

Consciousness research - a debate of centuries

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Abstract

In science and philosophy, consciousness study is probably among the most debated topics for at least several centuries. For example, Rene Descartes and John Lock gave their different definitions of consciousness in the 17th century. Present days, the recognized critical issue is that we do not have a universally acceptable definition of consciousness. Although the dictionary definition of consciousness is clear to all – consciousness is to know, or knowing, scholarly, the definitions of consciousness are quite vary according to different authors and groups. I have analyzed the long debating on consciousness studies and summarized them into two categories – brain consciousness and consciousness as fundamental phenomena. Here, I report that three main schools have existed for centuries, according to what consciousness is - as they have believed. The first school believes brain consciousness. This is the main school that believes consciousness is the unique property of a brain. This school for long time considers that only a human being is conscious, the unique property of a human brain - all in the mind. Only recently this school began to accept that non- human animals are conscious (2012). The second school believes that all life forms are conscious. Consciousness is a function of living matter. This school generally considers a cell and above organism conscious, which does not include virus or viroid. The third school believes cosmic consciousness that the universe is a highly ordered complex entity. Both the second and the third schools deserve to be considered significant, and they belong to the second category of consciousness as fundamental phenomena. Therefore, I advocate that we recognize the three schools of consciousness researchers. Some scholars from the main school of brain consciousness should stop rejecting the other two schools that study consciousness as fundamental phenomena. We should all adapt to the reality that the definitions of consciousness may well differ according to defined circumstances.

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A precise definition of consciousness – x consci

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Abstract

As we know that the debate on consciousness has existed for many centuries, I, therefore, have suggested that we recognize and adapt such a diverse opinions.(Yang C. 2014) Here, I propose a dual naming system to define consciousness – X consciousness. The X represents a specific value of what type of consciousness is. For example, brain consciousness, biological consciousness (bioconsci, Yang C. 2011), and cosmic consciousness. Since consci may be used as a short form for consciousness, the dual naming system can be called X consci. This represents a theoretical thinking from divergence to convergence. And this dual naming system can be applied to making the definition of consciousness more divergent as well. Applying this formula to the definitions of consciousness, one can help to lead the debate or research into a more specific area in the first place. Instead of asking – “what is consciousness”? We may ask – what is X consci? What is X consciousness? Here, I give some examples - what is cell consciousness (celluloconsci), what is brain consciousness (brainoconsci), what is animal consciousness (animal consci), what is plant consciousness (plant consci, botanoconsci), what is bacterial consciousness (bacterial consci), what is viral consciousness (viral consci), what is biological consciousness (bioconsci), what is cosmic consciousness (cosmoconsci), what is machine consciousness (machine consci), what is an individual consciousness (one’s consci), what is a group consciousness (group consci), and what is social consciousness (social consci), etc.? You can name them as divergent as your wish, and you will not lose your focus as long as you are using the dual naming system during your course of discussing on consciousness.

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Molecule consciousness

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Abstract

Although Manfred Eigen and Leo De Maeyer defined information storage, recognition, memory, learning, and adaptation at the level of molecule systems, they did not conclude that the molecule systems they described were conscious due to lack of some knowledge of that time (See: refer Eigen M and de Maeyer L. 1966. Chemical means of information storage and readout in biological system. *Naturwissenschaften* 53: 50-57). In this essay, I provide direct evidence to prove that a virus or a viroid is among the simplest conscious lives. A thought experiment is devised that a group of molecules composed of RNA or DNA with or without protein coat, is placed in a sea of RNA, DNA, protein, and other cofactors. If this group of molecules can survive and reproduce its own kind species, it proves its awareness of itself and its outside world. Therefore, this group of molecules is conscious. Immediately, the well-accumulated data of a virus or a viroid can be applied to this particular thought experiment. Therefore, it is certain that the hypothesis has already been proved. A virus or a viroid has demonstrated the existence of the simplest conscious forms of life. More generally speaking, any intercellular parasite that can make its own kind of species should have sufficiently proved its self and outside awareness. The understanding of consciousness at the level of molecule systems would greatly help to understanding consciousness at the level of cell and more complex organisms.

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Biological consciousness – level and content

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Abstract

Consciousness level and content are often used to describe human mental consciousness. Its level can arrange from loss of consciousness, an unconscious states such as coma (various levels of coma), to vegetative state, to minimally conscious states, to various sleep status and disorders (sleep is not considered unconscious), to various mental and brain disorders, to medication status (general and local anesthesia, psychiatric medicine), etc. Recently, consciousness level and content are also applied to describe non-human animal's brain consciousness. I genuinely derived my own conclusion that consciousness exist in all life forms, and from virus to human being all undergo evolution in 2008. I have also proposed that DNA or genome ultimately defines consciousness of a life form in 2010. It is both the stable and adjustable regions of a genome that determine the fine diversity of life forms. Although scholars have believed that all lives are conscious and studied them for centuries, there is no single term to convey this significant research work. To further define biological consciousness, I have used a combined short term, bioconsci (Yang C, 2011). It seems to me that the level and content of bioconsci can be a good starting point toward a more precise definition of consciousness in all living organisms. And bioconsci should also reflect the evolutionary consequences of various living forms. The most fundamental determinant of bioconsci is DNA or genome, "DNA defines consciousness" (Or RNA when the genome is RNA). Bioconsci can be further elucidated at the following four levels with their relating contents:

1. Molecular level (viroid, virus, and other sub-cellular level organisms, such as Rickettsia, Orientia, Ehrlichia, Anaplasmas, Coxiella, Chlamydia, and Chlamydia, etc.)
2. Cellular level (single cell, multiple cells, and organisms – prokaryote: domain bacteria and domain archaea; eukaryote: fungi, plants, and highly differentiated animal cells).
3. Neural level (single neuron, multiple neurons with network and brainless, ganglion).
4. Brain level (simplest brain in lower animals to complex brain like human brain).

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