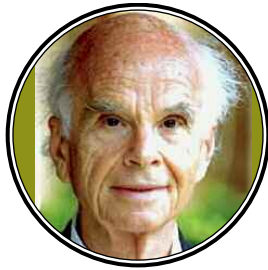


THE ONE MIND IN THE COSMOS

AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS IN OUR CONSCIOUSNESS¹



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THERE IS IMPORTANT AND FOR MOST PEOPLE IN today's world surprising evidence coming to light about the nature of consciousness. There are more and more reports of conscious experience beyond the range of the senses, and even beyond the body. They come from many sources. They come from people who arrived at the portals of death and returned, from spiritual masters and shamans and psychic mediums, and from ordinary people who entered a meditative, prayerful, deeply loving or otherwise non-ordinary state of consciousness. It appears that our individual consciousness does not come to an end when the life of our body does. This raises a number of critical issues regarding the true nature of our consciousness.

In the modern world received wisdom is that consciousness is a product of the brain. The evidence surfacing currently contests this assumption. It shows that in many instances consciousness exists without the brain – at least, without a living and functioning brain. The most striking cases of this kind are NDEs: near-death experience. But there are other documented cases where conscious experience

is not linked with a living brain. These include communication with “something” that appears to be a living consciousness but is not the consciousness of a living person².

An unbiased review of the rapidly accumulating evidence suggests that consciousness is not produced by the brain but only transmitted by it. This, evidently, is not a new idea. It was revived by William James in his 1899 *Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality*³.

James spoke of a “veiled” domain of the world from which information is transmitted by the brain. This is the “transmission theory” of consciousness, and it is an alternative to the “production theory.” It can account for many of the seemingly esoteric phenomena that the production theory cannot. Because if consciousness is not produced but only transmitted by the brain, it can exist also in the absence of the brain.

THE CLASSICAL THEORY: CONSCIOUSNESS IS GENERATED BY THE BRAIN

In the modern world the prevalent belief is that the stream of sensations that makes up our consciousness is generated by the brain. This is much like a stream of electrons being generated by a turbine. As long as the turbine functions, it generates a stream of electrons: electricity. As long as the brain functions, it generates a stream of sensations: consciousness. When it shuts down, consciousness vanishes. Consciousness no more exists in a dead brain than electric charge exists in a stopped turbine. Therefore, the standard argument goes, it is evident that just as the turbine generates electricity, the brain generates consciousness.

The turbine is an apt metaphor because it refers to a tangible object that produces something intangible. We do not see, hear or taste electricity; we know it only by the effects it produces. This is much the same with consciousness. We experience the stream of sensations, feelings, volitions and intuitions we call consciousness, but we do not observe anything we could call consciousness. The observation of the brain and its workings does not disclose consciousness; all it discloses are networks of neurons embedded in grey matter firing in complex sequences.

We know that functions in the brain and nervous system coordinate the myriad reactions that maintain the organism in the living state. Mainstream science is categorical that brain functions also generate the consciousness experience. The proof of this is the observation that when brain function is impaired, the stream of sensations is distorted, and when the brain stops functioning, the stream vanishes. Thus consciousness must be a product of brain function.

Philosophers have pointed out that this assumption comes up against the so-called “hard problem” in consciousness research. David Chalmers formulated it as the question how “something as immaterial as consciousness” could arise from “something as unconscious as matter⁴.” How the brain operates is a comparatively “soft” problem that neurophysiologists can be expected to solve step by step. But the question, how an “immaterial consciousness” can arise out of “unconscious matter” cannot be answered by brain-research, for brain research deals only with “matter,” and matter is not conscious. Philosopher Jerry Fodor pointed out that “nobody has the slightest idea how anything material could be conscious. Nobody even knows what it would be like to have the slightest idea about how anything could be conscious⁵.”

Scientists seldom speculate on the hard problem of consciousness research, but when queried about the nature of consciousness many of them express perplexity. *Science*, the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, published a special issue in 2005 celebrating its 125th anniversary. It featured 125 questions that scientists have so far failed to solve⁶. The most important unanswered question turned out to be *What is the universe made of?*, followed by *What is the biological basis of consciousness?*

In the public eye the turbine theory is the answer regarding the basis of consciousness. However, the hypothesis that consciousness is generated by the brain is not only an unsolved problem for philosophers and an object of perplexity for scientists: it is also contradicted by observation.

The consciousness-generating brain theory, the same as other theories in science, can be maintained as long as the predictions flowing out of it are corroborated by observations. The critical prediction for the theory is that when the brain stops functioning, consciousness vanishes, just as when a turbine stops, the electric current generated by it disappears.

At first sight this prediction seems confirmed by observation. When cerebral functions cease, consciousness ceases as well. This is not observed in the first person, but it is a reasonable inference

from the observation of people who are brain-dead. They do not behave as if they had a working consciousness.

The prediction that consciousness ceases in the absence of cerebral function does not admit of exceptions. We could no more account for the presence of consciousness in a dead brain than we could account for the presence of electric charge in a stationary turbine. If observations to the contrary would surface, they would place in question the dominant concept of consciousness. But observations to the contrary did surface. In some cases consciousness does not cease when the brain stops working. This is a direct counter-indication and conceivably a fatal flaw of the turbine theory.

The first and most obvious kind of evidence for this surprising finding is furnished by the NDE. It turned out that in a significant number of documented cases – experts speak of six million – conscious experience persists during the time the brain is “flatlined.” Even one experience of this kind would be a major problem for the turbine theory. A product of brain activity cannot persist in the absence of that activity. There is no known physiological mechanism that could account for conscious experience in a flat brain. Yet the NDE is totally convincing for those who had them: they have no doubt they are real experiences. Subsequent analysis could sometimes confirm the veridical nature of these experiences. It turned out that in many instances the experience of brain-dead people match the experience they would have had if their brain had functioned normally.

The NDE is not the only challenge for the brain-generated consciousness theory. There are other indications that consciousness can exist independently of the brain. Some reports claim that conscious experience persists not only during the temporary cessation of brain activity, but also in its permanent absence: when the subject is fully and irreversibly dead.

Many psychic mediums say that they channel messages from deceased persons. They report receiving information through clairvoyance (seeing apparitions), clairaudience (hearing voices), or clairsentience (physical sensations). The veracity of these perceptions has encountered many objections, among them that the mediums themselves invent them, or that they pick them up from living persons through some form of ESP. There are cases, however, in which these possibilities can be effectively ruled out: the messages conveyed by the mediums contain information that neither the mediums themselves, nor any living person with whom they could have been in touch, is likely to have possessed⁷.

Moreover it appears that contact can be had with “something” that acts as if it was a living consciousness. This is a widespread phenomenon. It surfaces not only in the experience of trance mediums but also in the experience of mystics and otherwise quite normal people when they enter an altered state of consciousness. Communication can take place with an entity that has a sense of self, carries memories of its physical existence, and manifests a keen desire to be understood and given credence. If this phenomenon is real, it places in question even more seriously than the NDE that consciousness is generated by the living brain.

THE HOLOFIELD THEORY:
INDIVIDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS IS
THE PROJECTION OF A COSMIC
HOLOGRAM

Consciousness, it appears, is not – certainly not always – generated by the brain but is only transmitted by it. Then the question is, transmitted from where – and how? An answer is now surfacing. It is a hypothetical answer, but the most plausible that is currently available. It is the theory that our individual consciousness is the projection of a cosmic hologram.

From the standpoint of the individual, consciousness is an information field: this was called it the Akashic field. This is a holographically coded field accessible to the brain and nervous system. It is holographic because it contains information in a distributed form – as in a hologram, all the information is present at all points. The field contains the codes projected to the brain and body of an individual and are perceived as the sensations that make up his or her consciousness. All these sensations are “entangled,” being particular projections of the same cosmic hologram.

The concept on which this theory is based is widely discussed in contemporary physics. It is the concept of the “holographic universe.” The theory is that the 3D things and events we observe in the world are holographic projections of 2D codes. The codes are at the periphery of space and time, and possibly in another universe.

The idea of the holographic universe has been raised by David Bohm in the late 20th century, and empirical support for it surfaced in 2013. Fermilab physicist Craig Hogan proposed that the fluctuations observed by the gravity-wave detector GEO600 may be due to the graininess of space (according to string theory at the super-small scale space is not smooth but patterned by minuscule ripples: it is “grainy”). It turned out that the inhomogeneities found by GEO600 are not gravity-waves. They could, however, be ripples in

the fine-structure of space. This would be the case if they are 3D projections of 2D information coded beyond spacetime. If the grains found by GEO600 are of the indicated size, Hogan’s hypothesis gains experimental support. Subsequent measurements confirmed that this is precisely the case⁸.

The hologram theory applies to all events and entities in space and time, including the consciousness that appears in association with the entities. If so, our human consciousness is the *localized* (but nonlocal) projection of the holofield. This accounts for the finding that one can enter into communication with “something” that appears to be the consciousness of an individual regardless of whether that individual is living or not, and where he or she may be located in space. The cosmic hologram conserves all elements of consciousness in space and time and these elements of consciousness can be recalled by brains and nervous systems specifically tuned to them. All consciousness is nonlocal, as all consciousness is a localized projection of the same holofield. When one consciousness communicates with another, one projection of the holofield communicates with another. Being internal communication within the holofield, this communication is not subject to the physical limits of communication in space and time. It can be instantaneous over any finite distance and across any finite period of time.

The theory that the consciousness that appears for us is the projection of a cosmic holofield tells us that Erwin Schrödinger was right. We cannot speak of consciousness in the plural: the overall number of minds in the universe is one. Carl Jung came to a similar conclusion. The psyche is not located within the cranium, he said, it is part of the single generative principle of the cosmos, the *unus mundus*. More recently physician Larry Dossey summed up his decades-long experience of healing body and mind with the affirmation that there is but one mind in the world. All individual minds are part of the One Mind, an infinite field of consciousness⁹.

A timeless intuition is now surfacing at the cutting edge of consciousness research and is meeting the cutting edge of physics. Our body may be separate, but our mind is not. We are more mind than body, and our mind we are one. Thus we are one. If we would realize and take it to heart, we could overcome the critical challenges of our time.



¹ This article is based on detailed materials presented *inter alia* in Ervin Laszlo, *Science and the Akashic Field: An Integral Theory of Everything* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2004, 2007); *The Self-Actualizing Cosmos: The Akasha Revolution in Science and Human Consciousness*, (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2014); and *The Immortal Mind: The Continuity of Consciousness Beyond the Brain, with Anthony Peake*, (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2014).

² For a detailed review and assessment of these kinds of experience see *The Immortal Mind*, op. cit.

³ William James, *Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899).

⁴ David J. Chalmers, “The puzzle of conscious experience”, *Scientific American* 273 (December 1995).

⁵ Jerry A. Fodor, “The big idea.” *New York Times Literary Supplement*, (3 July 1992).

⁶ Norman C. Kennedy, ‘What we don’t know.’ *Science* 309 (5731:75) (2005).

⁷ One of the most striking cases of this kind is the game of chess played by a living chess grandmaster with a deceased chess grandmaster. The moves by the latter have been channeled by the medium (who did not play chess himself), and all the moves have been recorded and analyzed. The analysis confirmed that the game was played at the grandmaster level, and that the style of the channeled player was truly that of the grandmaster he claimed to be. See *The Immortal Mind*, op. cit.

⁸ Further support for holographic spacetime theory came in the work of Yoshifumi Hyakutake and colleagues at Ibaraki University in Japan. They computed the internal energy of a black hole, the position of its event horizon, its entropy and several other properties based on the predictions of string theory and the effects of virtual particles. Hyakutake together with Masanori Hanada, Goro Ishiki and Jun Nishimura then calculated the internal energy of the corresponding lower-dimensional cosmos with no gravity. They found that the two calculations match. The internal energy of a black hole and the internal energy of the corresponding lower-dimensional cosmos are the same. Black holes, as well as the cosmos as a whole, are holographic <<http://arxiv.org/abs/1311.5607>>.

⁹ Larry Dossey, *One Mind: How Our Individual Mind is Part of a Greater Consciousness and Why It Matters* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2013).

