

A THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

including polyamorous consciousness

with the application of the concept of "theory" within it

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BACKGROUND.

According to historians, the attempt to make gold by blending substances that had resemblance to some features of gold, such as sulphur--the color--quicksilver--the

shining feature--lead--the heaviness--to which some element of transmutation--such as fire or a magical spell or both--were added, didn't succeed but led to a development of the theory of atoms. The atom idea, derived from a Greek work meaning 'indivisible', implied that as gold is a different atom from such as sulphur, transmutation isn't possible between these 'atomic elements'. The theory of atoms however underwent strong changes, as we know, in the 20th century, where after all it was found that indeed, some atoms can and does transmute into other atoms, for instance associated with radioactivity or hydrogen streams; atoms have a composite structure in a way, and these structures can undergo both fusion and fission.

Can you 'make' consciousness out of ingredients (to use a different word than 'elements') that do not each have consciousness, but which may have, independently, this or that feature that may look like something like what we experience as 'consciousness'?

The extreme cases are a worldview in which the universe is conscious, in which case the theory of how a being in it may happen to be conscious does not require a component of the miraculous, and a worldview in which the universe is a mindless machine, which leads to a number of challenges for one interested in making a going theory of consciousness. The two main ways of resolving these challenges (for those who are believers in the opinion that the universe is a mindless machine) is to completely reduce the consciousness concept to some features that a machine may have, or to expand the concept of a machine with a set of vaguely miraculous conscious-like properties that are postulated to "emerge" under certain circumstances. For instance, consciousness may be postulated to "emerge" given a very high degree of complexity of a certain type of machine that exhibits suitable physical behaviours we would expect of a conscious being, such as

creativity and picking up on methods of doing things induced by playful action.

For those who like myself regards the worldview that the universe is a mindless machine nothing but a ditched 19th century theory, I do not find it necessary nor even very interesting to read how people with either a reduced concept of consciousness, or an inflated concept of machine, try to account for the obvious fact of the presence of consciousness in the universe.

However, there are many levels in between the two vaguely afore-mentioned extremes of regarding the universe as conscious, versus of regarding the universe as a mindless machine. In between these two extremes one will find worldviews of a subtle and complicated character, such as what I imply when I engage in writing on what I call my "super-model" theory of the universe (or the multiverses, more precisely), and perhaps other such worldviews often vaguely inspired by quantum physics phenomena (possibly the book "Process and Reality" by Alfred North Whitehead from the 1920s exhibits one such; certainly the book "Wholeness and the Implicate Order" by David Bohm from the 1980s exhibits another such). And one will of course find many, even extremely many, postulates or--if rendered properly, "theories"--about the universe, in which consciousness is present from the beginning, more or less. A whole class of spiritual scriptures may be argued to fall rather into this category.

For those who are trained in a cause-and-effect and thus 'machine-like' view of the universe, but who has sought to suggest that there are more holistic principles at work, such as the biologist Rupert Sheldrake, when they talk about consciousness they may, elegantly sometimes, find ways in which these holistic principles can provide ideas of consciousness in which consciousness is neither seen to be miraculously emerging from something wholly other, nor is simply present from the

beginning in a finished form.

Some, like the physicist and Nobel Laureate Roger Penrose, schooled in the goedelian complications in mathematical foundational logic, take up complicated equations related to gravitation to suggest that a new type of physical theory is needed to bring about an understanding of mind. In the view of Penrose, the universe is not a mindless machine; but it is adequately near it to provide challenges of a big sort for those who wish to work on making a really meaningful consciousness theory.

Let me note in passing that when journalists working in the field of what they call "popular science" feel that their job is to provide security to the readers of their work,--simple security, simple points of view that does not lead to complicated thinking or self-doubt or doubt about the universe,--their handling of theories of consciousness is usually such that, by what we may call 'counter-inspiration', it feels important to write something like this. In sum, the quantity of eager journalists at present producing viewpoints along the lines that there is finely little to consciousness and perhaps infinitely much to machines seems to be at a peak.

I think that, post-goedel and post-quantum-and-relativity physics, it should be considered good upbringing to not attribute infinitely much to machines, and to, in fact, attribute much to consciousness and avoid reducing that concept completely.

A suitable theory of consciousness should first of all honor something of the highest aspects of the most meaningful formulations about consciousness. Without being an expert on his books, I regard writings by William James

on the Stream on Consciousness as a worthy non-reductive work. I have often been inspired by those who laid the foundations for "gestalt psychology" in their thinking about wholes. Carl Gustav Jung's formulations on "synchronicity", in part penned together with a legendary quantum physicist, Wolfgang Pauli, I regard as essential. Much of Sigmund Freud's writing on children's sexuality, especially the most reflected parts, and the further explorations by Alfred C. Kinsey and his group in the classic (and controversial) "Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female", I regard as a useful complement to a more dry and rationalistically oriented approach to consciousness. Some of the cut'n'dry formulations of the almost technical, yet spiritual work of Patanjali in the Indian Sanskrit treasure of core texts, are as insightful about consciousness as anything written ever after. We should add to this explorations of how the beauty concept is essential in consciousness; how the infinity concept is both a challenge and, when not over-indulged in, an opener to what Aldous Huxley called "The Doors of Perception". And we should not abstain from allowing insights to come from great writers, be them Ian Fleming in the private thoughts of a James Bond poised for action, or a Second Foundationer as penned by Isaac Asimov in his all-time science fiction classic Foundation series (esp the first three), or--and those who read much of my writings will now what I mention after this,--Frank Herbert's "Dune".

Consciousness is not just a knowing, but a knowing-with.

A clock may be poised to ring a wake-up bell, but does it know that it is poised to do so?

In a universe in which time is a process that cannot be considered in abstraction away from consciousness as a creative process, the way Henri Bergson, the French early

20th century philosopher wanted it, perhaps, yes, to some extent, that is precisely what a clock does. Despite the description of it being a machine, it is also something that a conscious human being may set up to induce a meaningful action, ie, the signalling of a bell, at an approximate time, indicated eg by some digital numbers, and by their coupling perhaps the consciousness of the human being is in a state elevated and different in a way a theory of consciousness must account for at a deep and essential level, and which would call on any time-process in the universe to be viewed in the perspective of consciousness as a sort of "fluid" penetrating all things. That is not to say there is infinitely much to machines; rather, it is to say that there is infinitely much to the universe, and machines, being part of the universe, may happen to partake in that.

Now a theory is a word that indicates that we have a view of something: the way for instance Karl R. Popper uses the word, it is much the same as, in an unsystematic and easy-going way, the word 'proposition'. These propositions do not have to be uttered by professional scientists nor do they have to be uttered through a hierarchy of assumptions or by a formal postulate or hypothesis or prediction. Rather, a theory is a state of mind that has a quest about something outside of itself, and which is in a state of readiness to receive feedback about it, which may lead to the theory being more confirmed or less confirmed. In the stronger case of it being less confirmed one could even say 'falsified'; but Popper cautioned much against saying a theory could be 'verified' or 'proved' and I wholeheartedly agree.

A theory, in this sense, when it is actively held--like, this will be a sunny, lovely day, full of barefoot girls, is a reaching out into reality with a question-mark and a

capacity to get a feedback that may be a confirmation; let's hope so for the theory-holder of just that theory! The theory is not exactly in itself a 'knowing' but it can --by suitable confirmations, ie, the sight of many golden long limbs and barefoot girls giggling in the sunlight-- become a knowing or part of a knowing.

And one can form a theory about having a theory; I can become conscious that I have a knowing about these girls.

That is to say, a theory of consciousness can call on the theory concept itself and use it sort of twice over to erect a portion of the theory of consciousness.

A particular form of consciousness is the consciousness that is much inward. For instance, in going from the mind state of reaching out into the sunny day with barefoot girls, to a knowing of this reaching out, I may, as a further step, engage in a knowing that I am engaging in this knowing. This is con-science, with-knowing. In sensing this as a whole and also fluid, process-like state, perhaps with a sense of rhythm, musical rhythm, or something arhythmically pulsating in consciousness, the mind can turn inward as a meditation; the meditation is, in a way, on its meditation; a kind of self-reference that may seem to take on a sense of immediacy. This immediacy we may most centrally link to consciousness as a concept: we are not at a distance, not in what Martin Buber called "I-It" relationship as much as having an intimate direct connection in our own sense of what consciousness is when there is the inward consciousness that turns happily upon itself.

We could think of consciousness as a kind of 'membran with a membran', with each membran being a sort of theory, a view--or sense--or musical feeling or contact--which is

resonant, resonating with something like itself, ie, another membran; one theory resonating with another theory we might say. This is a double-use of the concept of theory to form a theory of consciousness. This particular way of writing about it I have not encountered that I can remember but for all I know, it may have been published in one of the quintzillion texts about consciousness somewhere. Of course I am aware that Bertrand Russell worked on self-reference in a way that he hoped would lead to something of a theory of human knowing and consciousness, but let us bear in mind that Russell was mostly oriented towards removing self-reference, not introducing it, and that the chief result of Kurt Goedel's work in the late 1920s was that Russell didn't remove it.

Since I am situated happily in a worldview of the immediate, nonlocal, rich, diverse, synchroniistic interconnection of the universe, or multiverse, as indicated by my own super-model theory, there is an ease of being with me giving the double-use of the word 'theory' in this my theory of consciousness the following twist:

The two membrans in consciousness need not be in the same mind.

Let them vibrate happily; and that's what we call, "Love". Two, three, many, --polyamorous consciousness, suitable for a polyamorous multiverse.