Human Consciousness and the Image of God

Stan G. Smith*

Abstract

The interest concerning the presumed evolutionary development of consciousness from unconscious matter has escalated during the latter half of the 20th century. As the historical framework of such research is reviewed, challenges against such materialist perspectives will be presented in favor of traditional dualism, where consciousness and brain activity are viewed as different in kind.

Historical Background

Beyond genetics, human consciousness is becoming the major issue for evolutionists to unravel. Francis Crick has even suggested that the next great challenge for science will not be in quantum physics or microbiology, but rather in the understanding of how the human brain develops consciousness in the embryo (Bennett, 1997, p. 4). If ever any presumed evolutionary sequences were uncertain and unclear, the area concerning the origin of consciousness might get the biggest prize. This traditional mind-body dualism must ultimately be made to yield to a more materialistic perspective if evolution is to continue its reign. I shall therefore examine how evolutionists have tried to explain human consciousness. From the Greek philosophers to Kant most western thinkers were generally committed to some form of dualism. According to Bennett, Descartes was the first to formalize this dualistic perspective in terms of the mind-body problem, or brain-mind problem (Bennett, 1997, p. 29). Dualism views the brain, or body, as the physical organ housing our invisible mental operation. No serious scientist questions the fact that the brain as part of the body is material in its form and operation. Is the essence of "mind", however, something different in kind, or merely in degree? Dualism views brain and mind as different in kind. Evolutionary materialists, by necessity, must advance arguments that mental states merely differ in degree from measurable neuronal operation.

Since the last half of the 19th century Darwinism forced redefinitions for the development of every feature of the biological world. It would thus be necessary for evolutionists to consider human consciousness, but the efforts to provide any kind of tangible fossil evidence for Darwin's general biological theory was the main priority for most scientists at that time. There were some notable individuals, however, who were advancing their own opinions, or experiences, in the matter of human consciousness.

> Well known late nineteenth century and early twentieth century psychologists such as England's George Romanes, and Mark Baldwin and G. Stanley Hall in the United States, turned to evolutionary explanations of human behavior as well as the psychological development of children, seeing the later as a recapitulation of the evolution of the species. (Combs, 1996, pp. 181–182)

Another early example of someone proposing an evolutionary view of consciousness was Richard Maurice Burke (1900). Dr. Burke's categories for the conscious were a) simple consciousness, b) self consciousness, and c) cosmic consciousness. Burke discusses these three categories of consciousness and emphasized the development of the intellect as associated with such things as the development of language and color sense in vision which he borrowed from the noted Max Mueller. He further cited historical examples of well-known individuals (Jesus, Gautama, Mohammed, etc.) who in his opinion possessed the crowning illumination of cosmic consciousness. Burke also extolled and pointed to England's George J. Romanes, who wrote *Origin of Human Faculty* (Romanes, 1889). Although set in a framework of religious humanism (vs. modern secularization), Burke essentially maintains an evolutionary perspective of punctuated enlightenment. Burke's *Cosmic Consciousness* apparently stimulated further investigation into the evolution of mind and became a seminal work for the New Age movement. Consistent with Burke's presentation of a new religious humanism, a progressive interest in spiritualism was seen to accompany the rise of evolutionary thought in the latter half of the19th century.

Beyond these early beginnings, investigations of mind and consciousness moved through such familiar names as Pavlov, Freud, Jung, Crick, and Skinner with a presumed materialist, and sometimes pantheistic, basis for the operation of the human psyche. The most rabid materialist in

*Stan G. Smith, M.S., South Plains College, 1401 S. College Ave., Levelland, TX 79336.
Email: ssmith@spc.cc.tx.us
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this group could perhaps be represented by behaviorist B. F. Skinner (1971), whose chilling dehumanization of man is represented by his book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. Skinner makes the dogmatic assertion that man is no more than a highly complex sociological machine conditioned by a multitude of stimulus-reflex events. In one summary remark, we are confronted with his assertion: "To man qua man we readily say good riddance" (Skinner, 1971, pp. 200–201).

Finally, we arrive at the cultural milieu of our day where everything from strict neurophysiologists to New Age psychics exist with their attendant perspectives on human consciousness. Serious scientists restrict themselves to empirical demonstrations of operational mechanisms for proposed evolutionary change. Such experimental investigators are concerned with how syntax (logical structure for processing information), semantics (meaning and understanding), and qualia (quality of discrimination and awareness) could ever arise from a neural network (Bennett, 1997, p. 31). Unfortunately, it is easy to see how a pseudo-scientific community exaggerates limited findings to drive our culture toward a revived paganism as illustrated in statements like the following:

> It will come as no surprise that the history of ideas concerning evolution and consciousness presents a shifting ground, rife with confusions between the three types of evolution above- biological evolution, historical evolution, and the grand evolutionary synthesis. As we have seen, both Henri Bergson and Teilhard de Chardin considered the inner evolution of consciousness to be a counterpart if not a direct function of the evolution of complexity in the nervous system. Their descriptions of the progressive development of consciousness, however, owe more to their philosophic dispositions than to their dedication to evolutionary biology. Nor were they particularly interested in individual psychological or spiritual growth. . . . They were scientific mystics making the best of both the scientific and spiritual worlds of their day.
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> Sri Aurobinbo's evolutionary spirituality is of the second type, that is historical. At bottom it is founded almost entirely on traditional Indian ideas of the progress of the spirit through many incarnations toward identification with subtle levels of being. (Combs, 1996, pp. 185–186)

Returning to the empirical side of scientific investigation, some current schools of thought on consciousness, as discussed by E. M. Macphail (1998, pp. 204–213) are summarized in Table I.

Macphail indicates that functionalism is the major orthodoxy held by the professionals in this field (Macphail , 1998, p. 213). As a neuroscientist, M. R. Bennett stresses the neuronal basis for consciousness (Bennett, 1997, p. 88). It would appear that an evolutionary scientist would need to integrate both neuronal and functional activity in developing a comprehensive view of the evolutionary process which he proposes.

Table I. Current schools of thought on consciousness.

Dualism: The classical view that the brain-mind problem is understood in terms of a spirit-body operation (dual essences different in kind)
Anti-reductionists: A position that denies the brain-mind problem can be solved by linking mental and physiological events, yet holds that neurological activity is the cause of mental activity (reminiscent of philosophical positivism)
Logical behaviorism: A modification of the behaviorist view suggesting that an attempt to correlate brain-mind categories is invalid (problem with the semantics in the use of descriptive categories—different form Skinner's view which regarded brain-mind operation as cause and effect aspects of the same thing)
Neurophilosophy: Strict materialist view which suggests that mental activity can be correlated with neurological events (microscopic or component function of neural activity)
Functionalism: The view that consciousness is a product of functional organization of neural networks (macroscopic integration of neural activity)

Neuroscience (neurophilosophy) and functionalism seem to represent microscopic and macroscopic perspectives of the overall problem, much like what is commonly termed as microevolution and macroevolution. An appropriate analogy, which may initially favor the functional viewpoint, can be seen in using the letters of the alphabet and any book written with them (not a new analogy). Ultimately, we agree that it is the functional combination of the letters, as sentences and paragraphs, which carries the information. However, if I could completely remove a single letter (eliminating all the a's from the text), I could potentially make a radical change in the information. Should I remove all the spaces, commas or z's, I would generate a less catastrophic change. However, the point is that the individual components, even within a synergistic environment, are of extreme relevance; and the strict materialist seems to have less ground at this point in determining which carries more importance in the question of consciousness, the "letters" or the "sentences" of our neural operation. He must explain both simultaneously, granting that it is even possible to do so, which is doubtful. However combined though, these materialist positions feed the hope of creating artificial intelligence.

Significant challenges to the functionalist position on the other hand have been made. In particular, Macphail discusses how language and mathematical intuition pose significant challenges to functionalism. No one would deny that there have been overwhelming advances made in modern computer systems and robotics due to our systematic investigation of logical processes in the biological and physical sciences. It is in the arena of mathematical intuition, however, that I believe, and will attempt to demonstrate, that dualism remains the superior perspective with regard to the brain-mind problem. First, though, let us view some sensational yet interesting avenues in the scientific enterprise related to reality and consciousness, which have stretched or discomforted the evolutionary community.

On the Far Side

The famous British Darwinian evolutionist, Richard Dawkins (1989), has proposed the idea of the *meme*, a gene-like "unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation" (Dawkins, 1989 p. 192). Memes are mental replicators which behave like viruses in the survival of the fittest game at the level of brain activity. It is proposed that memes can infect a brain and later be passed on to others. Dawkins developed a view in which a world of such memes compete for survival in the minds of conscious beings. Successful memes (ideas which are remembered or retained) are therefore selected for residence to be passed on to future minds. This would be an amusing scenario except that brilliant evolutionists, such as Dawkins, are hard pressed to seriously invent such absurdities to reflect the difference they see between the rapid changes which occur in language and cultures compared to genetic evolution (Dawkins, 1989, p. 189). Dawkins, himself, is severely plagued by critics from the evolutionary camp itself, such as rival Steven J. Gould; but he presses on because he is basically correct in seeing a real difference in genetics and cognitive or cultural behavior. With respect to the Dawkins position, it seems that he is just advancing a different kind of dualism, somewhat similar to "soul" particles interacting with material particles as proposed by the ancient Greeks (Macphail, 1998, p. 27).

I was recently reminded by a colleague, H. O. Olney, that another area of interest relevant to the mind-body problem would be found in the research concerning near death experiences (NDE). Although many scientists would dismiss such studies as serious science, long-term researchers like Kubler-Ross (1970) have attempted to analyze near death phenomena. Feelings of love, a tunnel of light, review of life events, and much more have been common elements within the shared experiences and memories from a variety of individuals who do not know one another. Any committed materialist would have to reconsider his position in favor of traditional dualism, if he took this research seriously. Consequently, in the last three decades there have been significant attempts to progressively objectivize this research. Additionally, NDE research is fueled by a growing public interest, which is unlikely to wane as the case load grows.

Even more sensational and less palatable to the scientific community is a current resurgence in what is referred to as deliverance ministry. Aside from the extreme emotional states that virtually all people move through, a growing number of Christian pastors and laymen are concerned that various forms of bizarre behavior is the result of demonic influence. Though demon possession may seem laughable to many scientists, so-called "multiple personality disorders" are seriously treated in our psychiatric hospitals. Secularizing the terms do not solve any problems. My point in mentioning this example is that such conscious behavior mandates a sufficiently unique explanation from the evolutionary scientist. He may have a devil of a time in identifying the transitional forms, or states, of consciousness to support his materialist view in this arena.

Finally, another scientific controversy, which proves somewhat unsettling to the dogmatic materialist, is the Anthropic Cosmological Principle (Barrow and Tipler, 1986), or sometimes simply referred to as the anthropic principle. Scientific research has demonstrated how "fine-tuned" this universe is in order to manifest the stable forms observed within it, including life itself. To suggest that the universe must be the way it is *because* we are the way we are, sounds like confusing the ends with the means or rather the cause and effect with regard to both life and the universe. Although physicist Frank Tipler (1994) does not advocate a cosmic Designer or personal Creator, his basic proposition remains haunted by virtue of the language in his presentation. For example, Tipler discusses the Many-Worlds Interpretation associated with quantum physics which suggests that our unique circumstances have occurred amidst a realm of many potential universes. Tipler's Omega Point, a rather impersonal entity representing the completion of finite existence, essentially becomes a new "god". Skirting the classical consideration of a classical Biblical Creator, Tipler then begins to suggest the Many-Worlds Interpretation of reality gives us free will and his Omega Point will resurrect us. These certainly seem to be strained and bizarre departures from any straight-forward reading of the Bible. The natural evidence for the miraculous ordering by an invisible hand for our finely tuned cosmos continues to be rather compelling. Perhaps that is why Tipler felt drawn to write more about "God", albeit a more pantheistic god. However, a more personal "ghost in the machine" seems to haunt the real universe if not Tipler's technical definitions.

Language and Mathematics

Of all the objections to the evolutionary kinship of man to animal, the most readily observed and easily perceived difference is that of language. If chimpanzees really possess 98% of our human DNA, why should they not communicate proportionally? If ferns have more chromosomes than we do, then why are they not the dominate species on earth? (I am rather apprehensive about how some New Age philosopher might answer this last question). Genetic studies have been dramatically fruitful in the last three decades. However, owing to the above examples, genes cannot be primarily central to the issue of consciousness from what we have observed and learned.

Mathematics is a subset of language. Macphail (1998, pp. 215-216) noted that Roger Penrose and John Lucas used mathematical intuition to prove how minds cannot be computers, although Penrose still regards the mind as a physical system (Macphail, 1998, p. 215). It was only natural that Penrose and others, who clearly saw that minds could not be machines, would begin questioning whether quantum mechanics or chaos theory could explain the brain-mind problem. I have already dealt with quantum mechanics (Smith, 1986) and chaos theory (Smith, 1994) as presumed evolutionary mechanisms and refer the reader to those papers for more extensive consideration.

Oxford philosopher John Lucas (1961) has used Gödel's Theorem in the area of consciousness to support dualism. He uses this theorem to illustrate how the human mind cannot operate as a machine. In summary Lucas stated that:

> Gödel's theorem must apply to cybernetical machines, because it is of the essence of being a machine, that it should be a concrete instantiation of a formal system. It follows that given any machine which is consistent and capable of doing simple arithmetic, there is a formula which it is incapable of producing as being true—i.e., the formula is unprovable-in-the-system but which we can see to be true. It follows that no machine can be a complete or adequate model of the mind, that minds are essentially different from machines. (Lucas, 1961, p.113)

Lucas proceeded thereafter to cover objections to his basic thesis through discussing how progressive improvements in sophisticated machine operation will still be subject to the limitation of Gödel's Theorem. Reviewing Lucas' insightful paper left me wondering if Gödel's brain was a sophisticated machine, could it have developed this famous theoretical proof? In a somewhat similar, Gödel-like fashion, let us consider the concept of infinity in the human conscious.

Infinity

In a familiar example of Zeno's paradox (Bergamini, 1963, p. 45), the fleet-footed Achilles is matched against a tortoise who is given a head start of 10 stadia (or for modern ears, let us use 10 feet). Achilles, we shall say, is 10 times faster than this turtle but finds that by the time he has run 10 feet the tortoise has moved ahead one foot. As Achilles again moves another foot, this tortoise is found to have moved ahead by 0.1 feet. On it goes until we realize, as Zeno would have us imagine, that Achilles can never beat the tortoise, even if he is *faster.* Oh my; what is wrong with Achilles?

Zeno expressed this paradox in other forms, but the same logic applies. Zeno has set up his problems so that motion, or position, is viewed as an infinite continuum. We find ourselves using the same assumption as Zeno when a geometry teacher asks how many points are on a line segment. The answer, we have been taught to exclaim, is—an *infinite* number! We go on to systematically use this notion of infinite continuity in calculus, which easily becomes a very natural way for us to perceive things. But wait a minute—would not Achilles actually beat this turtle *in reality*? Yes, he will, because the real universe is manifested in discrete chunks of matter and energy in space. Despite how fast or slow Achilles may be compared to the tortoise, his *real* motion is advanced through discrete steps or strides. *Real* line segments, represented on a blackboard, are composed of one three-dimensional chalk molecule after another—not an infinite number of abstract dimensionless points. The *real* universe is *quantized*. At some point during the race, Achilles will put a *real* foot down and that *quantum unit* will put him ahead of that reptile.

Interestingly enough, if reality is manifested in discrete or quantized form, where did the notion of an infinite continuum come from? How is it that a *real* Zeno, or anyone else, can frame a paradox or geometry problem in terms of an infinite notion? The most paradoxical feature of Zeno's paradox is Zeno. The ultimate paradox in the universe is man, a finite creature who can reason systematically in terms of infinity.

Evolutionists hope that science will one day produce a computer that will satisfy the Turing criteria and truly mimic human intelligence. However, could a computer ever handle the notion of infinity in the intuitive style of a human being? Although the mathematical operations of commercial computer programs such as Mathematica and Maple are impressive, experts in the computer field have assured me that these mathematical programs still only use a glossary or catalogue of pre-programmed mathematical forms for their calculus operations. Although some programs have produced interesting solutions to geometric proofs, it is unlikely that computers will ever perceive or

derive their mathematical forms in the manner which Newton or Leibnitz did. Indeed, college freshman are able to learn about infinite series and limits in an intuitive fashion which computers cannot duplicate.

Considering what evolutionary thinkers have said about consciousness, I propose general and special principles involving this idea, or perhaps *meme*, of infinity. Stated as a question the general proposal is as follows:

> *General infinity principle:* If all properties of the universe are ultimately finite and quantized, from where could any conscious notion of infinity, in any form, be derived?

Furthermore, specific to man, the special form of this would be asked as follows:

> *Special infinity principle:* If the operation of a finite human brain is electrochemical in nature, and quantized in its operation, how can a person ever reason (systematically) in terms of a notion such as infinity, or an infinite continuum?

No number of finite states in brain activity could account for any real meaning for the concept of infinity. How can a type of consciousness arise that generates ideas outside the same universe that presumably produced such consciousness? How can any conscious creature think thoughts outside of the strictly quantized reality from which it supposedly evolved? The obvious answer would appear to be that consciousness of the infinite could not evolve from a finite, quantized universe or be produced from quantized brain operation. It appears that some features of human consciousness are clearly from another realm altogether. How could man therefore have evolved from this universe? It seems apparent that he did not. Infinity is the province of God, and man thinks in terms of infinite propositions because he has been fashioned after the image of God.

Summary

The proverbial "man-on-the-street" (who has not been overly contaminated through educational propaganda or *higher* learning as are some of us) *intuitively* knows that minds, people, and pets are not machines, even without Godel's Theorem. When he loves his wife, plays with his kids or his dog, or is perhaps lied to or deceived by another human being, he does not generally conclude that such behavior is anything machine like. For those of us, sufficiently contaminated, we make *rational* demands for answers in detail. Ironically, though Macphail is optimistic over experimental investigations in the area of consciousness, he recognizes that as yet evolutionists have no rational proof of rationality.

> …we are a long way from anything that might be regarded as 'proof' of the way in which self-consciousness evolved. (Macphail, p. 227)

When we consider wave-particle duality, it is we (rightfully so) who rack our brains over the meaning and mechanism associated with this phenomena; the various atomic particles and forms of radiation go about their business unencumbered. Despite our demands to know, science is arriving more and more each day at what we cannot know, and it is this idea of consciously knowing that we have been considering, even when it involves consciously knowing what we cannot know.

Almost 3000 years ago, King Solomon made a very interesting comment concerning eternity, perhaps implying the notion of infinity in general. Taking some liberty at clarifying this passage it reads:

> He (God) has made everything beautiful in its own time: also He has put eternity (infinity) in their heart (mind), so that no man can determine what God does from the beginning to the end. (Ecclesiates 3:11)

When I think about various limits or restrictions involved in physical laws, I am reminded how God has restricted our knowledge to prove that we are but creatures – not machines, not self-evolved mechanisms, but *created* beings. This is our inherent glory and limitation within the real universal system. He has done this for His own glory as the Creator, for only in Him are all things (mathematical or otherwise) sufficient and complete.

The body cannot produce mind, and man is not a machine. Man *is* the proof of God; and the nature of our consciousness is evidence for that proof. Our consciousness reveals that we really are made after the image of God, but our ignorance allows us to see and respect who God *really* is.

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CRSQ: Creation Research Society Quarterly

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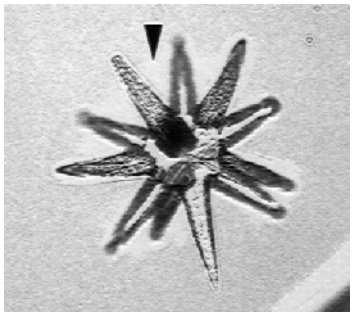
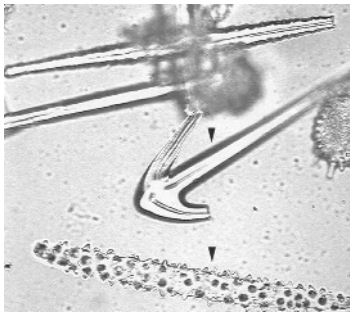
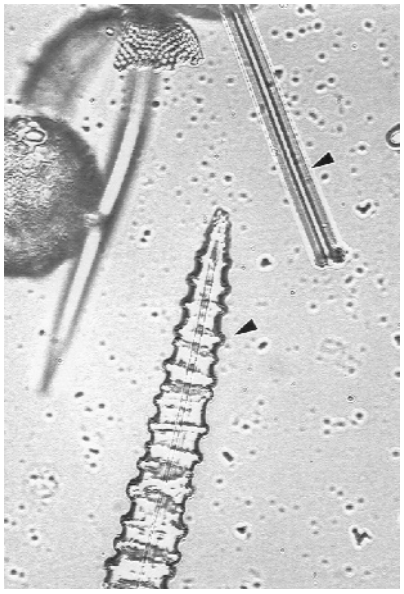
The Spicules of Sponges—A Photo Essay



In their natural or artificial forms, you use them every day to wash your car, your body and your dishes. Yet, do you really know that much about them? Sponges (Phylum Porifera) are considered by many scientists to be very ancient and primitive organisms. Boasting some 10,000 species, mostly marine varieties, they have no nervous system or musculature, but are comprised mostly of unique filter cells that are studded with whip-like cilia. Sponges have three general body layers, an outer layer of contractile type cells, an inner gelatinous layer, and a layer of ciliated cells. With these billions of cilia, all beating in unison, sponges can pump ten times their own body volume of water per hour, which they must do because they are filter feeders. Many sponges are very slow growing, and some scientists have estimated some of them to be 5.000 years old, making them possibly the oldest living individuals on the planet. Sponges also have an internal skeleton of sorts, made up of trillions of microscopic spicules, as you see pictured here in a variety of shapes.



Spicules are constructed of pure silica or glass (some varieties of sponges construct spicules of calcium carbonate). To quote the Queensland Museum,* "Sponges have no tissues or sensory organs, but they do have many different types of cells with many different functions that carry out normal bodily routines, including a primitive cell type (called an archaeocyte, an amoeboid-like cell), that is totipotent (able to change functions as required by the sponge, [e.g. secrete the skeleton, form the epidermis, become feeding or reproductive cells, etc.])." Unless you missed it, these tiny glass shapes are made by amoeba-like cells that have the ability to secrete pure glass into these amazing shapes. Primitive, indeed!



Mark Armitage, M.S.
Azusa Pacific University
P.O. Box 7000
Azusa, CA 91702-7000

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