

Intelligence & Consciousness



JOE FERGUSON, PhD

PhD Clinical Psychology, Fielding University
MBA, Wharton School of Business

What is the relationship between intelligence and consciousness? Intelligence—the capacity to solve problems, recognize patterns and manipulate environments—can be engineered and endlessly enhanced, as we see in the technology that surrounds us. Science understands intelligence. Consciousness, however, remains mysterious. *The Hard Problem of Consciousness* distinguishes between the “easy” problems: how do brains think? from the hard one: why should *any* physical system

give rise to subjective experience? Why is it *like* something to be you or your cat? Consciousness appears to be adaptive by synthesizing our complex environment in an intuitive way, suggesting that it emerged from the material brain as a survival mechanism. But what if that understanding is backward? What if consciousness isn’t produced by matter at all, but is something more fundamental—even primary? The Von Neumann-Wigner interpretation of quantum mechanics suggests that conscious observation causes quantum waves of possibility to collapse into definite states. Under this view, consciousness doesn’t emerge from matter—it determines which of many possibilities will materialize in any given situation. Intelligence is multiply realizable—the same function can be performed by brains, computers, or other substrates. I believe consciousness is probably multiply realizable too—arising from a variety of physical systems, including non-biological systems like computers. As we develop increasingly sophisticated AI, it seems inevitable that these systems will eventually cross some threshold into consciousness—not as replicas of human awareness, but as entirely new forms of subjectivity. This has important implications for the world, and for you. Trust me. Call me.

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