

Subject: Science

Article: 27

ABOUT CONSCIOUSNESS

Doç. Dr. Haluk BERKMEN

The success of the scientific method gave rise to the reductionist science we know today –one in which everything in the universe can be explained in term of physical concepts. But reductionism has to have a limit. If one goes on reducing indefinitely, the result will be “**reductio in nihilum**” or ending up in an absurd nothingness. This is what happens in physics when one encounters singularities. Several “scientific” tricks are invented to circumvent such abhorred infinities. Examples are the method of **Renormalization** in Quantum Field Theory and the **Big Bang Model** of modern Cosmology. Renormalization is a method for getting rid of an `infinity` (a number divided by zero) by pushing the mathematical term into the next step of calculation, thus “sweeping the dirt under the carpet”, as Richard Feynman said about renormalization. The same is also valid for the Big Bang Model. It is claimed that there was **nothing** before the Big Bang. No time, no space, nothing. Thus the universe has appeared suddenly, thus “**creation ex nihilo**” (generation out of nothingness) is accepted scientifically. Reductionist science has to start from an initial hypothesis and build a rational model that fits our mind.

Let us examine the concept of **dimension**. The 1st dimension (a line-length) cannot be seen from the 1st dimension. In order to see a full line one has to be at least in the 2nd dimension (length & breadth). The same is valid for the 2nd dimension. In order to see a two-dimensional object one needs to be at least in the 3rd dimension, or in a space where length, breadth and height exists. Similarly, the 3rd dimension CANNOT BE viewed from the 3rd dimension! We must exist in the forth dimension.

The forth dimension is not the `time` as **Einstein** claimed but it is the **mind**. The external world comes into consciousness through the mind-brain cooperation. The physicist **Arthur Eddington** once said: “Mind is the first and most direct thing in our experience, and all else is remote inference –inference either intuitive or deliberate.” The sense of an “objective” world is the interaction of external energy waves with our internal mental model of what we form “out there”. The important point is that any experience that arises in consciousness is a subjective experience and is not solely part of an **independent** external world. This belief in an independent external world is generated by us through the society we live in and the culture we are part of.

The fact that we see a similar “objective” external world is only because we have been educated or rather indoctrinated –by the family and the school- into accepting a common world model. A similarity of models does not necessarily imply the uniformity of the world that gives rise to those models. "Perception" starts only after our brain fits the sensory inputs to the mental model of our mind. We then assign a name to our subjective experience or conclusion and include it into our so-called `objective reality`.

If we want to get a broader understanding of the world we must get rid of the dichotomy that accepts a subjective *mind* and an objective *not-mind*, an external world that is independent of the mind. Quantum Physics has already begun to recognize that the objective and the subjective cannot be separated. According to Quantum Mechanics the observer and the observed are united by a common "wave function". This is the Schrodinger representation, which claims that it is our observation that collapses the unified wave function, or rather the "energy wave" that creates a correlation between interacting entities.

We have to admit that there is only energy out there and that we are just local energy concentrations. The form of energy that I am talking about is more subjective than objective. This may not be proven by the materialistic approach of the reductionist logic. We need a new logic that is not separating the object from the subject, an inclusive logic that unites and brings together the mind with what we accept to be "not-mind".

The mind can function in two different levels. It can either be broad-minded and compassionate, or it can be narrow-minded and despotic. What is called "the Ego" is the despotic, narrow-minded guard that claims to protect us from "external" dangers. But if there is no such thing as an external independent reality, what in fact is our self-oriented ego doing? The Ego participates in everything that we know. It forms both our self-image and also everything that we claim to exist `out there`. It does not create the world, but it forms it. This is an important point. The world is not a pure illusion; it is the result of interacting energy waves –our own brain energy and external energy waves. We cooperate to create and apprehend the world.

The second level that our mind can function is the level of what can be called as "**Will**". The *Will* is our capacity of being aware. Animals have no *Will*; they only react to external stimuli as any object does. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. But the will is beyond reaction. It has the capacity to withhold and refrain. The *Will* is not what makes us conscious, it is what makes us **self-conscious**. It has been shown that only Chimps, Orangutans and humans can be self-conscious. This has to do with the capacity of the cortex. The more evolved is the cortex the more sophisticated is the level of self-consciousness. In this sense we can claim that all humans do not have the same level of awareness and therefore are not equally evolved. Awareness is not only the result of our brain capacity, but it is also the result of our *Will*. The more we are self-conscious the more we are evolved. "Evolution" is therefore not only a purely physical-biological mechanism where the fittest survives, but it is also the consequence of the consciousness that activates the *Will* in order to attain self-consciousness.

If the Ego takes control of the mind, we get a destructive and self-centered personality. If, on the other hand, the *Will* gets control of the mind, we get a compassionate and self-aware personality. A self-aware person knows that what is out-there is not disconnected from what is in-here. Therefore, if one can be self-conscious and capable in controlling the **Id** and the **Ego**, it will be very easy to understand and control the so-called "external reality". Eastern mystics claim that the most important task is to be able to control the self-centered Ego. Those who can achieve such a difficult task can enjoy a unified existence and can transcend the dichotomy of daily frictions.

Related Articles:

<http://www.halukberkmen.net/pdf/97.pdf>

<http://www.halukberkmen.net/pdf/277.pdf>