**The Elusive Simplicity of Consciousness: Demystifying its Nature**

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**Abstract:**

The concept of consciousness has long been a subject of profound contemplation for both philosophers and scientists alike over the course of decades, often accompanied by the recurring refrain that the understanding of consciousness and its genesis remains an elusive pursuit. I contend that our prevailing interpretation of consciousness has led us astray, erroneously divorcing it from the broader realm of general intelligence. I posit that 'consciousness,' specifically self-awareness, emerges as an inherent byproduct of the development of language and interpersonal communication. Consciousness is but a representation of an internal dialogue akin to our external interactions with others. While the concept of consciousness has perpetually eluded precise definition, offering a plethora of interpretations, the true enigma arguably resides within the realm of self-awareness and the conscious facets of our cognitive processes. It is not in our capacity to react to external stimuli and interact with our environment, which have been largely understood on a scientific level, but rather in our self-awareness and ability to introspect that the mystique of consciousness finds its core. The frequently discussed question of whether artificial intelligence can ultimately attain 'consciousness' highlights a fundamental flaw in our comprehension of the authentic nature of consciousness and its emergence. This paper aims to deliver a comprehensive exploration of the fundamental essence of consciousness, elucidating its intricate relationship with both language and intelligence, it will simultaneously undertake the task of challenging prevailing paradigms and mystical conceptions surrounding consciousness.

Keywords: Consciousness, Intelligence, Evolution, Language

1-Introduction - Defining the Unseen: Our Quest to Grasp Consciousness

How can a three-pound mass of jelly that you can hold in your palm imagine angels, contemplate the meaning of infinity, and even question its own place in the cosmos? Especially awe inspiring is the fact that any single brain, including yours, is made up of atoms that were forged in the hearts of countless, far-flung stars billions of years ago. These particles drifted for eons and light-years until gravity and change brought them together here, now. These atoms now form a conglomerate- your brain- that can not only ponder the very stars that gave it birth but can also think about its own ability to think and wonder about its own ability to wonder. With the arrival of humans, it has been said, the universe has suddenly become conscious of itself. This, truly, it the greatest mystery of all.”  
― **V.S. Ramachandran,** [**The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human**](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/13443579)

This profound and aesthetically captivating perspective on consciousness is a viewpoint embraced by numerous individuals. Evidently, when articulated in such terms, consciousness does indeed evoke a sense of awe.

However, as we earnestly delve into contemplation of our self-awareness and truly scrutinize its operational dynamics, much of its enigmatic aura dissipates.

Throughout history, consciousness has been the subject of numerous interpretations, consequently leading to it controversially being proposed as a metric for assessing animal value (Dawkins,2017). Which is ironic as such proposals have arisen in the absence of a universally accepted definition of consciousness, let alone viable framework for evaluating animal consciousness. The ethical and ontological considerations regarding the assessment of worth based on “consciousness”, however, are a distinct and separate topic of discussion.

Our limited comprehension of consciousness, or more precisely, our inclination to imbue it with mysticism, likely arises as a direct result of existential anxiety. Embracing the notion of consciousness as a supernatural, mystical force, rather than as a routine biological process, can provide a psychological mechanism for coping with our fear of mortality. It is intriguing to observe the distinct contrast in the way people often separate our capacity to respond to external stimuli, interact with the environment, and engage in communication, from our cognitive processes of thought and introspection. The former is commonly acknowledged and addressed with a sense of routine, while the latter consistently remains shrouded in the allure of life's most profound enigma.

The statement often encountered, 'What if nobody possesses consciousness apart from myself? I lack empirical evidence of others' consciousness, and, for all I am aware, everyone else might merely be artificial constructs designed solely for my perception.', stems from the apparent challenge of defining consciousness, which in turn hinders its quantification and objective assessment.

However, it can be contended that consciousness has already long been identified and is amenable to quantification; we simply may be resistant to accept this.

2- Interplay of Intelligence and Consciousness

In George Orwell's renowned and frequently referenced novel, '1984,' the government initiates a deliberate simplification of language. Instead of employing a diverse range of expressions like 'awesome,' 'spectacular,' 'super,' 'incredible,' and the like, they streamline communication to the use of a single phrase, 'double good’ (Orwell,1949). This strategic linguistic manipulation serves to curtail the populace's capacity to articulate intricate ideas amongst themselves, rendering the initiation of any rebellion significantly more challenging.

While the idea that language influences thought is a well-established concept (Zlatev and Blomberg,2015), the proposition that language might have served as the catalyst for the inception of thought itself is a notion that provokes scrutiny and incites controversy. It appears to be a challenge for people to envision the coevolution of language and intricate cognitive processes, an idea that, paradoxically, stands as one of the most plausible theories.

In essence, our journey commenced with the exchange of rudimentary information, such as the location of food (Markov et al.,2023). Gradually, in tandem with the evolution of our cognitive abilities, our capacity for conveying intricate concepts expanded. Nevertheless, the development of intelligence and its underlying factors are not devoid of their own enigmas. Among these, a notably intriguing theory suggests that the utilization of fire, and the subsequent introduction of cooked meat into our diet, may have facilitated increased nutrient absorption in the brain, potentially expediting cognitive advancement (Rosati,2018).

We readily acknowledge our intelligence as an evolutionary outcome, attributing the development of language to our capability to produce diverse vocalizations and our innate social skills (Lieberman,2007). However, when it comes to consciousness, we tend to demarcate a distinct boundary. We resist the idea that consciousness could be a fortuitous occurrence.

The notion of flukes, in general, is a concept that humans frequently exhibit aversion towards and frequently misinterpret. Queries such as 'Why us specifically, and not any other animal?' persistently arise, and even after elucidating that our ancestors serendipitously executed precise actions at opportune moments, a reluctance to accept this explanation remains. An apt analogy revealing our cognitive biases and irrationality when discussing serendipitous occurrences can be found in the 'flower growing out of the sidewalk' analogy- a variation of the puddle analogy initially proposed by Douglas Adams in his famed work, “The Salmon of Doubt” to counter the theistic fine-tuning argument (Landsman,2016). In this analogy, the emergence of a flower from a sidewalk crack is a purely accidental event, brought about by the random entry of a seed into the crevice, where conditions fortuitously provided adequate nutrients and moisture. The flower, for the sake of this analogy, anthropomorphized, might struggle to perceive this as a mere fluke and instead assume that the environment was intentionally tailored for its growth. Similarly, we often find it challenging to comprehend how our development diverged so significantly from other animals, granting us complex cognitive faculties and language. Yet, it is worth noting that various other animals, such as the octopus- often cited as the closest we may ever get to extraterrestrial life (Goldhill,2017), also evolved in remarkable and unique ways. We are not inherently more mystical or intriguing than these creatures. Arguably, the phenomenon of consciousness is in no way inherently more remarkable or captivating than the octopus's extraordinary ability to not only change color but also manipulate its shape and texture (Josef et al.,2012).

It remains implausible for us to regard consciousness as merely another characteristic since it constitutes our fundamental identity, serving as the linchpin of our ego and the medium through which we engage in internal and interpersonal communication. We will always be reluctant to reduce our sense of self and identity to merely a product of evolutionary adaptation.

However, unfortunately for us, it is highly probable that consciousness is precisely that.

3- Insights from a Study

In 2019, Australian researchers conducted a study published in the journal Scientific Reports. The study revealed their ability to anticipate participants' fundamental choices approximately 11 seconds before the participants consciously articulated their decisions (Goldhill,2019). This discovery sparked extensive discussions regarding the concept of free will and even delved into considerations of the simulation theory. Remarkably, few, if any, interpretations recognized this as tangible evidence pertaining to the essence of consciousness. It suggests that we possess an innate inclination to act on certain urges, while concurrently subjecting these impulses to the 'conscious' segment of our cognitive processes, in order to provide ourselves with a rationale, akin to how we might elucidate our actions to another individual.

A highly plausible hypothesis then emerges, that our sophisticated language and interpersonal communication compelled us to adopt self-dialogue as a means of comprehending our thoughts, mirroring the manner in which we communicate with others. However, it's important to note that decisions themselves originate from a distinct region of our brain, one that predates the emergence of language—arguably therefore preceding the development of consciousness.

In his globally recognized work, '21 Lessons for the 21st Century,' Yuval Noah Hariri asserts that Homo sapiens fundamentally operate as a narrative-driven species, with our cognition primarily organized around narratives rather than numerical or graphical representations. This observation is profoundly intriguing and plays a pivotal role in enhancing our comprehension of human cognition, as it underscores the centrality of storytelling in our thought processes; essentially, our cognitive architecture is fundamentally narrative based. This quotation holds profound significance on multiple levels. It not only underscores the mechanics of our interpersonal communication and, consequently, the operation of our consciousness but also elucidates our endeavors to fathom the essence of consciousness itself. We, as narrative-driven consciousness, paradoxically engage in storytelling to attempt to elucidate the concept of consciousness itself.

4- Who is conscious and who is not?

Upon thorough examination of this study, we can confidently ascertain that our conceptualization of 'consciousness' essentially represents a form of self-translation—a means of self-communication within our own cognitive processes. Consequently, it is reasonable to deduce that consciousness did not experience a sudden, spontaneous genesis; instead, it evolved in tandem with the development of our intelligence. This leads us to the inference that consciousness likely exhibits varying levels, with our current state possibly representing not the zenith but rather a precursor to a more advanced form of consciousness. In this advanced state, we may possess the capacity to perceive and interpret ourselves with a heightened degree of objectivity, transcending our inherent biases.

The inquiry into whether animals possess 'consciousness' or not may now appear somewhat futile, anthropocentric, and simplistic, as many of our inquiries tend to be. Our brand of consciousness, characterized by intricate language and complex cognitive mechanisms, evolved as a result of specific adaptations over time. In contrast, other animals did not follow the same path of development and did not necessitate the evolution of complex language to thrive in their respective environments. Instead, they developed an array of diverse mechanisms, both physical and cognitive, unique to their needs. Nonetheless, if we insist on addressing this question, a reasonable deduction might suggest that social animals possess varying degrees of 'consciousness,' potentially correlated with their level of social proficiency and the complexity of their communication systems. However, it remains improbable that these animals experience consciousness in precisely the same way as humans do.

5- AI and Consciousness

The persistent question concerning the potential emergence of 'consciousness' in AI appears to also lose some of its urgency when examined in this context. Curiously, this question has also been employed to rationalize the aura of mystique surrounding consciousness. The argument posits that if consciousness arises from intelligence, then once AI reaches a 'human-level intelligence,' would it not attain consciousness? The likely answer is: No, it will not. AI is unlikely to acquire consciousness because it lacks the evolutionary imperative for survival that prompted the development of consciousness in humans. AI did not undergo the same evolutionary trajectory as humans and does not face the same adaptive pressures. In essence, the answer to this question is relatively straightforward.

Once more, we find ourselves attributing human characteristics to our environment and perceiving everything through a lens that centers on humanity. This anthropocentric perspective is a tendency that we aim to transcend as our consciousness advances.

6- Conclusion

Our aptitude for abstract thinking is probably a consequence of our necessity to communicate ideas and relay them within our social groups. We engage in internal dialogue in a manner resembling our external conversations, thereby enabling the capacity for advanced cognitive processes. However, decisions do not originate in the 'conscious mind' but rather within a part of our brain where instinctual choices were made prior to the advent of language and the requirement for self-explanation and narrative. Consciousness does not emerge spontaneously; instead, it represents an ongoing and evolving trait.

Throughout our lives, we navigate the world from the perspective of our ego, our 'self,' and to varying degrees, other animals do the same. Consciousness, as we experience it, is an anomaly—a phenomenon that captivates our fascination due to its intimate association with our identity. It's crucial to acknowledge that, from the standpoint of other animals or potentially undiscovered creatures, our consciousness might be nothing more than a characteristic, akin to physical traits such as brown spots or a furry tail.

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