

Could Consciousness be a Fundamental Property of Matter? A Preliminary Hypothesis on Matter, Life and Consciousness

Jay Altizer

Publication Date: 2026/10/16

Abstract: This paper explores the possibility that consciousness may be a fundamental property of matter rather than a phenomenon that emerges exclusively from complex biological brains. The physical universe contains matter that forms molecules, living organisms, and human brains. Brain activity is closely associated with conscious experience, but questions remain about how physical processes give rise to subjective experience. This paper asks whether consciousness could be more fundamental to physical reality than currently established explanations suggest. It does not claim to prove that matter possesses consciousness or that current science has overlooked a discovery. Instead, it proposes a question for further philosophical analysis and scientific investigation.

How to Cite: Jay Altizer (2026) Could Consciousness be a Fundamental Property of Matter? A Preliminary Hypothesis on Matter, Life and Consciousness. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(10), 785-786.
<https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26oct594>

I. INTRODUCTION

The universe contains physical matter, including atoms and the particles that make up the world around us. Through physical and chemical processes, matter forms increasingly complex structures, including the biological systems associated with life.

Human beings experience consciousness: we perceive the world, have thoughts, experience sensations, and possess a subjective perspective.

This raises an important question: How does physical matter give rise to subjective experience?

One possibility is that consciousness emerges when matter becomes organized into sufficiently complex systems, such as brains. Another possibility is that consciousness, or a basic precursor of experience, is a fundamental feature of reality that does not originate exclusively with biological complexity.

This paper explores the second possibility.

II. THE CENTRAL HYPOTHESIS

Consciousness may be a fundamental property of matter, rather than something that arises exclusively from complex biological organization.

If this hypothesis is worth pursuing, we must clarify what it means. It does not necessarily suggest that atoms think, that rocks have human emotions, or that all physical objects possess minds like ours.

Instead, it asks whether the foundations of consciousness might be present in physical reality in a form much more basic than the conscious experiences of animals and humans.

This idea resembles a philosophical position known as panpsychism. Panpsychism has several versions, and this paper does not claim to establish that any particular version is correct.

➤ *The Relationship Between Matter, Life, and Consciousness*

The hypothesis begins with three observations:

- First, living organisms are physical systems. Their structures and functions depend on matter and physical processes.
- Second, human consciousness is closely associated with the brain. Changes in brain activity can alter perception, memory, attention, and other aspects of conscious experience.
- Third, explaining the physical mechanisms associated with consciousness is not necessarily the same as explaining why those mechanisms are accompanied by subjective experience.

These observations motivate the question of whether consciousness is entirely an emergent phenomenon or whether physical reality has a more fundamental relationship with experience. However, the fact that matter forms conscious organisms does not, by itself, demonstrate that matter has consciousness in simpler forms. That possibility requires further argument and evidence.

➤ *Questions for Further Investigation*

This hypothesis raises several questions:

- Is subjective experience fully explainable through physical processes, or are important explanatory questions unresolved?
- Could consciousness be a fundamental feature of reality, as some philosophical theories propose?
- If basic forms of experience exist, how could they relate to the unified consciousness of a human brain?
- What observations or experiments could distinguish a fundamental-consciousness hypothesis from theories in which consciousness emerges from complex biological systems?
- Could the hypothesis produce testable predictions that differ from existing scientific explanations?

These questions are important because a philosophical possibility is not automatically a scientific theory. To become scientifically useful, the hypothesis would need clearer definitions and, ideally, predictions that can be evaluated against evidence.

III. LIMITATIONS

This paper does not present experimental results demonstrating consciousness in atoms or other nonliving matter.

It also does not establish that consciousness exists independently of brains, nor does it claim that scientists have failed to explain every aspect of consciousness.

The hypothesis faces substantial challenges, including the question of how elementary forms of experience could combine into a unified conscious mind. It must also be compared with existing theories and assessed against the available evidence.

These limitations are reasons for further investigation rather than reasons to assume the hypothesis is true.

IV. CONCLUSION

The relationship between matter and consciousness remains an important topic in philosophy of mind and consciousness research.

This paper proposes investigating whether consciousness might be a fundamental feature of physical reality rather than a phenomenon that emerges exclusively from complex biological organization.

The purpose is not to declare a discovery but to formulate a question that can be examined through philosophical reasoning, engagement with existing research, and the development of possible empirical tests.

Feedback from researchers in neuroscience, philosophy of mind, and consciousness studies could help determine

whether this hypothesis offers a useful direction for further inquiry.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Goff, Philip, William Seager, and Sean Allen-Hermanson. "Panpsychism." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. A survey of panpsychism, its arguments, and its challenges.
- [2]. Dehaene, Stanislas. *Consciousness and the Brain: Deciphering How the Brain Codes Our Thoughts*. Viking, 2014. A scientific account of research into the neural basis of consciousness.
- [3]. Chalmers, David J. "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness." *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1995, pp. 200-219. A discussion of the challenge of explaining subjective experience.