

Physics From Consciousness

Donald D. Hoffman

Abstract

Scientific investigation of the classic mind-body problem has failed to produce a viable theory. As McGinn puts it, "We know that brains are the de facto causal basis of consciousness, but we have, it seems, no understanding whatever of how this can be." I propose that the obstruction is commitment to a physicalist ontology: It is not possible to obtain consciousness from unconscious ingredients. I propose instead the ontology of conscious realism: Consciousness and its contents are all that exists. Matter, brains, and space-time are among the contents of consciousness, dependent on it for their existence. For a conscious realist the mind-body problem is to show precisely how conscious agents construct the macroscopic and microscopic physical world. I propose a mathematically rigorous account of conscious agents and their dynamics, and of their construction of the physical world. In particular, I propose that the physical world is a species-specific user interface, and that quantum physics represents properties of the stable dynamics of conscious agents. Symmetries of these stable dynamics are the source of the symmetries studied in quantum physics. I present a concrete dynamics for pairs of conscious agents that exhibits $SL(2, \mathbb{C})$ symmetry, and from this obtain a physical representation of the dynamics in terms of relativistic spin half particles. This representation allows one to canonically associate a discrete patch of Minkowski space-time to each such pair of conscious agents, and suggests that, at the smallest scale, space-time is discrete. This suggestion comports well with current approaches to quantum gravity.

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