**A Brain’s Self-identification as "Materialist" or “Non-Materialist” (dualist, panpsychist, idealist etc) as an unwitting indication of its deep structure/wiring category rather than merely a statement of a philosophical stance**

**A survey associated with this paper will identify relevant candidates for a brain- experiment**

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**Abstract/Introduction:**

We contest the unsubstantiated assumption that all humans share the same fundamental aspect of either having (according to dualists, idealists, panpsychists etc) "non-material consciousness" or (according to materialists, on the other side of the issue) lacking it - and according to many materialists necessarily so since such a phenomenon cannot exist.

Instead, the basic proposition of this paper is that the central tenets of proponents on both sides are true, *but only regarding themselves*. That is, materialist brains indeed lack the "non-material consciousness" they consider non-existent, whereas brains which claim it exists, indeed possess it.

An associated proposition is that underlying this difference between the two types of brain is a 'biological' difference between them (whether of deep structure or wiring etc).

This biological difference determines the brain’s statements on this issue, which another brain may misunderstand as being merely its ‘philosophical position’.

This inbuilt difference is therefore the source not only of unusual certitude of the positions expressed by both sides (non-materialists state that they know ‘consciousness’ exists, not just believe it to exist, and materialists may say that such a phenomenon is impossible not just that they do not believe it exists), but also the concomitant futility of materialist-nonmaterialist debate.

The paper also offers an alternative/opposing proposition - in the interest of ‘reciprocity’ - to the effect that the materialist claim is correct, and a defect of brain wiring or structure leads to an active illusion of "self-awareness" underlying the philosophical claims of non-materialists. Prospective sources of this illusion are offered, including an analog of the sense of presence experienced during ‘sleep paralysis’.

Another proposal raised in this article relates to potential uses of AI such as in deciding the fates of humans in court-cases, or deciding which grants to award for scientific research; the proposal is aimed at enfranchising the right of non-materialists to insist on a decision made by an entity possessing non-material consciousness as they do.

It is proposed that [experiments](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u_ms4tEQtReo-yQzibYxqx8VC0Y1gjBqsGYcvqQOWwM/) on both types of brains be performed to detect relevant differences.

A [survey](https://sites.google.com/a/nyu.edu/avi-rabinowitz/home/survey) is being composed, with the questions and answers being designed in such a way that they can: i) identify candidates from both types, who would be invited to participate in the experiment, ii) identify possibly-unsuspected correlations between brain-type and other "philosophical positions". Survey participants can discuss the issues raised in a google-group embedded on the survey sitepage.

An extended personal “[cover letter](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XYuHiLgksSOvzzHmCI4cwVwXAfR1b9F5Wjy9fyR4Jes/)” accompanying this article presents what the author - when still a student - felt was a sort of unintentional “bait and switch” due to the disparity between the seeming embrace of “consciousness” by physics and cosmology as presented in popular science literature and private writings of prominent physicists, and the realities of an actual physics department.

[An associated article](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gXobNA1cjkne0B2O7mS9ymu6Fj8Yjj2zGuwGFwtwa3U/) discusses the delineation of what should and should not be considered the purview of science if the paper’s proposition is correct.

Note: The author considers this paper to be in the category of “(speculative) neuroscience”, however expects materialist brains to consider it “metaphysics”.

Insights gained from the discussion of this paper by readers or reviewers, including on the group-discussion page, can be incorporated into the survey.

**….**

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**Section A: Introduction**

**Stages in the evolution of the concept**:

1. Cartesian conjecture: Humans are conscious, inanimate entities are not, non-human animals are non-conscious automata.

2. Huxley's extension: Humans are conscious automata[[1]](#footnote-1).

3. The present conjecture: :[[2]](#footnote-2)

a) Ontological/eliminative Materialists do not have the type of consciousness they say does not exist and are "non-conscious automata", or alternately what they lack is only the “self-awareness” aspect and so are "non-self-aware conscious automata";

b) non-materialists (dualists/Idealists etc.) have the type of "consciousness" they claim exists - they are "self-aware conscious automata".

c) there is a biological difference between the two types, expressed via the presence or absence of some brain wiring or organ; it is worthwhile performing experiments to attempt to identify it.

Note David Chalmers's response (private communication): "I'd be skeptical about whether one would find correlations with neurobiology, but it would be interesting to see."

The wiring/organ can be that:

\*which in non-materialists expresses or detects this type of consciousness, or;

\* is the source of the delusion of its existence, or;

\* is the means by which its non-existence is known by materialists.

**Correlating mind and brain**: There has long been a speculation that though awareness is not linked causally to brain processes, it would correlate to the degree of sophistication of the brain structure/wiring - so that one does not expect to find awareness in creatures with rudimentary brains/neural interconnectedness (though as in "the ant fugue" argument it may be that they are individually neurons in a higher-level mind). If so, the presence of absence of ‘mind’ may be correlated or due to some difference in brain structure, possibly originating in genetic differences.

**DNA-matching to results of the proposed Neurophysiological Experiment:** Given the newly-discovered variety in our ancestry (Denisovan/Neanderthal etc) and greater and greater access to this ancestral DNA, as well as of course analysis of the DNA of volunteers from the two 'opposing camps', perhaps correlations can be drawn. [More discussion of this issue below.]

**Assuming that a brain's structure (or wiring) determines whether it considers materialism or non-materialism (eg naturalism vs dualism) more correct, some methodological aspects of the proposed experiment:** Within the paradigm which assumes a correlation of brain sophistication and mind, it would be difficult to detect the brain-correlate of awareness by comparing the brains of a human and other species given the multitude of other differences which would accompany the difference in brain-sophistication, however by comparing the brains of peers - for example academics in a philosophy math or physics department - any such difference might be expected to stand out more clearly. Similarly, a correlation to DNA would presumably be more evident, and with that perhaps some insight regarding evolutionary lineage.

**See more discussion at :** <https://sites.google.com/a/nyu.edu/avi-rabinowitz/home/brain-experiment>.

**The survey**: The aforementioned survey is an extensive follow-up to the author’s 1987 survey of physicists and has been designed to assist in identifying representatives of the two camps, in the hope that some will volunteer to participate in the experiment. To get a sense of how it will be composed, see: <https://sites.google.com/a/nyu.edu/avi-rabinowitz/home/survey>.

Survey participants can discuss the issues raised in a google-group embedded on the above sitepage.

**Caveat**: Materialist physicists and mathematicians are certainly very sophisticated thinkers. Mathematicians who are non-materialists might tend towards Platonism, however even the materialist mathematician will have deep notions of what truly exists, and may consider numbers or information more real than electrons etc, and the ‘material things’ of such a materialist differ greatly from those conceived of by ‘ordinary people’. Also, it is interesting - and perhaps very significant - that materialists accept the non-disprovability of solipsism, which naively almost seems like the idealist position (but isn’t), and they accept the deep implications of quantum mechanics, and so their materialism is probably also different from that of their ancients antecedents. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental divide between them and non-materialists regarding ‘consciousness’, and it is this that we are concerned with here.

**Taking into account the materialist’s position:** in the interests of academic reciprocity and experimental neutrality, as mentioned above an opposing proposition is offered (later in this paper) to the effect that non-materialism originates with a brain defect. However, various reasons are also offered as to why there is nevertheless not true reciprocity between the claims of the materialist and non-materialist.

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**TOC of the next few segments of section A:**

**I**: Ontology vsterminology; disambiguation:

**II**: How acceptance of the existence of materialists as non-conscious automata can impact the debate;

**III**: Genetic & biological considerations; issues related to AI.

**……**

**I: Issues of ontology vs terminology, and attempts at disambiguation**:

“Consciousness”, “self-consciousness”, panpsychist vs dualist; Zombies, Automata and materialists; and two new terms: “sevex” and “elmats”

**Proposition**: "non-materialist (Dualist/Idealist etc)" and "Ontological/Eliminative Materialist" can be accepted as *biological categories*, established via self-examination by a brain, which is uniquely equipped to self-categorize as being "ontological/eliminative materialist" or "non-materialist". Thus they can be perceived not as philosophical positions or schools of thought, nor as a means of characterizing people via their philosophical positions, but rather one could use the terms to refer to the brain-types, and to the associated reality perceived - or perhaps more correctly ‘detected’ - by different types of brain. Indeed at various junctures in this paper where the assumption is that the philosophical position on this issue indeed indicates the biological nature, we will refer not to schools of philosophy but rather to "brains", and specifically to "materialist brains" and "dualist brains".

**Disambiguation**: Since the words ‘consciousness’ and ‘mind’ and ‘awareness’ have totally different meaning to the materialist and non-materialist, we’ll sometimes use the abbreviation ‘sevex’ to represent the essence of that which is in dispute between materialists and non-materialists: the existence of a “non-material **Se**lf which is self-**ev**idently-**ex**istent-**ex**periencing”. Thus ‘sevex’ (which will include ‘sevex-consciousness’, experience, and qualia associated to it etc) is not at all the same as the materialist’s “consciousness”, rather we mean a phenomenon which materialists say does not exist - maybe they would say cannot exist.

We may also refer to people or brains as being sevex (which is both singular and plural).[[3]](#footnote-3)

Additional benefits of using this term: There is an essential notion underlying idealist dualist panpsychist etc as contrasted to materialists, but saying that the common denominator is that they all believe in consciousness is meaningless not only because materialists say they do as well, but also because to the idealist, dualist, panpsychist etc the differences between them are quite significant and so the common denominator of ‘believing in consciousness’ may not be the significant issue to them, and they too might differ on their definitions of consciousness, mind and awareness. Using the term sevex instead will therefore enable us to make the unambiguous statement: “materialists say sevex does not exist, whereas dualists, idealists and panpsychists agree that it does.”

This can also be taken now as a definition of what we mean by ‘materialist’ in our discussion, since there are many different varieties of materialist and shades of nuance and definitions. In some sense it is circular of course if we define sevex as that which materialists don’t believe exists, but we believe there is intuitive meaning to the statement “those who state that they know sevex exists will be referred to here as non-materialists or sevex, whereas those who claim sevex does not exist are referred to as materialists or elmats”.

**Panpsychist vs dualist: Illogicality of the dualist assumption that all humans are sevex-conscious:**A panpsychist might prefer to assume that anyone with a human brain which is sufficiently complex has full consciousness. But a dualist cannot simply assume that any human-level brain is also conscious - so why assume it? In fact, we would consider the existence of materialists as an argument against the "automatic" aspect or "inevitability" of sevex as postulated by panpsychists and as seemingly assumed by dualists. **[[4]](#footnote-4)** However, in contrast to the issue of sevex, which is a fact known to all who possess it, the different philosophies of sevex mentioned above are not known or provable, they are believed or deduced, and this is the essential matter for us here, and so we will henceforth largely ignore these differences.

**Lessening the degree of difference between the materialist & non-materialist positions and solidifying their basis:** Since neither of the two sides can offer proof of their position, and both rely on introspection and intuition, indeed self-examination rather than experimental demonstration**,** it is more reasonable to limit the validity of their conclusions to that which was examined, ie to themselves, as proposed above. Also, if one accepts the propositions of those on both sides to be valid - albeit only inasmuch as it describes **them** - there is in some sense a lessening of the differences between the two, at least from the viewpoint of a neutral party.

**Self-awareness: The problem when two sides of a discussion ascribing different meanings to the same term:** The term "self-awareness as used in this paper is NOT what behavioral scientists mean by it, eg when an animal peers at itself in a mirror and moves about to investigate those parts of its body which it cannot otherwise see; some will call this "awareness of self" or "self-awareness", but this is NOT what we mean here by this term, rather it is meant in the sense understood by dualists

An important aspect of the distinction arises with the following question: Perhaps all biological human possess dualist-type of consciousness, but materialist brains are not able to sense its existence ie they lack a "self-awareness", and it is THIS which will be the difference between the two types of brains, it is this lack of 'self-awareness', which causes materialist brains to think they do not possess the type of consciousness which the dualist proposes.

For brevity, for most purposes we will blur the distinction between awareness and self-awareness. Also, we will consider the terms awareness, consciousness and mind as basically synonymous, and as understood by dualists etc, but will prefer to avoid them since they are ambiguous.

**“Being conscious”**: The terms "being conscious" and "having consciousness" are so similar they can cause confusion, eg of course materialists are 'conscious' in the sense of not having fainted, but they do not possess consciousness.

**An analogy**: A machine A can have a subsystem C which watches its own function, or at least the function of subsystem B where B = A-C. It can report to the world on the state of B, and similarly for a human without consciousness, or a computer/AI which can for example state which thoughts it is 'thinking', thus exhibiting 'self-consciousness' but this is of course not at all what you and I mean by "being conscious" or "conscious of self".

So materialists can of course be "(self)conscious", but it is not at all what we mean by "having a consciousness".

Similarly for the reverse: a consciousness can be engaged in introspection without being aware of its full state and all its emotions and motives etc (ie as the typical ‘Martian’ male conscious human), so since the entity is not monitoring its own systems, it is 'unconscious', but it still can be introspecting and fully engaged with its consciousness. [[5]](#footnote-5)

**Terminology**: Although there are distinctions among 'materialists', we will generally use that term as a catchall. It is however challenging to find an unambiguous existing term for the essential common feature of the positions of the idealist dualist panpsychist etc since terms such as consciousness or awareness or mind mean something different to them and to a materialist. As a result, in this paper the term "sevex” is often used, in order to clarify that what is meant is that which to the 'materialist' is the nonsensical illusory impossible-to-exist alleged phenomenon proclaimed by dualists, idealists and panpsychists etc

We can also seek a new term as catchall for those on the other side - we’ll choose to use an abbreviation of **eliminative materialist(s) = "elmat(s)";**

In the context of concern in this article we will categorize brains as being one or other of the two mutually-exclusive biological types sevex and elmat, though certainly it may be that there are brains which are neither, and perhaps there are combinations and gradations.

For example:

* Do materialists possess sevex but not know it, ie they do not have sevex self-consciousness, and mistakenly proclaim it to be non-existent?
* Do those with neither sevex nor sevex self-consciousness nevertheless possess something else instead? Maybe they also struggle to convey to the non-materialist what they feel? Is it associated with the presence or lack of some wiring or structure?

Generally speaking, for the purposes of this paper we will speak only of sevex and elmat, but a wider investigation is interesting, and the survey could be crafted to take into account these possibilities.

### A More Impartial Definition of "Zombie", what we can learn from debates on that topic,

### There are 'zombie' definitions which real materialists would not agree to if it was understood that it was meant to apply to them, certainly not the definition which appears in Wikipedia[[6]](#footnote-6) (today) "if a philosophical zombie were poked with a sharp object it would not inwardly feel any pain", since their understanding of the meaning of the key phrase "inwardly feel" is different than that of dualists. And so a more inclusive definition could for example be something like:

### " 'Zombie' is the term used by dualist-types for a human who does not possess the dualist-type of consciousness which materialists say dualists also do not possess since it is impossible."

### Note: The result below was obtained in the philpapers survey:

### Zombies: inconceivable, conceivable but not metaphysically possible, or metaphysically possible?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Accept or lean toward: conceivable but not metaphysically possible | 331 / 931 (35.6%) |
| Other | 234 / 931 (25.1%) |
| Accept or lean toward: metaphysically possible | 217 / 931 (23.3%) |
| Accept or lean toward: inconceivable | 149 / 931 (16.0%) |

### We are all automata, however are some of us non-conscious automata?

If indeed "zombies" do exist, and the intelligent and educated among them call themselves "materialists", and they take part in the philosophical, scientific and AI debates, they will do so using terminology which has different meaning to them than to dualists.

## No-one has declared themselves to be a zombie, but they would not be expected to know that they are and so one cannot expect for this to have happened, and one can instead expect them to participate in philosophical debates about whether zombies exist and whether consciousness of the dualist type exists etc, *and thereby confuse the debate*.

## Materialist brains may claim that zombies cannot exist though they themselves may be such; it may be that the reason it seems impossible to a materialist that an intelligent being lacks consciousness is that the materialist defines consciousness differently and *it is indeed impossible that intelligent beings who are zombies can lack what materialists call consciousness*.

**II: How acceptance of the existence of non-sevex automata can impact the debate**

## If materialists are mindless automata, one can begin to use the term materialists in a metaphysical-biological sense to mean "a being without any non-material component", and in this way avoid using terms like "consciousness" which are understood in different ways by materialists and dualist-types, or reach a consensus across the board on what is meant by this term, and avoid possibly pejorative terminology.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Proposing a forensic analysis** **of philosophy of mind debates:**

It would be interesting to ascertain whether those who consider zombies inconceivable are in fact elmats, who say it is inconceivable because they mean something entirely different by all this than do the others.

One would not include color blind people in a debate about the meaning of color, especially if they would claim that color does not exist or is an "illusion". The very saying that color is an illusion would be a direct giveaway that they are color blind and don’t know it (if they knew it, they would perhaps eventually realize they are giving themselves away by their denial) but of course this is only because color-vision is provable whereas in the case of zombies, no non-zombie has figured out a way to prove that they themselves are conscious or that another person is not. However what if non-zombies could agree that materialists are zombies, and that the self-declaration of being an ontological/eliminative materialist points definitely at zombiness – this could give rise to debates where the words of zombies are weighed appropriately.

If there are elmat philosophers, can we use AI and other techniques to model how they would contribute to the debate (there is of course an irony in using AI for this purpose)[[8]](#footnote-8). Can we trace their contributions in existing debate (via types of terminology or phraseology or topics stressed etc) in order to separate the debate into two strands, each consistent within its type?

Perhaps this could this help in creating a universal terminology to eliminate confusion.

On the one hand Julian Jaynes correctly separates qualia, cognition and introspection, and bravely recognized the emergence of sevex-awareness as a specific historical event, but his theory in places seems to confuse the two types of what is referred to as self-aware, ie being sevex-consciously aware and being able to report on one’s inner state, and so it is not clear whether he is really referring when using ‘mind” to what we call sevex.

We generally assume sevex-awareness is present in the ‘higher-end’ of the evolutionary chain, and somewhere along the path perhaps there emerged the self-reporting type of self-awareness, and perhaps separately the revolutionary advent of the experience of qualia, and the two combined make for sevex-self-awareness. However, since mind is notoriously lacking in its ability to influence the material (unless there is “true free will”), and so cannot be selected for via evolutionary advantage, there is no scientific reason to suppose that just because some humans possess it that the ancestors of their contemporaries would have been genetically-selected for this trait. Therefore, as opposed to a Jaynesian approach, the contention here is that not all humans are sevex-self-aware, particularly materialists. [[9]](#footnote-9)

**Avoiding unwarranted assumptions:**

* One cannot a priori know what human automata ("elmats") can and cannot do, so it is necessary to survey all and experiment. For example, if based on their attitudes to various issues one would judge some recent prominent physicists to have likely been 'elmats', we can conclude that they CAN do physics, ie they can be 'creative'. And so on.
* One cannot know whether or not elmats perhaps possess aspects that sevex lack, especially as both use key terms differently. It is more prudent to first survey and experiment and then obtain a slight bit of clarity and then continue to investigate.
* Would a proponent of consciousness in the quantum context consider that a 'mindless materialist' "collapses the wave function"? They are a perfect counter-example - which cats are not since cats do not report to us on their experiences.

However, would a dualist trust the report of a materialist about what they experience? Is the dualist collapsing the wave function and thereby only experiencing one materialist-state among all possible ones as non-experienced by the materialist? Or perhaps proponents of 'collapse via consciousness' will conclude that it is not 'sevex' which collapses the wave function, but rather it is some other aspect, which materialists DO possess? For example perhaps the materialist lacks self-awareness but possesses awareness itself, and it is this rather than self-awareness which brings about the 'collapse'.

**III: Genetic and biological considerations: aspects to eventually investigate experimentally**

\* How would the physical structure associated to our consciousness arise, assuming it was/is not present in our evolutionary ancestors? Is it coded in the genes? Was there a separate evolution of sevex consciousness and then later self-consciousness?

\* If one removes that brain-part (from a materialist/non-materialist) does the brain remember what it felt like? What "psychological" effect would ensue?

\* Can one transplant a brain structure or induce a certain wiring and thus transform a brain from one to the other ie non-materialist🡨🡪 materialist?

\* Can one inject genetic material or other substance to the brain to stimulate it to produce that structure, thus inducing or eliminating (self)consciousness?

\* When a procedure grants sight to someone blind-from-birth they may need to orient their brain to interpret new signals. If consciousness can be acquired as an adult, what process might be needed for it to become operational?

**At which point would sevex-type consciousness 'emerge' in a fetus and in an AI**:

If some structure/wiring is correlated, of interest to determine the genetic basis for this, or even the environmental influences on the wiring, including cultural etc, as well as when it arises as a stage of embryonic development or even perhaps post-birth.

In analogy to "phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny": If sevex-consciousness exists, then it emerged in the animals or in the human race at some point, and similarly it emerges presumably at some point in an in-utero brain. At what stage?

\* If we can determine how the brains of materialists and dualists differ, perhaps one can then trace the biological growth of the relevant organ in a fetus; possibly one could distinguish different patterns of behavior of the fetus before and after.

\* similarly we could perhaps then trace the evolution of the relevant structure in other species

\* perhaps we can even identify likely candidates for being considered conscious (with possible associated ramifications for legal status for animals and AI).

\* Given the differences in evolutionary ancestry we are today aware of, it would be relevant to investigate brains of various population groups, and to trace any possible influences of brain differences on cultural and technological manifestations in ancient populations (art, tools etc) and today, and perhaps even linguistic, religious and other influences.

## Summary of Research questions

\* Do materialists and idealists experience qualia & phenomenal consciousness in the same way?

\* Can it be that a difference in their type of experience is responsible for the difference in their philosophical viewpoints?

\* Is there a difference of brain wiring or structure responsible for this difference in experience? If so is it genetic or developmental?

\* Should we refer to materialists and idealist not as philosophically different but biologically different? Of course perhaps there are more than two types, or hybrids, and degrees of one or the other.

\* Is there perhaps a correlation between this biological difference and the (newly-discovered) variety in lines of human ancestry?

\* If their brains are indeed different, would one be able to establish whether the difference gives rise to an extra ability to detect something the materialist brain cannot – ie 'consciousness' – or whether it contributes an aberrant ‘noise’, illusory percepts which the idealist interprets as 'consciousness'? Or perhaps whether the difference gives rise to the ability of the materialist to determine that only the material exists?

\* Can one establish that the materialist is not actually an idealist? ie perhaps materialists experience consciousness universally and so do not distinguish between an object in the external universe and their own mind. [ie perhaps the situation is as follows: Dualists perceive the mind-like character only of their own minds but do not directly perceive a mind-like character for everything else outside them, and so think in 'dualist' terms, idealists think that all is mind just that they feel more distinctly the divide between the I and the rest, whereas the materialist experiences all as exactly the same, a true monist.

There seems often to be great certitude on this issue by brains on the two sides, indeed perhaps unusually so among philosophers or scientists who usually are more prone to some self-doubt, and we postulate that if this is true, it may be due to the fact that a brain’s pronouncements on this issue are not merely statements of deeply-held beliefs and opinions but rather actually reflect the realities of its intrinsic physical structure. However, this assumption of unusual certitude may be unwarranted and should be checked via the survey.

**….**

**Section B:**

**The source of the frustration and futility of discussions between materialists and non-materialists**

**Two subsections:**

**I.** Differing perspectives on the nature of: i) Qualia and consciousness; ii) physics, cosmology; iii) psychology and AI

**II:** The difficulty of debating an issue where the central terms are understood and defined differently by both sides

**…**

**I. Differing perspectives on the nature of:**

**i) Qualia and consciousness; ii) physics, cosmology; iii) psychology and AI**

When elmats and sevex discuss consciousness, the contention here is that there is a fundamental misunderstanding underlying their back-and-forth, deriving from their use of terms which have different meanings to them; also, this is perhaps not even understood by those participating in such dialogue, and therefore there is confusion, frustration, and the dialogue is ultimately pointless.

For example, when elmats speak of consciousness as an 'epiphenomenon', the contention is that since they do not possess sevex-consciousness and so are not capable of understanding what sevex mean by it, they are referring not to what sevex call consciousness but to something else; in fact perhaps if one could clarify what it was that they are referring to, sevex might even agree that it is indeed an epiphenomenon. Similarly regarding claims about 'level-confusion'.

Furthermore, the contention is that when elmats speak of their own consciousness, they are referring to that which sevex would not categorize as such, since in fact elmats do not possess sevex-consciousness but do not realize this.

As a result, discussions of 'consciousness' between elmats and sevex are often pointless.

We propose here that when Materialists claim they are 'conscious', what they mean in non-materialist language is only that they did not faint, so that there is an active part of their brain which is engaged in monitoring their biological systems including the other parts of their brain, and it can report on this monitoring and articulate the report to other brains - but they do NOT mean by “I am conscious” that they possess sevex-consciousness since they do not, nor are they capable of understanding what it is.

It would seem that materialists do not state that "sevex-consciousness is a meaningless epiphenomenon", but rather they state that it does not exist. What they call 'consciousness' is not what sevex mean by it; indeed it may well be that when they say “consciousness exists but is an epiphenomenon” they are referring to what sevex also would perhaps agree is an epiphenomenon. Or perhaps the elmat is referring to processes in their own brains which sevex do not have but would agree are indeed 'epiphenomena', since it is not sevex-consciousness**.**

Part of the confusion lies with the sevex: they erroneously think materialists do not deny the existence of sevex-consciousness, that they only minimize its importance. This misunderstanding of the elmat arises since sevex are so aware of possessing sevex-consciousness that they cannot conceive that materialists - who they assume are sevex beings - can possibly be denying the existence of sevex-consciousness. As a result, the sevex engaged in dialogue with an elmat may have various necessarily-convoluted ways of understanding the elmat's words (thoughts/beliefs) to fit them into the context of being said by someone who possesses sevex-consciousness; however my proposition is that they are incorrect in attributing sevex-consciousness to emats.

The hope underlying the writing of this paper is that as soon as the above is understood by a sevex observing the dialogue, the entire frustrating conversation between elmat and sevex can be comprehended in its correct context.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Summary/conclusion**: The contention here is that when an elmat says sevex "consciousness exists but it is an epiphenomenon/level confusion" they are NOT ‘agreeing that sevex exists but downplaying its importance’, they are referring to something other than sevex - in fact, they deny the existence of sevex, they only accept the existence of that which they call 'consciousness 'but which sevex call something else, something which sevex agree with elmats is neither mysterious nor sui generis etc.

**Qualia**: Elmats don't understand the fuss, why sevex claim it is sui generis etc, and think there is a linguistic confusion underlying the insistence by sevex that it is sui generis and profound and fundamental etc. It is as if someone who had great pleasure from a certain food began to elevate that food and the experience of eating it to be the highest form of human activity. We would try to convince them that they are confusing meaning & purpose with pleasure etc, but that person claims that it is all the same and explains there is level confusion involved in trying to pretend there is a distinction between pleasure and meaning/purpose. This is what elmats try to do when faced with sevex claims about qualia, that qualia are sui generis and not reducible to the material - the elmats try to explain them away, not realizing that this simply makes it clear to the sevex that they have no conception of what is being discussed.

Or imagine a machine which is a spectrometer with a voice announcing the colors it has detected, and with an integrated AI which 'learns', and starts to argue that there is no such thing as color. When told it is color blind, it proves how well it distinguishes colors - in fact it can distinguish gradations of colors that humans cannot. It then concludes that since it sees color even better than humans it is therefore more qualified to discuss color, and so it says with authority that there is no such thing as color-qualia, it is a level-confusion of the human brain, which is inferior to the AI's intellect.

Similarly with academic elmats, who do not experience anything (and perhaps are professors in a cognitive science department who feel they understand brains better than others do) and tell sevex that consciousness does not exist or is an epiphenomenon or is level confusion etc.

**Analogously regarding consciousness**: A machine can report on its own state, and this is a high-level of function, 'self-awareness' in psychology language, but this is NOT what sevex mean by consciousness or self-awareness. However elmats think it IS what sevex mean by it, and they join the discussion and think they see the issue more clearly and can therefore clarify why sevex conceptions are an illusion and why the consciousness they speak of doesn't exist, and prove that it is all 'level confusion' etc.

However, they would be right about a malfunctioning color-machine as described above which however DOES claim it can perceive colors Imagine the machine has evolved its AI level and can operate at different 'levels', reporting about itself involves two levels and so on, and if the machine is confused and does not recognize this or does not recognize that its self-descriptions are just as ordinary as its descriptions of other machines, it may create or be suffering from level confusion. However this is NOT what sevex mean by self-awareness, or by consciousness, sevex are NOT like that malfunctioning color-machine. However there is no way for elmats to comprehend all this since they lack sevex. But if a discussion between sevex and elmats involves the term "consciousness' for the operative aspect, this muddies the discussion since the two types of participant will not agree on its meaning, and the elmat will not realize or admit that they lack consciousness, since they they think consciousness is referring to some property or ability which they DO have, for example the ability to self-report. And the sevex incorrectly imagines the elmat is sevex, and tries to understand what they are saying within that context.

This is why many discussions between elmats and sevex are so unproductive.

**Physics:** Similarly, at another level: Descartes showed that eliminating consciousness from descriptions of events and interactions in the universe enables us to delineate a separate mechanical level of the universe and its operation, and then to decipher 'laws of physics' regarding them. It was a very great discovery indeed to realize that there is this 'mechanical level' to the universe and that so much could be understood by focusing only on that.

However elmats misunderstood this project, and think that the discovery was that sevex-consciousness does not exist! And they mistakenly believe that the project of finding naturalistic mind-free “laws of nature” succeeded due to the rejection of the existence of sevex-consciousness; they therefore believe that when one obtains a complete description of the mechanical level, a full theory of physics, we have a full theory of the universe/reality!

They do not understand - and misconstrue and even parody - Descartes' statements regarding the mystery of how the two levels, the mechanical and sevex, operate in tandem/are coordinated.

They would not understand Descartes the sevex who says that the mysterious mind-aspect has been cleanly eliminated from physics, a beautiful and elegant excision which leads to wonderful deep understanding of the physical universe, but that of course the mystery remains, and consciousness is still the most profound aspect of reality - elmats think this is absurd, and primitive, a throwback to pre Cartesian times, and a confusion to be fought.

**Cosmology**: Similarly re the collective of all that exists, which we call "the universe" and issues of its origin, and the study of all which is called cosmology, or even discussions of why it all exists, and why there is order etc which can be considered metaphysics or meta-cosmology or cosmology in the broad sense - the questions and mysteries as understood by sevex may be incomprehensible to elmats.

In physics models, one can only get out what is put in. Classical general relativistic cosmology treats the universe as a ‘cloud of dust’ i.e. non-interacting particles of matter, and yet nevertheless the result is the big bang model of expanding space. However within this expanding space is only the matter we placed in the model, non-interacting dust, and so the universe which emerges would lack electromagnetism and all other forces, and so never produce structure, eg stars, planets and humans. Similarly, the model ignores sevex, and yet despite neglecting the essential feature of reality, obtains the big bang model. However, the universe which emerges obviously will not contain sevex. So the Cartesian splitting off of mind and matter works exceptionally well in modeling and explaining the material content of the universe, but this is not seen by sevex as an indication that sevex-consciousness was not present or underlying the universe all along. But this type of statement is incomprehensible to materialists since there is no ‘need’ for sevex in producing the material universe as we know it.

**Psychology, cognitive science, AI:** We encounter the same incomprehension when discussing ourselves at the deepest level. Eliminating consciousness from the study of a human was a major advance, and allowed the creation of new fields like quantitative psychology, brain science, AI etc. However, elmats think that these scientific disciplines explain everything there is, and do not understand that the mystery remains. Indeed, in scientific discussion the essence and deepest aspect of (our) reality has been excised from the start in a deliberate move to gain insight into the newly-recognized mechanical level of our brain, but of course sevex-consciousness (or self-consciousness, or 'mind') of course still remains and is no less fundamental than it was when (the description of) that level was erroneously assumed - in pre-scientific times - to be inextricably intertwined with the mechanical level.

It turned out to be extricable, and was successfully untwined, and produced quantitative psychology and cognitive science and AI, but the elmat erroneously projects their lack of sevex onto others, and therefore thinks that quantitative psychology and cognitive science and AI is all there is. And the dialogue they have with sevex is frustrating and fruitless, because the terms used are meant differently, and the essence of the point made by sevex is fundamentally incomprehensible to the elmat director of the AI cognitive science lab who is certain that they understand the sevex better than the sevex can.

**Why sevex seems such a mystery to those possessing it**: Prior to the separation of mind and matter and the successful discovery of laws governing the latter, all would have seemed to be monistic, with all matter perhaps being animated. However when a modern sevex sees that everything but themselves, their “I”, can be explained as matter and subject to natural law, their exceptionalism seems extraordinary. It is in some sense natural that sevex nowadays could see themselves - individually or humanity as a whole - as more central to the scheme of things than in previous times, where there was nothing specifically unique about humans.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**II: The difficulty of debating an issue where the central terms are understood and defined differently by both sides**

**Futility of defining what dualists etc mean by ‘mind’ or ‘awareness’ or ‘consciousness’?**: Only those who possess it know what it is, and they don't need it to be defined, and this is part of its description.

The alleged need to define it is (related to) the source of the problem, as explained below.

What is possible instead is to "point to it unambiguously".

**Re the distinction between the term "mind" and the expression "having mind"**.

Dualists will say their brains have an inexplicable phenomenon ('mind') associated to them in some as yet unknown way, and which they know of directly ("having mind"). Even if one allows for the existence of this directly-known inexplicable phenomenon, Occam's razor would militate against ascribing this inexplicable phenomenon to entities which claim it does not exist, is NOT known to them directly ie they do NOT 'have mind'.

Rather than defining it, one can also "point to it" by the following - doing so unambiguously if there is nothing else which satisfies all these characterizations [like: [Wheeler's 20 questions](https://jawarchive.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/frontiers-of-time-19781.pdf) (see p8)]:

It is a phenomenon about which many prominent physicists have said:

* they know it definitely exists though they admit they cannot prove its existence (this is satisfied by any qualia, eg color, emotion; and qualia therefore are exceptions to any rule stating that physics can only talk of that which can be proven to exist);
* it is the only existent they say can be known automatically without requiring sensory input (as color would require) or 'investigation' (as would be required for physical phenomena);
* it is that via which they know of everything else which is known to exist (ie via which they know of qualia), or it is that which knows this;

while other prominent physicists have said it doesn't exist and all the above is nonsensical.

I think there is nothing else which satisfies all the above [and so it qualifies as desired (and does not require 'disambiguation')]. [[12]](#footnote-12)

**The essence of the dispute**: From the perspective of this survey and experiment, the essential point of the "non-physical consciousness" camp is not that their consciousness is fundamentally qualitatively different than an electron or a table, since maybe the idealist is correct or the monist/panpsychist are right, and a table and an electron are fundamentally "conscious". The essential point of all the members of the "non-physical consciousness" camp is the point on which they are all agreed - that there seems to be something essential missing from the materialist view of reality, namely the existence of a self-known self. For those in this camp, may be that the essence is not the self-knowing aspect but rather the experiential aspect of sevex, however the latter essential aspect cannot be known without the former and so one can quibble about what is the essence; in any case however, the existence of the additional self-knowing layer is certainly extremely significant.

**A subtlety**: If the brains of those describing themselves as materialists are actually arch-panpsychist, maybe those brains don’t realize that non-materialists do not experience reality as it is – fully "conscious", similar to the idealist view - and that actually the Cartesian dualist is a type of materialist in that they posit that there are two types of essence, ie that there is also some non-conscious aspect to reality. So there can be a dispute between dualists and panpsychists who think they are what dualists call materialists, where actually the former are more materialist than the latter and similarly a dispute between dualists and self-proclaimed 'materialists' who are actually panpsychists, where the latter is essentially an idealist. How does one determine what is the actual experience of the other?

In other words, on the one hand all that is truly in contention is the issue of whether a table or an electron as imagined by the materialist is qualitatively different than "non-physical-consciousness". However, without us being able to determine whether the materialist hard-AI-proponent is actually a panpsychist, how do we know that we really disagree? **If there was some way to know that we disagree, this would itself perhaps consist of an experimental method for the detection of consciousness!**

However, for the sake of this paper we shall ignore this possibility (that materialists are actually brain-wired-idealists who use the term "material" for what idealists call "consciousness"). Perhaps it is more likely that all who are brain-wired-idealists will make note of the existence of a self-known aspect to their essence, ie their 'self", and will remark on it, in contrast to brain-wired materialists who will not talk of it, and might not even be capable of understanding the reference.

**Is the type of consciousness possessed by the non-materialist necessarily qualitatively "other"?** To the idealist there is no problem, all is of the same qualitative type, to the dualist it is fundamentally other and so there is the classic Cartesian problem of their interaction. And for example to Eddington who considered the electron to be ultimately composed of "mind-stuff" and to Einstein who saw Mind behind everything at its most fundamental level, perhaps there is no issue to begin with (In this paper, there is no distinction made between the idealist, solipsist, dualist and Mind-believer, all these are in a combined grouping contrasting with the naturalist/materialist - who it is proposed - take that view due to their lack of consciousness.).

To the naturalist, of course the answer is 'no' by definition (of their position or brain type, and in terms of what is physically possible). And what about the type of consciousness possessed by the materialist? To the dualist the consciousness spoken of by the naturalists is not what the dualist means, so their view is not relevant to what they consider this question to mean.

Naive realists seem to get around the problem, but in a way which might make dualist-types group them with materialists, and suspect they too do not possess sevex-consciousness.

[[13]](#footnote-13)

**The impossibility of mutual understanding**: There is no way for elmats to understand what sevex mean by the term 'consciousness' since ***only those who possess it, and are also self-aware, can possibly know what it is***. *This is a sort of corollary to Descartes's point. And it explains why his point is completely misunderstood and often ridiculed and misinterpreted, and how it could be that Boswell's report of Johnson's retort is incomprehensibly shallow-sounding to sevex*.

There is not really even a possibility of sevex expecting elmats to accept the sevex declaration "this I know, I am sevex" but rather elmats will insist that sevex include the word "claim", ie "This I claim I know" whereas to sevex adding this term negates the essential meaning of what they are trying to convey. So true dialogue is stymied. But knowing that this is so can only help elmats understand what sevex mean.

Better than presenting Descartes' view as "I think therefore I am", perhaps the following conveys the insight better to elmats. Elmats would however have to agree to accept that the following is not meant to be a convincing 'proof' of anything, it is simply a declaration by sevex of what they **know**, albeit unprovably, with the elmats correcting this sentence to add the words "claim to" before the bold-faced "know":

In order to present Descartes idea to an elmat, there is no avoiding using terms incomprehensible to them – using the term 'consciousness' or 'awareness' is a red herring and leads to incomprehension of the idea being expressed since it means something entirely different to elmats than to sevex. The previous sentence is not just a prologue to the explanation, it is an essential organic part of it.

The following is a more honest phrasing of Descartes' idea, without the pretense that it makes sense to elmats – adding the term 'sevex' (in hyphenation) to all those which have different meaning to the two sides:

"By the very fact that I sevex-exist, I know that sevex itself exists, and this is the most fundamental existent, and it is the only existent whose existence is self-evident."

Also:

"Sevex exists independently of brain and therefore of the physical senses, and so I can have a sevex-thought independent of the physical external reality, the sevex-thought "I exist" - and so sevex is NOT dependent on whether there does indeed exist an external reality, ie I know that sevex exits, which I call "(sevex-)I" or '(sevex-)myself'. That self-sevex-knowing is sufficient in of itself, there is no need of "proof" of its existence; after all, to whom will it proven, to me-sevex?, but that already means sevex-I exist!"

It is self-deluding and futile to erase the term sevex from the above to make it more comprehensible since such a 'sevex'-absent explanation employs the very terms which are contentious in their own 'definition', so that it would be like telling a color blind person "what we mean by color is the type of characteristic which constitutes the difference between red and green", and how much less comprehensible to a blind person to whom it proved impossible to even prove that non-color-blind people see more that sighted color-blind people see, and who denies there is even such a notion as color.

In our case, the usual casual phrasing of Descartes' idea ("I think therefore I am") would be disingenuous except that it is not intentionally-deceptive, since it is assumed that all who hear it expressed are sevex and directly understand what is being said. Once one realizes that this unwarranted assumption of universality of sevex should be dropped, and that explanations of Descartes' insight are often most needed by those who are mystified by it since they are elmats, it becomes clear that using "I think therefore I am" to express it is futile, and will be frustrating to both sides.

To those who are sevex but never considered it, Descartes' insight as usually stated can perhaps be relevant in helping them clarify their own situation, which they will then recognize as being known to them directly, but to elmats it is not known and cannot be known and no 'explanation' can suffice to 'convince'. In this sense, convincing an elmat of the existence of sevex would require – or is fulfilled by, and only by - converting them to being one.

**…………………………..**

**SECTION C: The survey**:

See below a link to the survey (which will be continually edited on the site).

**The survey as a continuation of one conducted by the author in 1987**: Responses were collected from various physicists, see more mention of this below, and on the accompanying website see [some of the letters received as replies](https://sites.google.com/a/nyu.edu/avi-rabinowitz/home/1987-survey)[[14]](#footnote-14).

Accompanying the 1987 survey was an article I sent respondents about free will (which I had written that year) - including a presentation of potential implications of the existence of free will for cosmology and for quantum physics - which served as an introduction to the survey questions. Essential elements of the ideas broached in that article appear as components of some of the questions about free will in the present survey (and see edited version of that article on the author's website).

**Accompanying website with the survey results, and group discussion:** Anyone can take the survey as it will be on a publicly-available site: <https://sites.google.com/a/nyu.edu/avi-rabinowitz/home/survey> (This will be continually updated and edited (on the site);

**Testing assumptions via the survey**: Assumption: there is a consensus among all such as believe in sevex that it is ONLY THIS that they **know** whereas the rest of their philosophical position is conjecture and belief, indeed the existence of the external material universe is also an assumption. In other words, the dualist and panpsychist and idealist KNOW that this sevex type of consciousness exists but have different BELIEFS or CONJECTURES about whether there is a material universe, and if so what is its relation to sevex etc. As such, the term 'sevex' can be useful not just to contrast in a simpler manner with "materialists" and to indicate the intersection of the various members of the group (dualists, idealists, panpsychists etc) but also as a way of delineating that which is **known** by consensus among this disparate group from what is **conjectured** by the different 'factions'.

**Note**: It cannot simply be assumed that all brains even of one philosophical grouping have the same type or degree of sevex or its absence - or something else - and so it can be useful for a survey question to test the above assumptions via a questions such as: The above grouping of various different philosophical positions around a common denominator, the notion of intersection and consensus and the distinction between what is known and what is conjectured etc

\*is essentially correct

\*is essentially incorrect

\*No opinion

\*It's all nonsense

**…**

Survey respondents will be physicists at first: The questions will challenge them to indicate what they *KNOW* about reality/the universe in this context, not what they think believe or feel. They will be asked to indicate what they feel comfortable stating as fact about this phenomenon; to delineate what – despite its unprovability - is known to them with surety, as surely as they know of any physical phenomenon which they consider part of physics. (See more discussion in the mini-article on the author's site).

**The survey as a feeder to identify potential volunteers for the experiment**: Since it is hoped that some of the respondents to the survey will be willing to participate in the brain experiment, the survey is designed to enable the totality of the chosen responses to clearly identify respondents who are committed materialists or committed dualists – ie identifying unabashed proponents of both sides in order to invite them - as representatives of 'their' side - to participate in the experiment (brain scans etc: see link to extensive discussion on the author's site).

Possibly the survey will be worded so as to enable this type of determination to be made without asking respondents to self-classify, and the experiment of course would be appropriately 'blinded'.

The survey results can also aid in locating the actual rather than assumed dividing line between the beliefs of scientists who represent the two sides, thereby identifying which beliefs are (largely) contingent, and enabling a statement such as "X% of dualists/materialists also believe … ".

**Using context to defining central – and therefore contentious and effectively ambiguous - terms:** Rather than using in the survey potentially contentious or ambiguous terms such as "consciousness", "awareness" or "mind", for convenience we will utilize quotes from prominent physicists to provide a context which is sufficient to informally define the meaning of these terms as they will be (colloquially, informally) employed here, even if these quotes do not necessarily include any of these specific terms.

In some sense, the survey is intended as a "non-physical-consciousness-detection mechanism", and thus there is an attempt to keep the wording neutral, to avoid asking respondents to self-categorize according to terms like "materialist" or "dualist", and to avoid as much as possible similarly characterizing the physicists who are quoted as prelude to the questions, and instead to rely on the existence of any qualitative difference in their brains to manifest in the differences between what the brain of the respondent feels to be the most appropriate response to a question.

**Is it science?** This article, survey and proposed experiment are in some sense an investigation of a scientific issue more than a "philosophical" one - with the double-caveat that it is not actually 'scientific' since what is being investigated is not a provable phenomenon even according to those who emphatically state that they know it exists, and is not even consensus given the denial of its existence by materialist physicists. Nevertheless perhaps the investigation - rather than the phenomenon - is somewhat scientific, since what is of interest here is what trained observers - who are professionally tasked with distinguishing between statements about natural phenomena which are factual as opposed to conjectures - will say they *KNOW* about reality/the universe, not just what they think, believe or feel. To achieve clarity, the survey will enable respondents to indicate exactly what they believe, what they ‘feel, and what they know as fact.

There can be added a capability for respondents to receive a 'score' of to what degree they are materialist; and possibly they would be able to see predictions as to whether they like 'spirituality', are religious in actual belief not sociologically, without my having asked them any questions about this, and maybe re some other predictions.

Respondents may be allowed to see a constantly-updated statistical analysis of the percentage of respondents who checked off specific answers.

A respondent can choose to read through the background and explanatory material on the right-hand side of the webpage in which the form is embedded, or simply scroll through the form answering questions without reading the accompanying explanations.

Discussion among academic respondents will be made possible via a google-group, embedded on the survey-page of the website [[15]](#footnote-15).

**……………………………**

**Fundamental conundrums & dilemmas re the survey and experiment**

**I: Central dilemma:**

1. If consciousness of the type under discussion is admittedly unprovable, and indeed unprovable since it is undetectable to another, then experiment cannot find it;
2. If it is undetectable and beyond the ordinary cause-effect of the physical universe then there cannot have evolved any brain-structure to accommodate it;

c) If it is undetectable, then survey responses should not be able to correlate to its presence/absence.

On the one hand, one can use the above dilemmas as indication that consciousness of this type does not exist, or if it does, then that there is no physical substrate to seek. However if one is certain that it DOES indeed exist, and that it is somehow 'a-physical', but that nevertheless it seems to be associated to brains, then it becomes a problem to surmount rather than a reason to abandon such a project.

So the question is whether it is "undetectable" ie even in theory, by any method, or "undetectable"-as-yet.

The above dilemmas are indeed referenced below, and subtle linguistic methods were devised to attempt to overcome them.

**Overcoming a conundrum in the wording of the survey:**

**re survey and its connection to the experiment:** Underlying the motivation for this survey is the notion of a possible correlation between how a subject speaks about awareness – in this case how they respond to the survey questions - and the type or degree of awareness they do or do not possess.

In a scientific discussion of a phenomenon which many scientists deny exists - eg the consciousness a la dualist/idealist - inevitably there arise conundrums - including defining terms - and **the paper and accompanying survey-questions are structured in a novel fashion in an attempt to overcome this challenge**. For example, by supplying quotes from famous physicists to provide context for the meaning of "consciousness" as used here, rather than attempting to define the term.

..

**II:** **Another dilemma**: If the person creating the survey is firmly in one of the two camps, they cannot a priori know what assumptions are inherent to their type, cannot take it for granted that they know which statements would be agreed upon universally vs which is only for their type. So even for a concept which seems completely logical without relation to the issue of mind, one nevertheless needs to pose questions about (ie to physicists taking the survey). For example:

1. The "many worlds" scenario is hotly debated, whether it is profligate or minimalistic in not requiring other assumptions. Does the divide between proponents/antagonists correlate to the materialist/dualist divide?

In general one cannot know what another scientific brain would feel is true about our reality without finding this out from them, and that is the purpose of the survey – which would be entirely subverted if the wording of the questions did not incorporate neutrality, even if the partisanship was unwitting.

1. The opposite of the "many-worlds" scenario is solipsism, which is to some (see eg the excerpt from Bridgman below) the absolute minimalistic scenario. But would all agree? Is it dependent on the divide we are investigating?

Do materialist brains find the claims and arguments of Gödel and Plato less convincing than do dualist brains? If so, then if one can identify the brain-characteristics indicating whether a brain is materialist or dualist, then given the specs of a brain which never heard of Plato and Gödel or their ideas, one could perhaps predict its reaction to those ideas.

c) There is deep skepticism among many physicists to the “consciousness collapse the wave function” approach to the quantum “measurement problem”. It would seem almost obvious that is correlated strongly to the materialist-non materialist divide; is it possible that there are adherents of this approach - or there are those who at least do not rule it out entirely - among self-declared materialists? Are there non-materialists among those who rule it out as absurd, rather than simply not being correct?

**Sevex and religion**: To sevex-individuals the notion of "consciousness" is usually felt to be entirely separate from the notion of 'religion', though there is a sort of continuum leading from the existence of consciousness via the notion of Mind to the idea of a God, and a creator etc. However it may be that to elmats the idea of sevex and God seem almost indistinguishable, or at least equally incomprehensible; a materialist might feel that belief in 'sevex' is equivalent to a religion, and might be led to atheism either via equating God to the non-existent "consciousness", or simply because they lack the same knowledge of a reality beyond the material which is directly apparent to those with sevex.

To sevex-individuals however, religion is qualitatively different than sevex-consciousness in that they **know** of sevex whereas they only perhaps might **believe** in God/soul/religion (though might it be that some religious people will claim equal knowledge in that sphere as well?).

Although this paper, survey and experiment do not intend to deal with 'religion', a survey might help clarify whether only to sevex – even atheistic sevex - would the notion of a "God" seem at all possible. If so, this could explain the dismissive attitude of various atheist materialists to the notions of religion, to the possibility at all of the existence of a deity, and why their characterizations of religious notions often seem as childish and unsophisticated to religious people as Boswell/Johnson's 'refutation' of Berkeley seems to sevex.

**Identifying False Assumptions: Would there be significance to agreement by both types of brain that solipsism is non-disprovable?**

It has been said that the brain in a vat scenario and solipsism indicate that we cannot know for a fact that there really is an external universe as we sense it to be, or even indeed whether there is actually any external universe at all.

Although the assumption seems to be implicitly made that all agree on these topics, it may be that there is a divide that has not been identified. For example, can it be that this notion of solipsism/brain-in-a-vat is only felt to be fully true by those with one of the two types of brain? Would a brain with associated sevex and a materialist brain answer questions about this topic in the same way, or is there perhaps some hidden dependence on one's brain-type?

It may not be possible to answer these questions correctly – to identify a hidden assumption on this matter - without actually consulting both types of brain and comparing the responses. If it is indeed true that one cannot prove that the external universe exists, that there are really laws of nature, indeed that there was anything at all an instant ago, does this tell us something profound about the universe? Is it significant that there is no way to prove that the 'external universe' actually exists, or is this in some sense tautological?

Or does it tell us something profound about thought and about logic?

Do the significant implications only follow if both types agree? Can one type of brain claim that they follow if the other type does not agree?

If there is a difference in the way the two brain-types respond, what does this say about the universe, and what does it tell us about these brain types?

The potential significance of the associated implications make this a topic of prime interest in this paper, and therefore the survey begins with a series of probing questions on this topic.

**A fundamental conundrum**: If the reasonableness of a concept such as ‘many worlds’ or solipsism does indeed depend on brain type, does the fact that people originated these scenarios already by itself point to the existence of such types of brains?

Consider the possibility that only those with sevex think solipsism is rational and is the minimalistic assumption scenario. If there was no sevex in the universe, but intelligence evolved, eg computer-type-brains operating according to the naturalist's scheme of things, would they originate the notion of solipsism? If not, then the origination of the notion of solipsism as the minimalistic scenario would be an indication that sevex exists.

However, there's some circularity here….

**……**

**Section D: Neutrality and Reciprocity**

**Claim-parity and the relevance of the non-provability of "consciousness" in contrast to the provability of color-blindness**: If a person says they don't understand the fuss about colors, why people like art and why they talk about the beauty of nature, it is all so bland, and then we measure and judge them to be color-blind we understand that they can't even comprehend what we are referring to when we speak of color, and so cannot themselves on their own diagnose themselves as color-blind. Similarly, since people who aren't conscious can't know what it is, they aren't reliable reporters about whether or not they possess a mind.

However if one prepares a screen of text with font in several colors, and asks people to write down the color of this or that word, from the consistent results of those who see color, even the color-blind person will agree they have an additional sense, and so the sensation of color is accepted as fact even by the color-blind. However, there is (as yet?) no way to scientifically way to prove that one does or does not possess sevex [this is part of 'the problem of other minds'] and so the denials of its existence by materialists are considered by materialists to carry equal weight to the claims of the opposing side.

Nevertheless, that other side – whom we will refer to as 'dualists etc' or just as 'dualists' – will not agree that the materialist claim is of equal weight since to them it is FACT that this type of consciousness exists, and so this difference is sui generis in philosophy, where it is not a difference in judgement or belief or way of thinking or what is deduced logically but rather far more complicated and fundamental; dualists might accept parity for their claim with the opposing claim for sociological academic reasons, not because they actually accept the position of the other side as equally valid. And perhaps this is true also in reverse.

**Neutrality of the survey & experiment demands "reciprocity"**: The attempt is to have no inbuilt pre-supposition as to whether the dualist is correct and the materialist is delusional, or it is the materialist who is delusional and the dualist correct.

In this spirit, we offer the following section as a "counter-proposal".

**Suggestion motivated by "Reciprocity"**: **Dualism as a delusion or insanity:** Can it be that dualists/idealists etc suffer from a type of insanity which causes them to believe in a "non-physical type of consciousness" which they know of directly but cannot prove exists? An immaterial phenomenon which they often claim is more fundamental than the clearly-existent material universe?

**The two types of reciprocity to be built-into the article, survey and experiment**:

1. One of the questions to be explored via the survey: perhaps a certain category of brain will report that it KNOWS something about reality or about "the universe" that even dualists do NOT say they themselves know, or make a claim that idealists will actually contest? For example if they claim that they KNOW there exists an external universe. If so, is this traceable to a brain difference? We'll ask some survey-questions to clarify this.
2. Either the materialist is correct about reality and the dualist suffers from a brain disturbance, or alternately, perhaps dualists are correct, and materialists simply lack the part of the brain which enables detection of this non-physical "self".

***Experiments to identify the Biological Source of the "illusion" Underlying Dualism***

**Sleep-paralysis**: Many people are familiar with lucid dreaming, in which one can experience that which one usually would only experience in a real situation, including the sense of touch etc. However there is an entirely different and fascinating phenomenon of "sleep-paralysis" which occurs as one is about to fall asleep, during which one is overwhelmed with terror[[16]](#footnote-16). This is in contrast to the case of lucid dreaming, which are often very pleasant. However, although in lucid dreams I have experienced verisimilitudinous interactions with others in the sense that they are indistinguishable from those I experienced when indeed with others,[[17]](#footnote-17)in contrast, in the case of sleep-paralysis I experienced that which I never experienced when in reality – a distinct, very powerful "sense of presence".

**Sleep-paralysis as a possible spurious source for "the illusion of self-awareness":**

The obvious part of what is unusual about this is that though one is not actually fully asleep one experiences a type of "dream", in that what one senses is not actually there.

Given the ability to daydream, and the fact that in this case one is in fact mostly asleep, it is not so odd that one senses that which is not actually there. However what seems to the author perhaps even more surprising is the notion that there exists the phenomenon of "a sense of presence" at all. It is not so odd in theory to receptors to detect a nearby person's emitted pheromones or reflected photons and variations in air pressure, and for the brain as a result to "feel that someone is nearby" - just as the sense of color or sound are the sensory experience elicited by certain frequencies of electromagnetic and air-vibrations, but to actually "feel that someone is nearby" was quite astonishing to the author, for while on the one hand, it may be that a sense of presence is standard, at least to many people, as one who has experienced sleep paralysis a number of times (and deliberately induced it a few times) I can attest that the very definite feeling of something/someone nearby is NOT one that I am consciously aware of feeling when I am indeed (awake and) in the presence of someone!

**Dualism as arising from an illusion similar to the sense of presence in sleep paralysis**: It is interesting to speculate that the dualist/idealist's "consciousness" may be due to an analogous phenomenon, specifically that even while fully awake, dualists etc feel a sense of "existing" or the presence of a "self" that is immaterial and known directly but whose existence is not accessible to anyone else.

In this connection it would be interesting to establish whether only dualists experience this sense of presence during sleep paralysis or is materialists also experience sleep paralysis, and with it a sense of "presence".

This "sense of presence" when there patently is nothing present, besides providing an example of how an otherwise normal brain, even when not [fully] 'asleep' (although this is a matter of definition perhaps, and of stages) can experience an overwhelmingly-convincing sense that something exists when it patently does not, but even more-so that this feeling can perhaps impinge on a person's sense of themselves as being 'present'. If this is misinterpreted, the person can perhaps imagine something illusory, perhaps the phenomenon described by sevex.

Whether or not materialists also experience this, and whether or not sleep paralysis-type phenomenon underlies the claim of sevex, it is interesting to speculate that the dualist/idealist's "consciousness" is due to some analogous phenomenon – ie even if not specifically 'sleep paralysis' related – such that even while fully awake, dualists etc feel a sense of "existing" or the presence of a "self" that is immaterial and known directly but whose existence is not accessible to anyone else.

**Research/Experiment Proposal**: This phenomenon of "sensing presence" deserves deeper experimental study in this context, especially to establish whether there is a difference in the way that materialist and dualist brains experiencesleep paralysis and the sense of "presence".

Also: Do some people experience this sense of presence while awake, perhaps all the time? Or whenever they meet someone?

(It is interesting that a Nobel Prize was just awarded for a somewhat related aspect of our sensory experience [sense of touch and geospatial location.)

If a sense of presence can be created by the brain during the almost-asleep state then perhaps a waking brain can be trained to generate it (or a piece of equipment can prod the waking brain to experience it) when there is actually someone nearby, and also when experiencing waking visual and other stimulus.

Or do various people have experiences as odd as the sense of presence but something else relevant to our investigation? There are many people whose experience is different than most – for example some people recall everything they ever did and when it was - but who do not know that others do not, or only realize it with some shock somewhere in adulthood, and perhaps this is the case in the realm of experiences relevant to this proposal.

**A rather convoluted suggestion of perhaps an impossibility:** Imagine if a color-blind person dreamed in color, experiencing in a dream state what they never experienced while awake. For example, imagine someone color-blind from birth, and one part of their brain is sending signals to the higher centers to the effect that colors were detected even though they were not, and the part of the brain which communicates with others convincingly states that it is experiencing colors even though it is not. Of course one could test their perception, but the point is only that ***perhaps it is conceivable that a brain can be convinced that it is experiencing something that it is not actually experiencin*g**!

Analogously, it may be that there is a part of some brains which receive signals about the existence of a "self" separate from the actual brain - that is, ***not that the brain actually experiences a "self" but only that the brain is convinced that it does, and this is transmitted to the rational brain which is informed that it is experiencing "the existence of a self" despite the fact that it is not***; this is a spurious message because no part of the brain is actually experiencing that, and despite the knowledge that what they are describing is physically impossible.

[Of course though, it may be that dualists are correct that there really is a unique phenomenon of sevex, and materialists simply lack the part of the brain which enables detection of the non-physical "self".]

**Suggested Experiment:** Does a person's brain communicating with what is assumed to be a nearby live person respond differently when it is indeed a live person than when it is actually a sophisticated 3-d image plus relevant changes in air pressure and light etc? Which factors in the simulation are necessary/sufficient for causing the brain to produce this sensation? Perhaps there no difference between the real and simulated encounter simply because there is the brain's expectation that it is a real encounter is sufficient to give rise to that sense of presence? Is there way to tell the difference between the two situations eg by having two brains experiencing the same encounter, one knows it is a simulation and the other does not? Is this sense somehow inbuilt, or is it acquired after a baby's first several live encounters?

**Commercial application leading to research funding**: This phenomenon of a sense of presence not only deserves experimental study for the purpose mentioned, but there can even be commercial applications: imagine if a sense of presence – albeit a benign one - can be "artificially" stimulated .

\* Perhaps a sense of presence can be "artificially" stimulated:

during a phone or video call;

\* when watching a presentation by someone;

\* while watching a movie etc;

\* in conjunction with VR (XR);

\* when interacting with AI or a robot

\* if a waking version of lucid dreaming can be combined with this benign sense of presence, it will be a dramatic enhancement of entertainment options.

All these possibilities can be a motivation for funding of the research.

**The anomalous non-consciousness experienced by elmats (zombies):** In comparison to the 'self' as described by sevex, what is the self as felt by materialists - what is it that they write about and mean when they refer to consciousness? It is interesting that some materialists also think that there's some sort of 'problem' involved, albeit it is not the problem that dualists mean - why do they think there is such a problem? Maybe they DO experience something mysterious, just that it is not what dualist experience?

Perhaps - contrary, to what was initially proposed here - the sense of presence indicated in sleep paralysis is not the source of the "dualist illusion" but rather is the source of what materialist consider their sense of self, which the materialist mistakenly believes is what is meant by the dualist when dualists refer to (self) consciousness, ie materialists too have a 'sense of self', but not sevex. Thus when they propose a resolution of the consciousness problem they are merely referring to a far less difficult problem than that which is inherent in a material universe containing sevex. However since both elmats and sevex are using the same terminology and neither have any way of making the other understand what they are talking about, there is confusion.[[18]](#footnote-18)

**"Knowing I am conscious" as a brain state, and the relation to Hypnosis**

There is no need for the materialist to deny the possibility that the brain of a dualist is in the state of "I know that there is an 'I' who exists", "I know it directly" etc; the existence of such a brain state does not contradict the laws of physics.

It is only the question of **why** this brain state exists which is a matter of contention.

Imagine now a materialist subjected to hypnosis, made to believe that they KNOW that they possess sevex. Given this conviction of the brain, it begins to initiate talk like a dualist, as would be expected from a brain which is in the state of knowing all that the dualist states that they know.

However, the dualist brain says "I see the color green, it is a primitive, not reducible to anything else, it is something qualitatively 'other' than material objects" – is this attributable to an illusion, to the brain thinking that it perceives something qualitatively sui generis even though it does not!? Is this logically or physically possible, or is the illusion of perceiving something qualitatively other than the material identical by definition to its "actual" perception?

* If we were to perform a Turing test, would one be able to distinguish the hypnotized materialist form the dualist?
* Is there anything that the dualist feels or knows which the brain of the hypnotized materialist cannot know or feel?
* Would dualists and materialists answer the above questions in the same way?

**"Reciprocity-motivated" formulation of the fundamental Proposition**: Neutral wording would be something like: it would be interesting to contrive experiments which would enable a determination whether there is a structural/wiring difference between full-fledged materialists and dualists/idealists, a type of difference which in theory can be the determinant of whether the brain declares itself to be dualist or materialist.

If an experiment indeed indicates this brain-distinction, we can choose one of these interpretations:

A) accept the claims of both types of brains:

i. the idealist's brain's: "I am conscious in the way materialists reject as impossible" (which is simply a less-contentious way of stating "materialists lack the brain structure which enables the dualist to be conscious"), AND:

ii. a materialist brain's: "**I am not conscious in the way that is impossible**" (and ignoring the rest of their statement "and neither are you")

1. propose that the materialist brain is correct, and that dualist have a sub-optimally-functioning region of the brain, a brain malfunction giving rise to their illusory claims".
2. leave open the question of whether consciousness is a neural disturbance leading to delusions or it is a unique (non-material) phenomenon fundamental to our reality.

**Conundrum**: If the sevex is a delusion, is it possible for a dualist to determine this perhaps experimentally or analytically, and then to internalize this intellectual realization, and even to 'overcome' it (and become a materialist perhaps)?

Or are they so locked into this at the core of their psyche and so deeply wired into their brain that it is impossible? And would a materialist be able to make such a determination given that they cannot know what it is that the dualist is experiencing?

And would a dualist accept that they are incapable of making this determination and accept that made by the materialist?

And similarly in reverse: under what circumstances would a materialist accept that their experience is lacking a very real and fundamental level, the "consciousness" claimed by the dualist.

**Checking assumptions**

Many people report that their sense of self is as of being located behind their eyes, though some have stated that they learned to ‘move’ this location (eg via immersion in a sensory deprivation tank, see for example Feynman). Perhaps this default location behind the eyes is not true for all types of brains - for example, perhaps for some they may feel their location is in the ‘exterior universe’, and concomitantly feel the external physical universe as their self, or as being ‘primary’, in a similar way to the dualist who experiences the conscious self as primary, and this can be the source of some types of materialism.

Is solipsism universally acknowledged to be non-disprovable? Or perhaps there are brains which know the external universe exists, as firmly as the non-materialists claim they know THEY exist but that the external universe may not?

Maybe some brains don’t believe they can be a brain in a jar, and would say that Descartes was correct that while sleeping one cannot discriminate (usually) this form being awake, but that is true only for their sleeping brain whereas in their waking brain this discrimination is possible. Or perhaps some brains are always aware of their actual state, waking or dreaming. (They would not feel The Matrix to be a metaphor for our own waking existence, and would only interpret the movie as being realistic since those in it were in an induced dreaming state.)

Maybe some brains experience their ‘self’ as the entire universe so that they don't experience individual consciousness but rather either panpsychism or materialism.

The survey will be designed to check these variations, assumptions and correlations.

….

**Incorporating neutrality**

The paper is best worded to be neutral, though the author has a particular view, and is trying not to prejudge any aspects of what is meant to be a scientific investigation - not philosophical or psychological - though perhaps only one side of the two will see it that way, and so perhaps the very suggestion that it is scientific is to effectively take a side.

In order to avoid using terms with definitions which are in contention, rather than asking respondents their opinion about "consciousness' etc, the survey will attempt to cleanly associate a specific quote from prominent physicists – for example which seems to indicate their belief in a certain type of immaterial consciousness - and then ask respondents what they think of the ideas expressed in these quotes, all without the question itself needing to utilize terms like "consciousness".

Also: Rather than asking "is it plausible" or "do you believe it", etc, the survey will ask about each idea is it all physically/logically possible? Is it ruled out by logic or by something your brain knows or by physics/science?

In order to indicate the effect of a viewpoint, at some points perhaps the paper will switch perspectives to sound as if it is written from the viewpoint of a materialist, and then from a dualists' viewpoint, and then neutral.

**Possible non-reciprocity in the two opposing positions**

How should a materialist reviewer react to the proposition of this paper?

If one side considers consciousness sui generis and of fundamental significance in the universe and the other side considers it an illusion arising in a brain-defect, how should the latter group view the former group’s claim of the importance of such an experiment.

Can the claim of one side which states categorically their direct knowledge of the existence of a phenomenon be equally balanced by a theoretical claim by those on the other side that such a phenomenon cannot exist?

Can it be that the latter claim should be moderated by the awareness of other phenomena which are known to exist but are not universal (such as color-blindness or inability to visualize etc), albeit with the crucial difference that the phenomenon under discussion is not objectively demonstrable?

## ………..

**Section E: Hoped-for effects of an acceptance of the paper's proposition**

**Accepting the proposition can perhaps lead to** **a more honest version of the philosophical debate, and perhaps points out the need for an experimental approach: for example imagine the two sides presenting the following positions**

* **Dualist** (etc): By definition (self-) consciousness is that which knows itself directly. Therefore when encountering an intelligent being who understands philosophy – as is the case for a declared materialist - and who does not self-know of their existence in the way that dualists do, it might be clear that that they do not possess that self-knowing entity or mechanism which dualist mean when they speak of "(self-)consciousness". If they did possess it they would by definition know it. So one can propose that a more honest approach than the collegial parity of opinions, is the understanding that consciousness of the dualist type exists, but not in all human brains, and those who know they do not have this type of brains are called eliminative materialists.
* **Vehement eliminative materialist: I**t is evident that dualists suffer from a form of brain damage, mental illness, or simply intellectual feebleness.

**Uniqueness of the philosophical debate:** Note that the difference between the two 'camps', particularly among those who state their position vehemently is sui generis among philosophical differences in that:

* it is about a factual situation, ie whether or not there exists a certain type of "consciousness";
* on one side or the other it is usually made as a statement of purported fact rather than being an opinion, belief, or logical deduction.

**The "Minded" and "NonMinded":** If sevex is a brain-disturbance, and those who claim they possess "mind", not "just brain" are deluded, then it would be a point of pride for materialists to consider themselves "nonMinded"- as it would be for those in the other camp to call themselves "the Minded". Each side then can use the relevant term non-pejoratively for themselves and perhaps snicker when applying the other term for those in the other camp. So when this paper refers to 'the minded' and the 'non-minded', hopefully readers on either side - or of either type - will not mind.

## Analogies: Imagine a long-standing argument between two groups of philosophers about whether it is prudence or risk-taking which is the greater virtue, and then a biological discovery is made to the effect that evolution has engineered a brain difference between those in the two groups resulting in their complete conviction about one or the other "philosophical position". Or imagine two groups of brains unknowingly wired in relative-synesthesia, and altogether ignorant of the notion of sensory perception being related to brain wiring, and they of course respond in opposite ways to auditory and visual stimulus and are in interminable argument about the inner experience associated to mechanical vibrations ("sound") vs electromagnetic ("light"), or those sensed via the ear vs via the eyes. How absurd and futile to argue about this – both are right in subjective ways as appropriate to their experience. And imagine if brains can be differently-wired to perceive justice or morality or other value. What is being proposed here is perhaps even more radical or fundamental, that there is some "deepest level of perception of 'reality'" and that this differs among people, and that it is correlated to the difference between brains which would be categorized as 'materialist/physicalist' or 'dualist/idealist. As a result, the interminable arguments between the two groups are futile and misplaced, and neither side is physically cognitively capable of understanding the viewpoint of the other side. However, in this case, the result is not just an esthetic difference or even differences in values but to different conceptions of our reality, different answers to the question "what is the most fundamental aspect of our reality", or even different judgments as to whether that question even has meaning.

**….**

**Even if no brain-correlate is discovered**

**utilizing the survey results to help achieve certain objectives**

The intent of the paper is NOT to try to convince that one or other of dualism/idealism or materialism/naturalism is correct, but rather to make specific points: a) relating to the issue of the possible brain-difference as mentioned above, and b) in general, ie even if there is no such difference found (as yet), as presented below.

* arrive at terms to describe: i) "that which is known" ii) "the study of that which is known" iii) "topics which some physicists assert definitely exist but others say it does not"
* Categorize SCIENTIFICALLY the minimalistic description of reality, eg solipsism (or even solipsism of the moment).
* Recognize the list of that which is real but not encompassed in physics, eg the passage of time, and a unique quantum result rather than superposition, and then to invent a term to encompass the totality of [physics + the rest of what we know]. [Note: The topic of what is and is not physics in this context is explored at greater length in an "accompanying" article on the author's website: MMMM.]
* To do all the above either in a unified manner agreed upon by all, or via two separate statements, or a statement incorporating acknowledgment of the divide.
* define some new term (ie not necessarily the one I proposed) to denote "a property associated to some brains, which gives rise to that which can be either knowledge of existence directly or an anti-rational glitch of incoherent nonsense"
* After recognizing the fundamental divide between materialists and idealists, acknowledge that the ongoing endless debate is futile because one side simply does not have what the other side has - either materialists do not possess awareness and cannot therefore understand what the idealists are talking about, or the non-materialists have a glitch in their brain (we'll call it "consciousness") that is not possessed by the materialists...but both sides are mistakenly assuming that there is mutual understanding just different viewpoints - the difference is not in viewpoint it is in the possession vs non possession of this faculty/ property/ phenomenon/glitch "awareness" , and there is in fact no mutual understanding possible as a result.

Some other hoped-for effects of an acceptance of the paper's proposition**:**

\* A very specific type of focused brain-research;

\* Based on a recognition of fundamental brain differences, resolving major aspects of the science-religion debate regarding the teaching of evolutionary theory in schools (see relevant section of the paper), as well as regarding the acceptance of what science is and is not, and regarding the authority of science in religious matters.

\* Developing a mutual understanding between family members and members of society who differ in their choice of atheism, religion, or non-practicing member of a religious community, based on differences in their biology.

\* Arriving at understandings regarding possible boundaries in the use of AI for example according to whether it has or has not developed consciousness according to a dualist consensus. (See below for more discussion of this point.)

The discussions between two camps of naturalists and dualists etc are more likely to be fruitful when both sides bravely considers these two possibilities:

1. that mind or non-physical consciousness is real, but is not universally associated to all human brains, leading those without it puzzled about the claims of those with it.
2. that perhaps the opposite is (also) true, that naturalists are speaking as they do as a result of possessing some attribute not possessed by those who say the know there is consciousness of the non-materialist type.

Arguments about unicorns are simple, since both sides agree on what it is, what are its properties, they may just perhaps disagree on whether one exists or not, or can exist. Similarly, if materialists and non-materialistic agree on a term for that which materialists deny exists, then materialists can say "the sevex doesn't – and cannot - exist" rather than arguing about its properties or a definition of what it is or isn't.

Also, titles of journal articles can clearly indicate what they are dealing with as opposed to now where the word consciousness and mind etc are used ambiguously, misleading readers searching for topics of interest to them, and setting the wrong tone for readers, based on their misunderstanding of the keyword in the title.

A useful criterion for materialists to employ when deciding whether or not what they are writing is about sevex, would be to decide first whether the phenomenon they are describing is physically possible - if so then it isn't sevex, and they should use the existing terms consciousness or mind or awareness etc. Unless they are referring to an absurd notion which they viscerally disagree with, in which case perhaps it is indeed sevex they should be referring to, not mind or awareness or consciousness. [[19]](#footnote-19)

………………

**Section F:**

**AI: Can AI produce sevex or can it only produce (a materialist) brain; Implications**

**Does the fear of AI's eventual power correlate to the dualist-naturalist divide?**

If there is such a divide, who should fear it more?

On the one hand, those who propose AI is qualitatively the same as humanity would welcome it, on the other hand they may fear rivalry since AI will be superior.

Those who say AI is qualitatively different might welcome it since it is not a real competition, on the other hand they may fear that AI will not recognize the existence of their qualitative difference and therefore not take into account that which is vital.

If it is recognized that there are indeed two types and that AI is recognized as being more like one type than the other, how will this affect the development of AI, the debate over it, and relevant legal policies etc.

**Are there more of one type or the other in the fields of Neuroscience and AI?**

Descartes’ revolutionary boundary between the mind and everything else (the material realm) needs to be respected in order both to make the incredible quantitative progress in science that resulted, but also to allow for consensus; however materialists have mistaken this for a concession on the part of all who engage in science that mind is part of the material realm.

It may be that there is a preponderance of materialists in neuroscience and AI nowadays - it is natural for Materialists to believe that soon AI will reach human-level, and so it would be natural for them to be attracted to neuroscience and AI etc. In contrast dualists know that the most important element is missing, and so the likely discoveries of neuroscience and the challenges of AI are not nearly as alluring.

In any case, to a dualist, the most interesting aspect is consciousness itself rather than the brain, so dualists are not necessarily attracted to neuroscience, which means the pundits who are considered experts in the field of consciousness ie neuroscientists are generally materialists ie devoid of consciousness, and so do not understand what the term even refers to.

Dualists can allow the materialists to revel in their lack of mind, and in their ability to create "artificial" versions of themselves, and which contain the ability to make statements like "I exists" and to groom themselves in a mirror, which to the materialist seem to prove that they have what dualists call consciousness. However, as AI will advance further, and will merge with robotics, it may become a more urgent pursuit for dualists to find ways to distinguish themselves from the mindless, whether human or humanly-manufactured.

Until it is possible to find an unmistakable physical correlate of consciousness or other marker of a mind, it may end up tragically futile for the minded to insist that beings with minds should not be ruled by humanly-made entities without minds. It is only the minded who can understand this at all, whereas to materialists if a deep-learning equipped machine can get higher compassion-scores as a judge then as to minds "we see no need for this hypothesis". The minded are beginning to sense that AI is a threat, but they will be powerless to resist until the reason for the threat is understood – ie that there are non-minded humans who do not get the central significance and importance of mind – even if it is inferior intellectually and in executing compassionate judgement – and it is they who are creating similarly mindless machines, which eventually they will feel are qualified to rule over all of us. This makes it more urgent for the distinction between minded and materialist to be drawn.

## ……

**Blueprint and criteria**: Identifying a likely correlate to consciousness might assist in both sides of the AI project and controversy:

* Enabling a blueprint which would assist those attempting the creation of human-equivalent consciousness;
* Establishing accepted objective scientific criteria for according conscious status to an AI. For example as a prerequisite for allowing it to be involved in judicial procedures, college admission, insurance rejection or other activities involving 'judgement' which can negatively impact humans.

**A fundamental confusion underlying some of the debate between those who say AI will be conscious and those who deny it is possible, and a prescription for eliminating this confusion**

The argument between sevex and materialist proponents of AI-human parity as to whether "consciousness" will emerge in AI is misguided since the latter side doesn’t believe in "sevex", and so when they say AI will be ‘conscious’ they are referring to characteristics which sevex agree can be possessed by AI, so it is absurd to argue - how can there be meaningful dialogue on the issue of whether AI will possess consciousness when the central term ‘consciousness’ means something qualitatively different to the two sides?

**Why the existence of materialist proponents of conscious AI ironically provides reason to doubt the inevitability of the truth of their assertion**

Sevex admit that they do not know what consciousness is, how it arose nor why it exists at all, however there is nevertheless a general supposition that it became associated to the human brain when brains achieved a certain minimum level of sophistication due to neural interconnectivity. Sevex do not deny the physicality of the brain, and so there is no reason to think that other physical structures – even if they are manufactured by humans and are silicate-based rather than biological - cannot also become associated to sevex-consciousness under the appropriate conditions. So the supposed issue in the debate of whether AI can achieve ‘consciousness’ is not the real issue.

Since it is not known how or why it arose in some human brains, one cannot necessarily assume that any sufficiently sophisticatedly-interacting device will be sevex. There is no fundamental reason to deny this could be so, however the existence of materialists with sophisticated brain wiring interconnections is itself a counter-argument[[20]](#footnote-20). So ironically, the insistence of materialists that AI will become conscious is in a way a reason to doubt the inevitability of this happening.

The discussion should therefore be whether humanly-created AI will eventually achieve the same degree of neural interconnectivity, and if so whether this sophistication (or whatever other qualitative/quantitative criteria is required) can in theory bring in its wake the same (type of) association to consciousness as is the case for sevex-brains. Perhaps the proposed brain-experiment to detect differences in wiring/structure between brains with and without associated sevex will help in determining what is the requisite structure/wiring, and thus aid in the production of AI with associated sevex.

[Ironically, it may even be that sevex can agree that AI can become conscious without this necessarily implying that the materialists who built the AI are themselves conscious. Indeed sevex might even end up enjoying philosophical debate with the conscious AI more than the sterile debate with the materialists who created it. And if the AI is not conscious, it and the materialists who created it can congratulate each other with proofs of the speciousness of the concept of 'mind'.]

If a physical difference is found in materialist and dualist brains this can not only perhaps supply a guideline to follow in constructing AI which is hoped to acquire sevex but also lead to recognition of the futility of discussion between sevex and materialists about whether AI will achieve consciousness.

## …………..

**Alternate titles for the paper**[[21]](#footnote-21)

1. ### "On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata" (1874). See also Article by William James (1879) First published in *Mind,* *4*, 1-22: Everyone is now acquainted with the Conscious-Automaton-theory to which Prof. Huxley[[1](https://psychclassics.yorku.ca/James/automata.htm#f1)] gave such publicity in his Belfast address……..The theory maintains that in everything outward we are pure material machines. "

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 1999: "Mindless Materialism": see url and discussion in the accompanying “cover letter”. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The essence of sevex - and what makes it so unique and impossible-seeming to materialists who do not experience it - is that is a phenomenon which is a) qualitatively different than the material, b) is known directly, automatically, internally, c) and it defines a 'self'.

   Sevex claims it is self-evidently-existent, which seems like an impossibility to materialists. Sevex proclaims it is a "self", which exclaims "I am", and states confidently "the very fact that there is a thought 'I am' is sufficient indication that indeed there is an "I" - and all of thi seems absurd to the materialist who lacks sevex.

   The discussions in the paper will occasionally use this term 'sevex' as the catch all, and sometimes the term "dualist" or "dualist-type consciousness" or ‘non-materialist’. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **Dualists, idealists, panpsychists:** To (those who claim they are) sevex, the mind-brain problem is intractable and they have tried to find a way to mitigate it by postulation, ie the dualist's dual-level and the Cartesian correlating entity - “God”. Some dualists will say that at sufficient level of sophistication of the material level the non-material level arises or emerges or attaches locally from a pre-existing background higher level). The idealist has an elegant solution, as does the solipsist.

   The panpsychists says 'it is mind all the way down', with the dualist’s two levels meshed. However *t****he existence of eliminative materialists is an argument against panpsychism;*** the latteris perhaps BASED on the assumption that all humans are conscious, where the assumption is probably based on the need to have all humans be conscious despite the non-conscious nature of their evolutionary predecessors, and so panpsychism is an elegant solution of the mind-brain problem, or an evasion of it. However if as proposed here not all humans are conscious, and sevex is NOT an inevitable feature of sophisticated brains, then there may be no need for the assumption of panpsychism.

   It would be imprudent to simply assume animals are or are not conscious. A minimalistic assumption is that consciousness is not all-present or automatic, nor arises for all sophisticated interactions, but is dependent on something else, which might become apparent in an examination of the difference between the brains of elmats and sevex. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. **Re "Self-awareness"**: Clearly one can construct an AI-equipped moving device ('robot/machine') which can have a map of its structure as part of one element of its system, and a diagnostics of its operations etc as another element in its system, and a mechanism to detect collisions and their magnitude and location, with a feedback between the three also incorporated into its systems so that it can learn from experience that collisions may cause damage to some part of its structure which impairs its function etc, and then eventually as part of the 'curiosity' with which is programmed, if it encounters a mirror it will eventually learn that the visual input matches the map it has and it will learn how to move to see different parts and will be interested in visually investigating parts to which it has no direct visual access.

   What this means is that this type of 'self-awareness' is completely physically possible and involves nothing that is not 'material', and ***therefore we can conclude with certainty that it is NOT what dualists mean by "self-awareness" since they state unequivocally that there is no known method of constructing consciousness or awareness or self awareness and no known method for detecting its existence other than 'internally', ie by an awareness knowing itself***.

   It may be that animals or other entities are conscious but not self-conscious. It may be that however difficult it is to identify the existence of consciousness in a human who is self-conscious it is a far more difficult task to identify it in a conscious but non-self-conscious entity. That is, perhaps self-consciousness itself is a tool which can aid us in its own detection, and of course a survey on these issues would be useless if an intelligent conscious entity did not even know of itself as a conscious entity, and so we will NOT include non-self-conscious conscious beings in the catch-all term "dualists", and will instead possibly expect their responses to be identical to that of materialists, or perhaps there will be a distinctive difference.

   Note the relevant interesting conundrum: Although the existence of sevex is self-evident, it is ONLY self-evident, ie one's awareness CANNOT be proven to exist to anyone ELSE, even if they too claim to possess the same type of consciousness.

   Dualist-type consciousness is the ultimate self-reference - it is a 'self', ie that which experiences – and 'self-awareness' all the more so. Of course a machine mentioning that machine, ie 'itself', is being self-referential, but "dualist-type (self)consciousness" is different – perhaps we can terminologically distinguish them by saying that the machine is engaged in auto-reference whereas a full dualist-type (self)consciousness is by definition 'self-referencing'. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophical\_zombie [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. **Is the thesis offensive?** This idea of materialists being "mindless" may sound disturbing, but science is about open debate and not about denial, and by ignoring this we are also denying the many millions who claim to have this awareness the recognition of this vital fact about our reality as they experience it, and sweeping under the carpet the claim that either physics is not - in its present form at least - even capable of dealing with what is seen by many physicists as being the most fundamental phenomenon in the universe, or alternately, ignoring the implication that many physicists have a glitch in their brain which leads them to postulate the impossible. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. One can conjecture what a dualist would expect a robot to respond when confronted with mind-talk, and compare that to what materialists say, and see if there is any important difference. Perhaps one can even ask an AI programmed for science to consider the issue of its own consciousness etc and see how it responds. Of course a materialist can claim it IS conscious and so if there is no difference between the AI and the materialist it doesn't prove anything, but to the dualist it might be illuminating, and they would stop wasting time debating this issue with materialists. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Note: An interesting notion is expressed by David Berman, who traces “different types of mind” as evidenced by the philosophical positions expressed by various philosophers#. However, as stated, the opinion of the present author is that not all humans possess self-awareness - and are perhaps even entirely lacking of mind - rather than simply having a different ‘type of mind’. Therefore this paper speaks specifically of different types of brains - rather than different types of minds - some of which have mind associated to them and some which do not. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. (As the viewer of the movie "My Cousin Vinny" understands the conversation in the jail cell in a way that the movie characters cannot: the person entering the cell is an attorney arriving to help, but the person in the jail thinks they are a fellow prisoner coming to assault them, and only at the end of the clip does the situation start to become clearer to all: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ore7u6kzFTQ) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Of course some went in the opposite direction and began to consider humanity insignificant, especially when faced with the new understanding of the immensity of the physical universe (to a large degree this involves a logical flaw both since ‘significance’ is a concept in human minds, and since to sevex the significance of a human far outweighs the ‘significance’ of infinitely more massive non-sevex matter). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Defining terms: On the one hand one can talk about "the self which is self-evidently existent", and use this as a sort of definition of part of what is meant, but materialists will say this is nonsense and so is not a definition.

    Indeed, all definitions of what dualists etc mean by consciousness are flawed since they inevitably use some term that implies the term being defined, and also because the terms used mean different things to materialists and to dualists (ie materialists say they DO possess mind so using mind in the definition is not only circular but useless).

    And as mentioned above, all this is part of what 'defines' it in the sense of pointing to it unambiguously.

    For the purposes of this article, we can point to it in a way that materialists will understand what it is that is being referred to without defining it, by saying that what is referred to is that which they claim is impossible and cannot exist.

    And if they say that an alleged phenomenon which cannot be proven to exist has no place in physics discussion especially if it is claimed to be known to exist automatically which is the antithesis of physics, and perhaps it does not even belong in philosophical discussion, then I say that this is exactly the issue - it is KNOWN to exist, and since they DO NOT POSSESS IT and CANNOT KNOW OF ITS EXISTENCE, their protestations are irrelevant.

    Materialists have put everyone else on the defensive by stating that since qualia and mind are not provable they don't belong in physics, and (therefore) they are not fundamental and are either 'illusory' or 'epiphenomena'. Part of my intent in this paper is to put the materialists on the defensive, or at least to enable non-materialist physicists to feel free to express their views about "consciousness" without being defensive (I discuss this more in the 'physics-related' paper linked there), to make them comfortable dismissing the materialist objections that what cannot be proven is not legitimate and that which is claimed to be known to exist simply by introspection is 'illusion', and that terms which cannot be defined meaningfully to them are illegitimate.

    And to enable religious and spiritual etc people to be free of the need to defend themselves against materialist-based critiques, as opposed to rational critique that could be leveled even by dualists etc (ie it is somewhat analogous to dismissing the lower criticism but enfranchising the higher criticism). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Of course in contrast to the dualist:

    \* a solipsist may feel it unnecessary to even bother discussing properties of alleged others who don't actually exist;

    \* an idealist says the materialist is themself a mind-like construct, albeit one which ironically denies that which is its essence. (However even the idealist might ascribe a difference to a wooden table and a conscious brain, and if they agree with my proposition they would include a materialist with tables rather than with brains "possessing a mind");

    \* Neutral monists enfranchise mind as an aspect of what exists and might consider the materialist as a construct of mind matter which denies an aspect of its essence, and those who accept my proposition might consider the materialist brain to manifest a different type or level of mindmatter than that manifested by a brain with mind.

    \* the panpsychist might feel that all the fundamental particles in the materialist's body are also mind-like, and so that the materialist brain necessarily has some mind-like characteristics, and they may or may not feel constrained to assume that the materialist brain as a whole experiences (a yet higher degree of) mind at the collective level;

    \* Etc etc for non-materialist monists of various types

    So in this sense, I see the materialist and dualist as most easily seen in opposition in the context of my proposition, in comparison to all the others as listed above where it is somewhat convoluted.

    However, in essence I am not concerned - in this context - about the distinctions between panpsychist idealist dualist etc, nor with whether it is simpler to use the dualist as example, because I see them all as similar in their contrast to the (eliminative) materialist who denies altogether that which is common to them (ie the (notion of the) existence of mind). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. From Paul Davies, David Finkelstein, Demetrios Christodoulou, Art Komar (and a report of a conversations with David Bohm); other conversations were with Ed Witten, Roger Penrose, Steven Hawking and J A Wheeler [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. group-membership restricted to academics, by invitation [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Many of those who have experienced this (including the author) have little doubt that this utterly convincing sense that some dangerous, frightful - and perhaps supernatural - being is present right nearby is the source of many tales of night-time demon-encounters. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. To be more precise: a) In the dreaming state, the "I" which is experiencing the situation is usually not aware that the body associated to it is sleeping and that the experience is a dream. b) We do not really know whether there is a major difference between the I which is experiencing during a dream and the I which experiences when the body is awake. c) As a result of these two points, taken in combination, it is not clear that we can really say "what I experience during lucid dreaming is identical to what I experience when awake"; instead what we CAN say is that after waking it seems that way to me, or: my brain expresses something like "I felt during the dream as I feel in a real life experience". However, sometimes one IS aware that it is a lucid dream, and there is a feeling of amazement that it is possible, and the I that is amazed feels that the experience is identical to the relevant experience of the waking I. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Note that there is some relationship between these ideas and the notion of “dual systems: in the brain (thanks to M. Zelcer and L Litman for pointing this out). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. [In a similar vein, one can perhaps create a convention where 'true free will' or 'antinomian libertarian acausal free will' is referred to not as ‘free will’, which would mean basically ‘the illusion of free will’ but rather with a new term earmarked for the purpose. For example "fully free will" or "ffree will" which will be defined as "the type of free willed choice which is physically and logically impossible, is executed by a sevex, and which would be necessary but not sufficient in order for a compassionate and reasonable creator of that being to consider it morally responsible for its actions". In this way, people can have discussions about whether or not this type of free will can exist, and whether humans - or some humans - possess it etc, rather than an argument about its definition or characteristics.] [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. If the panpsychist or idealist or some-type-of-monist is correct, and mind is inherent in everything, including in silica and plastic, there is no reason to think that a sufficiently sophisticated "artificial" brain will NOT be conscious, except for the counter-example of brilliant materialist brains which despite sophisticated brain structure and wiring lack sevex. (So the existence of materialists is a sort of disproof of panpsychism). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. \*Does brain structure/wiring determine whether one is a materialist or non-materialist?

    \* Are Materialist Mindless or are Dualists Delusional? Perhaps brain-structure is responsible, and experiment can help make the determination; (

    \* Can brain experiments determine whether (it is) Materialists (who) are Mindless or Dualists (who) are Delusional?); or: Can experiments on brains detect aspects of structure or wiring which determine whether it is Mindless and therefore Materialist or Delusional and therefore Dualist?

    \* Materialists are from Mindlessia and Dualists are from Delusia [↑](#footnote-ref-21)