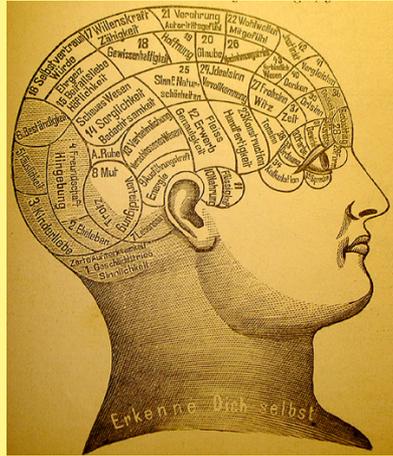


# THE QUEST



# FOR CONSCIOUSNESS

FRANK ARUNDELL

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# The Quest for Consciousness

At the outset it may seem a bit silly to be looking for something we already know we have. Our waking moments are said to be conscious ones, we are aware of our environment and our selves. Our five senses, if working properly, continuously keep telling us what's going on directly around us; and in this age of instant communications, very little of significance happens in the world that we don't hear about within minutes, or hours at the most. Some of us believe everything is moving too fast to give ample consideration in the light-speed flow of important and unimportant matters in order to make the right decisions a good life requires. The contemplative life is long gone. If we are able to handle the traffic, are we mentally equipped to respond in a well reasoned way to the input? Is it possible that the current escape to mind-enhancing drugs and alcohol is symptomatic of the anxiety ridden age we're living in? There's a lot "out there" for us to be conscious of, but that doesn't explain "consciousness."

Anyone who has under gone anesthesia or who has ever fainted understands what loosing consciousness is. "Fainting, also called Syncope, is a sudden, brief loss of consciousness and posture caused by decreased blood flow to the brain."<sup>1</sup> With the loss of consciousness the thinking process is suspended. "One may suffer from a simple fainting spell due to anxiety, fear, pain, intense emotional stress, hunger, or use of alcohol or drugs. Most people who suffer from simple fainting usually have no underlying heart or neurological (nerve or brain) problem."<sup>2</sup> In Open Spaces Magazine, Dr. Robert Stack tells us about the altered state of consciousness when we sleep. "Because sleep is actively promoted by the brain and is such a powerful biological

imperative, the reason for its occurrence must lie with some brain process that is best carried out in an unconscious state. Memory consolidation could be one such function...Consciousness is a favorite topic for philosophers. I wonder how we would conceive of consciousness if we never slept and therefore did not regularly experience its absence. Rene Descartes (1596-1650) said, 'I think therefore I am.' Apparently this famous equation would have as easily been translated, 'I am *conscious* therefore I am.' In his formulation, Descartes separated mind from body ( a division that philosophers have argued about ever since). The formulation also clearly asserted that consciousness is inexorably connected to our definition of being alive... The more conscious we are, the more fully alive."<sup>3</sup> I liked Dr Stack's reference to Descartes because it relates consciousness with thinking, and thinking is a "mental thing." " There is surely nothing weird or demonstrably false about declaring reality to host two *essentially* different things: those that are mental and those that are physical."<sup>4</sup>

Is consciousness the same as thinking? Is it part of a "higher level" of thought called mind produced by the physical brain? "Biological Naturalism is a monist theory about the relationship between mind and body (i.e. brain), and hence an approach to the mind-body problem. It was first proposed by the philosopher John Searle in 1980 and is defined by two main theses: 1) all mental phenomena from pains, tickles, and itches to the most abstruse thoughts are caused by lower-level neurobiological processes in the brain; and 2) mental phenomena are higher-level features of the brain."

"This entails that the brain has the right causal powers to produce intentionality. However, Searle's biological naturalism does not entail that brains and only brains can cause consciousness. Searle is careful to point out that while it appears to be the case that

certain brain functions are sufficient for producing conscious states, our current state of neurobiological knowledge prevents us from concluding that they are *necessary* for producing consciousness.” Searle says:

"The fact that brain processes cause consciousness does not imply that only brains can be conscious. The brain is a biological machine, and we might build an artificial machine that was conscious; just as the heart is a machine, and we have built artificial hearts. Because we do not know exactly how the brain does what it does we are not yet in a position to know how to do it artificially.”<sup>5</sup> Although Searle attributes both lower and higher processes to the brain as the organ of thinking, or at least it “appears to be the case,” his implication is that the brain may not be the only “biological machine” that is the cause of consciousness, even though it has the “right causal powers to produce intentionality.” Let’s have a look at what Webster says about “intentionality.”

Intentionality:

- a. pertaining to an appearance, phenomenon, or representation in the mind; phenomenal; representational.
- b. pertaining to the capacity of the mind to refer to an existent or nonexistent objects.
- c. pointing beyond itself, as consciousness or a sign.<sup>6</sup>

This definition suggests that what ever *intentionality* pertains to or points to, is thought to be related to and existing (in or of) the *mind*. In other words, mind, is both the re-generator and repository (memory) of all thought and thought processes including our feelings. The assembly point and file system of all purposive thinking. A direct result from external sensory input by the physical workings of the neurological system in conjunction

with the brain. The brain and its corollary network, is believed to be the bio-evolutionary apparatus that, over time, has produced *mind* as we know and experience it. It is presumably the mind that knows the difference between a pat on the back, a slap on the backside or a slap in the face; and it knows it strictly by experience and culture. A writer for Wikipedia says: “A mind is the set of *cognitive faculties* that enables consciousness, perception, thinking, judgement, and memory—a characteristic of humans, but which also may apply to other life forms.”<sup>7</sup> The “enabling of consciousness” in this definition leaves room for, what else?—more thought. Rather than enabling consciousness, I am of the opinion that mind works within consciousness.

Most modern, or I should say post-modern neuroscientists, are beginning to believe that life, previously thought to be biogenic has now turned in the direction of chemo-genetic based on the hypothesis of an early transfer of RNA and DNA molecules, investigated with recent partially successful experimentation. When it all shakes out it would give some of our best minds great pleasure to confirm that life itself is no more than chemistry. A perfect rational in today’s secular-materialist climate.

I remember writing a margin note in one of my philosophy books that said: “Are we conscious of experience, or do we experience consciousness?” I suppose one can say that consciousness, like mind, can be built up starting with the new-born through continuous experiences. This is the usual “Tabula Rasa” (blank slate) understanding elaborated on by the Persian philosopher Avicenna, (980-1037) Yet, I think there is a pre-awareness that enables us to be affected by experiences. Experiences happen to an organism in a conscious state, A consciousness of it’s surroundings is scientifically understood as the principal reason for the survival of very early microbial *life* on earth; living

creatures without a brain. If one wants to reduce this phenomena to chemistry, he or she is obliged to offer empirical proof of that position. It is my understanding that research in this area is presently going on in the UK as we have said.

“The unborn fetus, especially in the third trimester, may already be sensitive (conscious) to stimuli in the maternal external environment. The effects of genetic and epigenetic factors are thus inextricably mingled, from the earliest stages of embryonic development. The remarkable combination of gene-controlled factors, some of them conserved for over a billion years, together with an enormous range of idiosyncratic factors, *both internal and external*, help account for the uniqueness of each individual.”<sup>8</sup> We must not underestimate the prevalence of in utero-consciousness in the life of the fetus previous to the complete development of the human brain.

In a materialist culture anything that does not exist in space and time is considered immaterial, in the sense of being unimportant or irrelevant. Here is a statement that frames that idea: “We can know about causal relations only in so far as they concern entities in space and time. The category of causality can have a meaning beyond its logical use *only if*, as a condition of a possible experience, it relates to appearances, that is, only if it relates to things as they appear to us in space and time.”<sup>9</sup> If we were to ask the materialist whether “mind” appears in space and time, the answer, of necessity, would be that the physical brain is the cause of experiential thought, and therefore mind, or thinking, is simply the result of the activity of our evolutionary brain. If we were to insist that “mind” is immaterial, the response again would need to be that mind is simply a product of the physical brain, constructed in such a way as to activate all our thought processes which have come to us only by experience. If

we are to seek answers to the question of consciousness we must understand that consciousness, if it exists at all, has been deliberated since the ancient Greeks. What is it? Why is it? and, How does it work?, are the very same questions which have been asked across the centuries, and, I might add, up to now there are no definitive answers. Yes, every century has had it's philosophers, theologians, physicists, mathematicians, scientists of all types, trying to close the book on consciousness, but have not been able to do so. Common sense tells we are conscious but to describe it is a whole other ball game. It seems to me that there are four words of primary importance on our quest to describe consciousness as a reality. They are: Life, Awareness, Mind, and Experience. I will use the word "awareness" instead of consciousness for the rest of this piece. For me, it's more descriptive in understanding the idea of "being conscious." Yet, to be aware one would think you have to be conscious first; but in the interest of clarity. let's assume the words can be used interchangeably. Still the main thrust of this essay is that they cannot.

Keith Ward has an MA and DD degrees from both Cambridge and Oxford, and an honorary DD from the University of Glasgow. In a short piece I found online, he clarified where the issue stands with most of the participants regarding consciousness. "The major mystery of consciousness is just what the causal relationship between conscious and physical states is. There are six main possibilities: (1) consciousness is an illusion (*hard materialism*); (2) matter is an illusion (*hard idealism*); (3) consciousness is dependent on matter (*non-reductive physicalism*); (4) matter is dependent on consciousness (*theism*); (5) the two exist independently (*dualism*); or (6) they are different aspects of one underlying reality (*monism*). All have been tried, and none is wholly satisfactory. That is why

consciousness is such a fascinating and important problem.”<sup>10</sup> I would think that awareness doesn’t become a problem until it’s defined by the majority, and then it only becomes a problem for those who disagree. Let us analyze each of Prof. Ward’s possibilities as we understand them.

*1 Consciousness is an illusion (hard materialism)*

Understanding what an illusion is, seems to be the best way to grasp what the “hard materialist” thinks awareness is, so here are words that are synonymous with illusion: aberration, fantasy, chimera, hallucination. Delusion refers to false perceptions or ideas. An illusion is a false mental image produced by misinterpretation of things that actually exist: A mirage is an illusion produced by reflection of light against the sky. A hallucination is a perception of a thing or quality that has no physical counterpart: Under the influence of LSD, Terry had hallucinations that the living-room floor was rippling. A delusion is a persistent false belief: A paranoiac has delusions of persecution.”<sup>11</sup> So, we get the impression that being aware, or awareness, is unreal. We cannot see, hear, smell or reach out and touch awareness. Yet, who among us, except hard-materialists, will say that our “being aware” is unreal or non-existent, except in a very narrow sense? When one thinks of awareness itself, it is not a thing, nor did it come from a thing, but is a creature’s precondition within which life is individually played out as *things* get to be known. An openness *to* experiences— not formed by experiences. It is an adjunct of life itself, a condition of being alive. If everything is working correctly, in a proper, prescriptive order —life contains awareness, awareness contains mind, and mind along with the body experiences things, both material and immaterial by the unified operations of an entire

neurophysiological, metabolic edifice, depending on the organism's health and its position in the phylogeny.

*2 Matter is an illusion (hard idealism)*

The people who hold this theory are not talking about what happens to us when we are hit by an illusory bus or cut ourselves on an hallucinated, broken mirror; but are generally relating to a fact that in reality everything is made of condensed energy. Combinations of atoms, molecules, sub atomic particles, and so on, the stuff that Cern or Fermi Lab deals with every day. They also accept the reality that along with the things that are "solid" or "visible," there are also *things* that are invisible. Things that exist either by belief, reason or intuition, and that cannot be affirmed or secured in the natural world. One of those things is a persons private thoughts, regardless of the fact that those thoughts may be internal visualizations of things that exist dimensionally or by extension, learned by experience; they are *real* nonetheless because they are the thoughts of a real "minded" person. Another area of the unseen would be the productions of an organism's creative imagination, when he or she is seeing with the so called "inner eye," or minds eye. Most artists have an intimate relationship with these realities. Seeing David in the marble was one of Michelangelo's greatest "visions," in the truest sense— not at all unreal. Visionaries of all sorts have populated the arts and literature as far back as the caves of Lascaux and the shadowy figures of Plato's allegory, which has taught us so much about the truths of reality.

Idealists generally have strong spiritual convictions, and in one form or another believe in the unseen God, "Creator of all that is seen and unseen," in Angels and in Saints, and in heaven and hell which they have not seen but believe by their faith. Harvard

lecturer William James has written extensively on the nature of the unseen phenomena which life presents and of which we have complete awareness, some more than others. It is amazing to me that both James and Charles Pierce, the inventors of pragmatism have deeply mined the unseen human psyche. "Idealism, in philosophy is any view that stresses the central role of the ideal or the spiritual in the interpretation of experience. It may hold that the world or reality exists essentially as spirit or consciousness, that abstractions and laws are more fundamental in reality than sensory things, or, at least, that whatever exists is known in dimensions that are chiefly mental, and as, ideas."<sup>12</sup> Idealists are usually not destroyers but strivers. Those who succeed know that ultimacy can never be reached in the natural world because nature is terribly fickle. Hard-Idealists are very often greatly disappointed, but their "heads" are always in the clouds. They are purveyors of what ought to be.

*3 Consciousness is dependent on matter (non-reductive physicalism)*

In order to draw some conclusions as to whether awareness depends on "matter" or not, we need to know as much as possible about what "reduction" and "non-reduction" means, and what kind of an "ism" "physicalism" is supposed to be in philosophical terms. Understanding "philosophy" as "the rational investigation of the truths and principles of being, knowledge, or conduct," enables us go on. Still, it is always good to keep in mind who Lady Philosophy is, so that she doesn't slip away from us to become something which she is not. Considering the above description given by Webster, both the study of knowledge, (Epistemology) and of conduct, (Behaviorism) are just a few of Philosophy's many children.

To start with, “physicalism” is nothing more than materialism. The people who are proponents of “physicalism” say that everything is matter of one kind or another, and can be understood in reality by physics rather than non-physics or “metaphysics.”

To reduce something is to take it down as far as necessary to it’s parts. Piece by piece, until you can say that you have found, psychologically, that is, in your own mind, what the cause and the essence of the thing is in reality. It is important in this case to be satisfied with the knowledge that everything has a physical cause and an effect, so when we discover the “initial” or the root cause of something, we can say we know all that we need to know about the thing.

The folks who are physicalists contend that even things like awareness, mental states or ideas can be reduced to understanding their cause, because nothing is unreal, i.e., “nothing can come from nothing.” (Parmenides)

Other materialists in order to explain both a lower order and a higher order of brainwork, in which the higher order appears as being somewhat metaphysical, have said that it is all but impossible, at this point, to reduce all mental processes to “bio-neurological” causes, simply because we don’t know enough about the workings of the human brain to hold to a purely physical-reductionist hypothesis. They have come up with notions to explain their position to other materialists with words such as “supervenient:” “To be dependent on a set of facts or properties in such a way that change can occur only after change has occurred in those facts or properties.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, the thought processes have changed from the basic physical-neuronal activity to a *higher-order* of mental activity. In another notion the

word used is “emergentism:” “A property of a (mental) system that is said to be emergent if it is in some sense more than the "sum" of the properties of the system's parts.”<sup>14</sup> This definition is relatively close to the notion of supervenient that it’s almost self explanatory. It must be noted though, that for the purist there are differences between them.

Now we can ask the question, Is awareness dependent on matter? Well, if there was no matter, what on earth could we be aware of? Yet, there is matter, thanks to “Creation,” or, if you prefer, the sensible condition of reality. In reference to the “mind” though, the non-reductionists have a good case regarding the extremely high degree of thinking that pertains in today’s world. I suppose there are some materialists who are also spiritualists, although I think it highly unlikely. If you are a physicalist, tried and true, reductionist or non-reductionist, chances are that you have already thrown the Deity under the bus, and all that is left is natural human hope and “whispers of immortality.”

#### *4 Matter is dependent on consciousness (theism)*

We’ve all known for a long time now that the earth is made of matter and energy: “Physical substance in general, as distinct from mind and spirit; (in physics) that which occupies space and possesses rest mass, (especially as distinct from energy.)”<sup>15</sup> “The Earth was formed about 4.54 billion years ago. The earliest life on Earth existed at least 3.5 billion years ago, during the Eoarchean Era when sufficient crust had solidified following the molten Hadean Eon. The earliest physical evidence for life on Earth is biogenic graphite in 3.7 billion-year-old metasedimentary rocks discovered in Western Greenland and microbial mat fossils found in 3.48 billion-year-old sandstone discovered in Western Australia. Nevertheless, several studies

suggest that life on Earth may have started even earlier, as early as 4.25 billion years ago according to one study, and even earlier yet, 4.4 billion years ago, according to another study. The mechanism by which life began on Earth is unknown, although many hypotheses have been formulated, (including Panspermia, where life was delivered to earth from the stars by asteroids, comets and the like.) Since emerging, life has evolved into a variety of forms, which biologists and chemists have classified into a hierarchy of taxa. Life can survive and thrive in a wide range of conditions.”<sup>16</sup>

That’s probably more than we need to know, if it’s correct. Our interest here is the fact that the earth was in it’s formative stages long before life appeared, no less than human awareness. So the assumption has to be that there was nothing but energy and matter on or in earth about ten billion years after the so called Big Bang. Answering the question, “does matter depend on consciousness (awareness)?” one would have to say no if we’re speaking in human, philosophical terms. This is where all the physicalists get off the bus. There is a reason that Professor Ward called this possibility *theism*. And the reason is that the earliest human beings came up with religion, and religion strongly suggested to them a Creator, a power greater and more powerful than themselves; an ultimate power who was totally “aware” of what he was doing. In that sense, matter indeed depended on “consciousness,” an awareness of an unseen God who set all things in motion and order. Of course, philosophy does not surrender it’s inquiries to theology in this case and would ask the theologian: Why would a perfect being such as God make such an imperfect world, with such imperfect people?

*5 The two (matter and consciousness) exist independently (dualism)*

Professor Daniel Robinson in his fine book *Consciousness and Mental Life*, says: “There is surely nothing weird or demonstrably false about declaring reality to host two *essentially* different kinds of things: *those that are mental* and *those that are physical*... there is no more a “problem” of consciousness than there is a “problem” of bivalent atoms; it is simply one of the constituents of reality. (This was the primary philosophy of René Descartes (1596-1650) That is, it is not problematic in and of itself. Rather, it becomes problematic only on the further assumptions that (a) all really existing items are physical and (b) mental properties as such either do not exist at all or, if they do exist, they exist dependently on physical properties”<sup>17</sup> as has been said.

“Probably the earliest systematic concept of mind and body, (form and matter) stems from the Greek philosopher Plato (429-347 BC). Descartes, somewhat like Plato, saw the *mind* as identical with the soul. However, Plato argued that the soul both pre-existed and survived the body, going through a continual process of reincarnation or “transmigration.”<sup>18</sup> Dualism seemed the perfect solution for the doctrine of the separation of the soul from the body after death, as life continues somewhere else in another form. For centuries, dualism suited the purposes of most religions on the issue. Where was John Brown when John Brown’s body lies a moldin’ in the grave? Some would say, “in hell,” others, “in heaven.” For me, following Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225/7-1274), I believe that the soul and body are one, and that what we have called “soul” is in reality the life of the body. The dualism argument started after the introduction of the evolutionary theory of natural selection from Charles Darwin (1809-1882) entered the picture. Most of the participants were religious, as was Darwin, though he later became agnostic. Those

that were not religious, found themselves in a position to try to destroy the Church by destroying God using Darwin's theory as a weapon, claiming that souls do not exist. Recent studies show that Descartes was not as dualistic as was originally thought. The battle, in my view, primarily revolved around revenge for the real and perceived evils of Catholicism begun by the Reformation; as well as the pre-eminence of science over religion to free people from the "constraints" of dogma.

*6 They (matter and consciousness) are different aspects of one underlying reality (monism).*

The notion of monism can be applied to many things. Principally, it is a metaphysical concept that the world is essentially one substance or contains only one kind of substance and that was essentially the good or God; it was the philosophy of Benedict de Spinoza. (1632-1677) In other words, nature is God and God is nature. Monism is opposed both to dualism and to pluralism.

Monism got its start as Eleaticism. This school of Greek philosophy that flourished in the 5th century BC, was distinguished by its radical monism—i.e., its doctrine of the One, according to which all that exists (or is in reality true) is a static plenum (space) of Being as such, and nothing exists that stands either in contrast or in contradiction to *Being*. It was a new philosophy, agreeing with the religious and mystical tendencies of its time. Plotinus, (204-270 BC) a later follower of Plato, (428-348 BC) assumed the existence of several levels of Being, the highest of which is that of the One or the Good, (essentially God) which are identical but indescribable and indefinable in human language. The next lower level is that of *nous*, or pure intellect or reason; the third is that of the *soul*. Closely related

with (Neo-Pythagoreanism) were the recognition of a hierarchy of divine principles with stress on the transcendence of the supreme principle, which was already occasionally called “the One”; the placing of the Platonic forms in the divine mind; a strongly otherworldly attitude demanding a “flight from the body,” an ascent of the mind to the divine and eternal for metaphysical or religious thinking. This was the result of the presence in the soul of higher realities and their action upon it. For Plotinus the illumination of the soul by Intellect and the One was the permanent cause of human ability to know of eternal reality.”<sup>20</sup>

It would be well to note, this capsulized history from Britannica, shows how advanced the thinking concerning metaphysics had come and how it’s basic tenants are still being argued in philosophy today.

The first monist concept, “mono-theism” appeared in human history with Abraham, about the year 1800 BCE in Southern Mesopotamia. It is doubtful that the clever Greeks got any of their ideas of “monism” from the ancient cult of “the Jews,” but it is possible that some of the ideas could have come from certain eastern thought via trade.

Many “monist” principles still remain, in the philosophical and theological exegeses of our day. With regard to the issue of consciousness and matter being different aspects of an underlying reality, some of that thinking does make sense to us on a rational, religious basis. Not being a materialist or a dualist, I personally believe that body and soul are one, and not two distinct entities. I also think that the human mind is in perfect conjunction and coordination with the body and it’s neural networks, operated primarily but not entirely by the brain; and

when conditioned by experience, becomes an intelligent, functioning human person; and that “life” exists from the moment of conception. Human life displays a graduated awareness from the zygote to the fetus called consciousness, within which the new-born will later function and mature. Life’s awareness is simply one of the constituents of created reality. Life itself, to one degree or another, over time, may be called “consciousness.” Life or “Spirit,” God’s being, his omnipotence, so to speak, preceded the great “fire works show” at  $t=0$ , where space and time were created together on a meaningful , teleological trajectory. What was put in motion in the first moments of creation were the primal constituents of “life.” Much later, after planet earth cooled and was formed, what “followed was biological-existence. It ultimately comes from inorganic matter and establishes a new level of being. The capacity for reproducing itself and that of self-contained functioning are among the principal indications of the presence of life, so that what we have is no longer a chemical-mechanism but an organism. We have the biological level, which begins with the simplest kind of single-cell creatures (which cope with their environment, win or lose) and develop ever higher and more complex life forms, becoming even more wonderful, richer, and more mysterious.”

“In the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, we find the following ingenious comment on this question: ‘What distinguishes a materialist from a spiritualist is no longer, by any means (as in philosophy, which establishes fixed concepts), the fact that he admits a transition between the physical infrastructure and the psychic superstructure of things, *but only the fact that he incorrectly sets the definitive point of equilibrium in the cosmic movement on the side of the infrastructure, that is, on the side of disintegration.*’ Certainly one can debate the details in this

formulation; yet the decisive point seems to me to be grasped quite accurately: the alternatives are: materialism or a spiritually defined world view, chance or meaning. It is presented to us today in the form of the question of whether one regards spirit and life in its ascending forms as an incidental mold on the surface of the material world (that is, of the category of existing things that do not understand themselves), or whether one regards spirit as *the goal of the process* or, on the other hand, matter as the prehistory of spirit. If one chooses the second alternative, it is clear that spirit is not a random product of material developments, but conversely, *matter signifies a moment in the history of spirit*. This, however, is just another way of saying that spirit (life, in my view) is created and not the mere product of development, even though it comes to light by way of development.”<sup>21</sup>

As for me, this is the proper order of “creation” by the *One* super-natural entity we call God, believed by faith, reason (in the order of nature) and revelation. We are his creatures, continuously becoming something new, not too far from Darwin’s insight I might add, except that Darwin didn’t connect all the dots. He knew nothing of the big bang theory and little of cosmology and “quanta” other than Newtonian astronomy and physics. Many of his followers, years later, sadly turned the beauty of his theory of evolution into a philosophical revolution, and not always for the best reasons. One thing is certain, many people on both sides of the divide have no certainty as to the nature of consciousness.

Conclusion:

Professor Ward, and many other influential philosophers have got it quite right: “The major mystery of consciousness is just what is the causal relationship between conscious states and physical

states...I agree with University of Oxford mathematician Roger Penrose in thinking that the future of science is closely bound up with somehow integrating consciousness and the material substratum of the cosmos in a coherent way. Neither of us, I think, suppose that it has yet been done.”<sup>22</sup> Another study, this one from Pediatric Research states that “consciousness in general and the birth of consciousness in particular remain as key puzzles confronting the scientific world view.”<sup>23</sup> “It is a challenge for scientists and philosophers to define life in unequivocal terms. This is difficult partly because life is a process, not a pure substance. Any definition must be sufficiently broad to encompass all life with which we are familiar, and must be sufficiently general to include life that may be fundamentally different from life on Earth. Some may even consider that life is not real at all, but a concept instead.”<sup>24</sup>

I would tend to agree with Physicist Freeman Dyson who believes that the Cosmos is suffused with consciousness, from the grandest level to the most minute dimensions. Those among us who are reductionists can take that idea right back to  $t=0$ , the beginning of all processes, to the uncaused cause of St. Thomas Aquinas, or the book of Genesis. No one has given the world an alternative concept that makes any more sense than that. I have no problem with “mind” being built up by experiences from the time in the womb to death. I do not think, as dualists do, that mind and body are separate entities, as I have said. This was a concession to ancient theologies stemming from Plato’s and Aristotle’s matter and form philosophy, solidified by Descartes’ body and soul bifurcation. I suppose I could be called a monist in this regard.

I believe that the Almighty Father of all creation is consciously aware of each one of us, just as we have been aware of him since

the animal to human transformation and the transcendence of mind over matter. Many religions have historically alluded to this, in their own way, but none with the authority that the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and his one, holy, catholic and apostolic church brought to us over two thousand years ago.

Thursday of the 3rd week of Eastertide:

Gospel John 6:44-51:

Jesus said to the crowd:

‘No one can come to me  
unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me,  
and I will raise him up at the last day.

It is written in the prophets:

They will all be taught by God,  
and to hear the teaching of the Father,  
and learn from it,  
is to come to me.

Not that anybody has seen the Father,  
except the one who comes from God:  
he has seen the Father.

I tell you most solemnly,  
everybody who believes has eternal life.

‘I am the bread of life.

Your fathers ate the manna in the desert  
and they are dead;

but this is the bread that comes down from heaven,  
so that a man may eat it and not die.

I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.

Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever;

and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.’<sup>25</sup>

Just by coincidence, today's gospel gave me the perfect ending for such an imperfect piece. Thanks for your patience.

## NOTES

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- 2 WebMD, Fainting
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- 17 Consciousness and Mental Life, Daniel N Robinson
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- 19 Joseph Ratzinger Benedict XVI
- 20 Britannica, (with additions)
- 21 Joseph Ratzinger Benedict XVI (with additions)
- 22 Keith Ward, [closertotruth.com](http://closertotruth.com)
- 23 The Emergence of Human Consciousness, Lagerkrantz and Changeux
- 24 Wikipedia, Life
- 25 John 6: 44-51