

## **Consciousness Totally Explained and Elucidated**

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Like I have even a clue. I don't think anyone does. But I do have some thoughts about it. Here's the definition I'm using: "Consciousness" -- that mysterious phenomenon by virtue of which we can say "I" in our minds.

1. First off, you've gotta wonder why consciousness is even necessary -- why it's useful from the standpoint of evolution; that is, what survival benefit does it confer? From a survival point of view, why wouldn't we do equally well just receiving and reacting to stimuli in a totally automatic sort of way? -- like we assume a computer does. It could be a pretty complex path between the stimulus and the reaction -- for example, a computer can play an excellent game of chess or the Chinese game of go, but it's still completely automatic and "mindless". I have no clue on this point. But "Nature" does seem to have gone to quite a bit of effort surrounding its implementation of consciousness -- it's given us an elaborate internal "display screen", or in Microsoft Windows terminology, an internal "desktop", that allows us to speak with ourselves internally, to see images in our minds, and to "think". So, obviously, there is an evolutionary benefit to incorporating consciousness into the design of creatures over a purely automatic, reactive design. Or is there? Anyway, my own suspicion is that consciousness is just an inexpensive solution to an evolutionary problem.

### **2. Questions without answers (because we don't know the answers, for certain):**

Suppose we took a person's brain out of their head, took the brain apart, cell by cell, neuron by neuron, put it back together again, and put it back into the person's head. Would the person have consciousness? Would he or she be the same person with the original consciousness (whatever that might mean)?

Suppose we took a person's brain apart and duplicated it cell for cell. Then we put the duplicate brain back into the person's head. Would the person have consciousness? Would he or she be the same person?

Suppose we put the original brain into one body and the duplicate brain into another?

Suppose we took a person's brain apart, duplicated it cell for cell with semiconductor chips, and hooked up the semiconductor brain into the person's body?

3. **Suggestion for an experiment.** I thought about the idea of two people having duplicate brains a little bit more, and I can imagine one result being that they would share a consciousness. (Note - I'm got going so far as to say that this is a real possibility -- that's why I used the word 'imagine'.) Going a little further, maybe creatures get consciousness somewhat analogously to how a radio receives a radio signal. Maybe we are all tuned to some kind of central source of consciousness. Maybe each of us is tuned to a different "frequency" of that

central source, with the result that each of us has a separate consciousness. So maybe if two people have exactly duplicate brains, they are both tuned to the same "frequency", and thus share a consciousness. (It's my blog, so I can take these flights of fancy!)

There's just a smidgeon of evidence that this is a possibility: Many sets of identical twins say that they have a sense of one another. One can sense when the other is in danger, can feel the other's emotions, can "feel the other's pain". Perhaps the brains of identical twins are tuned very close to the same "frequency", so their consciousness overlaps to a degree. As far as I know there is no good experimental evidence for this. In fact, as of 2015, James Randi's million dollar prize for reliably demonstrating any kind of paranormal phenomena had gone unclaimed for 19 years, and it was canceled that year. The evidence, such as it is, is all anecdotal. That doesn't mean it's worthless, but it does mean we're not on solid ground.

My idea for an experiment is to nail down what I said in the previous paragraph, one way or the other. Get some cloned pairs of mice that are as close to being exact duplicates as possible. Then take one mouse of each pair, give it a little electric shock, and see whether there is any reaction from the other one in the pair. Or, teach one mouse in each pair to run a maze, and then see whether the other mouse in the pair can learn the maze faster. Of course, we have to have all the usual experimental controls: mice in each pair separated; a control group of mice, etc, etc.