

Models of Consciousness
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Consciousness and the Theory of Brain-Sign

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There is no question a brain phenomenon exists, commonly supposed as consciousness. But there is no scientifically agreed definition of it, or what it does. If the universe is wholly physical, it is incumbent upon any theory to demonstrate how consciousness can be physical and what precise role it plays in brain function.

In recent years I have proposed that consciousness be replaced by *brain-sign*. Brain-sign, the brain phenomenon, arises moment-by-moment from the *causal orientation* of the brain as interpreted by the brain. Its biophysical role is to facilitate communication between brains in collective action by establishing the common features of the world of the joint causal orientations, for brains are physical organs isolated in the body. Thus the world of action comes into being; but it is of course a neural construct.

Mental states are a prescientific myth, and their pursuit by neuroscience is counterproductive. The supposition that (for example) we ‘see’ as a mental faculty, or the brain sees, are errors. But it is not that the brain phenomenon is an illusion, as some authors propose, or that the brain tricks us. As yet science offers no appropriate model. Once established, mathematics is of use.

Brains are causal organs, not knowledge organs. In evolutionary development, the ability of isolated brains to communicate in joint action has improved survival chances, and facilitated inter-organism behavioural complexity, which in humans has transformed command of the environment, particularly in the last four hundred years with the emergence of science.

Explication of the theory does not involve the problematic notion of subjectivity. There is no mental world. The supposed mental subject, the ‘sense’ that we exist and command our actions, is each brain’s identification of *this* organism in joint behavioural action. That is, it is part of the communication of brains and, as a sign, potentially identifiable in brain structure. (Signs are intrinsically physical and biologically ubiquitous.) Thus the presentation outline demonstrates that the process of interaction can be described in wholly scientific terms. Indeed, it is the fact of brain-sign that allows the communication of science itself.

The three components of brain-sign are (1) categories-of-the-world, (2) categories-of-interaction, and (3) brain-sign language. Each is derived from the causal orientation, and are established from infancy. They have no causal power for the host organism, but are the means of interneural communication. The first establishes the world of interaction; the second portrays the reaction of the organism to the world, including itself as organism; the third is the means of altering another brain’s causal orientation. All these elements arise moment-by-moment from the brain’s causal orientation. They coexist, but they are not, as unconscious mental states, an alternative domain. How this takes place is *the* question for neuroscience.