the subject, my original views ran head-on into reality. Though it took a while and happened in gradual stages, I was forced after a long consideration of a variety of viewpoints to conclude that my original views were grossly misinformed.

There is little you've demonstrated in this forum that would indicate you'll ever be capable of similar open-mindedness, or even a similar passion for evidence. Good luck. Feel free to stay inside your cloistered world.

By Faustus (Brian Peterson)

Elysiumfire wrote:

As for 'levels' of explanation, no biologist or chemist worth their salt would not hold a brief foundational knowledge of physics. They would not ignore the fact that water is made from a combination of hydrogen and oxygen atoms, without this underlying knowledge they would not understand the processes of water. You of all people should realise that!

You miss the point.

Of course ultimately it's a quarks and photons, but scientists understand that trying to explain the wetness of water, or the biochemistry of enzymes, or the stimuli and reaction behavior of organs or sensory perception or consciousness with quantum physics is overly reductionist, even if it were possible in practice (which it is not).

Read the paper Faustus suggested if you really want to learn something new and interesting. Or don't- it's up to you.

By Probeman (John Donovan)

