

# QUANTUM PHYSICS IN NEUROSCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY: A NEUROPHYSICAL MODEL OF MIND/BRAIN INTERACTION

Jeffrey M. Schwartz<sup>1</sup>

Henry P. Stapp<sup>2</sup>

Mario Beauregard<sup>3, 4, 5\*</sup>

1 UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute, 760 Westwood Plaza, C8-619 NPI Los Angeles, California 90024-1759, USA. E-mail: jmschwar@ucla.edu

2 Theoretical Physics Mailstop 5104/50A Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720-8162, USA. Email: hpstapp@lbl.gov

3 Département de Psychologie, Centre de Recherche en Neuropsychologie Expérimentale et Cognition (CRENEC), Université de Montréal, C.P. 6128, succursale Centre-Ville, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H3C 3J7.

4 Département de Radiologie, Université de Montréal, C.P. 6128, succursale Centre-Ville, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H3C 3J7.

5 Centre de recherche en sciences neurologiques (CRSN), Université de Montréal, C.P. 6128, succursale Centre-Ville, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H3C 3J7.

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\*Correspondence should be addressed to: Mario Beauregard, Département de Psychologie, Université de Montréal, C.P. 6128, succursale Centre-Ville, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H3C 3J7. Tel (514) 340-3540 #4129; Fax: (514) 340-3548; E-mail: mario.beauregard@umontreal.ca

## **ABSTRACT**

Neuropsychological research on the neural basis of behavior generally posits that brain mechanisms will ultimately suffice to explain all psychologically described phenomena. This assumption stems from the idea that the brain is made up entirely of material particles and fields, and that all causal mechanisms relevant to neuroscience can therefore be formulated solely in terms of properties of these elements. Thus terms having intrinsic mentalistic and/or experiential content (e.g., "feeling," "knowing," and "effort") are not included as primary causal factors. This theoretical restriction is motivated primarily by ideas about the natural world that have been known to be fundamentally incorrect for more than three quarters of a century. Contemporary basic physical theory differs profoundly from classical physics on the important matter of how the consciousness of human agents enters into the structure of empirical phenomena. The new principles contradict the older idea that local mechanical processes alone can account for the structure of all observed empirical data. Contemporary physical theory brings directly and irreducibly into the overall causal structure certain psychologically described choices made by human agents about how they will act. This key development in basic physical theory is applicable to neuroscience, and it provides neuroscientists and psychologists with an alternative conceptual framework for describing neural processes. Indeed, due to certain structural features of ion channels critical to synaptic function, contemporary physical theory must in principle be used when analyzing human brain dynamics. The new framework, unlike its classical-physics-based predecessor is erected directly upon, and is compatible with, the prevailing principles of physics, and is able to represent more adequately than classical concepts the neuroplastic mechanisms relevant to the growing

number of empirical studies of the capacity of directed attention and mental effort to systematically alter brain function.

**Key index words:** mind, consciousness, brain, neuroscience, neuropsychology, quantum mechanics.

"[T]he only acceptable point of view appears to be the one that recognizes both sides of reality --- the quantitative and the qualitative, the physical and the psychical --- as compatible with each other, and can embrace them simultaneously."

Wolfgang Pauli, *The Influence of Archetypal Ideas on the Scientific Theories of Kepler*

## 1. Introduction

The introduction into neuroscience and neuropsychology of the extensive use of functional brain imaging technology has revealed, at the empirical level, an important causal role of directed attention in cerebral functioning. The identification of brain areas involved in a wide variety of information processing functions concerning learning, memory and various kinds of symbol manipulation has been the subject of extensive and intensive investigation (See Toga & Mazziotta 2000). Neuroscientists consequently now have a reasonably good working knowledge of the role of a variety of brain areas in the processing of complex information. But, valuable as these empirical studies are, they provide only the data for, not the answer to, the critical question of the causal relationship between the aspects of empirical studies that are described in psychological terms and those that are described in neurophysiological terms. In the vast majority of cases investigators simply assume that measurable-in-principle properties of the brain are the only factors needed to explain eventually the processing of the psychologically described information that occurs in neuropsychological experiments.

This privileging of physically describable brain mechanisms as the core, and indeed final, explanatory vehicle for the processing of every kind of psychologically described data is the foundational assumption of almost all contemporary biologically based cognitive neuroscience.

It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that there is at least one type of information processing and manipulation that does not readily lend itself to explanations that assume that all final causes are subsumed within brain, or more generally, central nervous system (CNS) mechanisms. The cases in question are those in which the conscious act of willfully altering the mode by which experiential information is processed itself changes, in systematic ways, the cerebral mechanisms utilized. There is a growing recognition of the theoretical importance of applying experimental paradigms that employ directed mental effort in order to produce systematic and predictable changes in brain function (e.g., Beauregard et al. 2001; Ochsner et al. 2002). These willfully induced brain changes are generally accomplished through training in, and the applied use, of cognitive reattribution and the attentional re-contextualization of conscious experience. Furthermore, an accelerating number of studies in the neuroimaging literature significantly support the thesis that, again, with appropriate training and effort, people can systematically alter neural circuitry associated with a variety of mental and physical states that are frankly pathological (Schwartz et al. 1996; Schwartz 1998; Musso et al. 1999; Paquette et al. 2003). A recent review of this and the related neurological literature has coined the term "self-directed neuroplasticity" to serve as a general description of

the principle that focused training and effort can systematically alter cerebral function in a predictable and potentially therapeutic manner (Schwartz & Begley 2002).

From a theoretical perspective perhaps the most important aspect of this line of research is the empirical support it provides for a new science-based way of conceptualizing the interface between mind/consciousness and brain. Until recently virtually all attempts to understand the functional activity of the brain have been based, at least implicitly, on some principles of classical physics that have been known to be fundamentally false for three quarters of a century. According to the classical conception of the world, all causal connections between observables are explainable in terms of mechanical interactions between material realities. But this restriction on modes of causation is not fully maintained by the currently applied principles of physics, which consequently offer an alternative conceptual foundation for the scientific description and modeling of the causal structure of self-directed neuroplasticity.

The advantages for neuroscience and neuropsychology of utilizing the conceptual framework of *contemporary* physics, as opposed to that of *classical* physics, stem from five basic facts. First, terms such as "feeling," "knowing" and "effort," because they are intrinsically mentalistic and experiential, cannot be described exclusively in terms of material structure. Second, in order to explain the observable properties of large physical systems that depend sensitively upon the behaviors of their atomic constituents the founders of contemporary physical theory were led to introduce explicitly into *the basic causal structure of physics* certain important choices made by human beings about how

they will act. Third, within this altered conceptual framework these choices are described in mentalistic (i.e., psychological) language. Fourth, terminology of precisely this kind is critically necessary for the design and execution of the experiments in which the data demonstrating the core phenomena of self-directed neuroplasticity are acquired and described. Fifth, the injection of psychologically described choices on the part of human agents into the causal theoretical structure can be achieved for experiments in neuroscience by applying the same mathematical rules that were developed to account for the structure of phenomena in the realm of atomic science.

The consequence of these facts is that twentieth century physics, in contrast to classical physics, provides a rationally coherent pragmatic framework in which the psychologically and neurophysiologically described aspects of the neuroscience experiments mentioned above are causally related to each other in mathematically specified ways. Thus contemporary physics allows the data from the rapidly emerging field of self-directed neuroplasticity to be described and understood in a way that is more rationally coherent, scientific, and useful than what is permitted by theories in which all causation is required to be fundamentally mechanical.

To explicate the physics of the interface between mind/consciousness and the physical brain, we shall in this article describe in detail how the quantum mechanically based causal mechanisms work, and show why it is necessary in principle to advance to the quantum level to achieve an adequate theory of the neurophysiology of volitionally directed activity. The reason, basically, is that classical physics is an approximation to the

more accurate quantum theory, and that this classical approximation *eliminates the causal efficacy of our conscious efforts* that these experiments empirically manifest.

It will also be explained how certain structural features of ion conductance channels critical to synaptic function *entail* that the classical approximation fails in principle to cover the dynamics of a human brain. Quantum dynamics *must be used in principle*. Furthermore, once the transition to the quantum description is made, the principles of quantum theory must, in order to maintain rational consistency and coherency, be used to link the quantum physical description of the subject's brain to his stream of conscious experiences. The conscious choices by human agents thereby become injected nontrivially into the causal interpretation of neuroscience and neuropsychology experiments. This caveat particularly applies to those experimental paradigms in which human subjects are required to perform decision-making or attention-focusing tasks that require conscious effort.

## 2. Practical ramifications of the altered conception of the causal structure of self-directed neuroplasticity

Clarity is required about the sorts of neuroscientific reasoning that remain coherent, given the structure of modern physics, and, contrastingly, the types of assertions that can now be viewed as the residue of a materialistic bias stemming from a superceded physics. Entirely acceptable are *correlational analyses* concerning the relationship between mentalistic data and neurophysiological mechanisms. Examining the qualitative and quantitative aspects of brain function, and doing detailed analyses of how they relate



to the data of experience, obtained through increasingly sophisticated means of psychological investigation and subject self-report analysis (e.g., the entire Sep/Oct 2003 issue of *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Volume 10, Number 9-10, is dedicated to these questions), are completely in line with fundamental physics. These activities are the core of neuropsychological science. What is not justified is the presumption, either tacit or explicit, that *all* aspects of experience examined and reported are necessarily causal consequences solely of brain mechanisms. The structure of contemporary physics entails no such conclusion. This is particularly relevant to data from first person reports concerning active willfully directed attentional focus, and especially to data pertaining to which aspects of the stream of conscious awareness a subject chooses to focus on when making self-directed efforts to modify and/or modulate the quality and beam of attention. In such cases the structure of orthodox quantum physics implies that the investigator is not justified in assuming that the focus of attention is determined wholly by brain mechanisms that are in principle completely well defined and mechanically determined. Conscious effort itself can, justifiably within science, be taken to be a primary variable whose complete causal origins may be *untraceable in principle*, but whose causal efficacy in the physical world can be explained on the basis of the laws of physics.

As already emphasized, the cognitive frame in which neuroscience research, including research on cerebral aspects of behavior, is generally conducted contains within it the assumption that brain mechanisms are in principle fully sufficient to explain all of the observed phenomena. In the fields of functional neuroimaging this has led to

experimental paradigms that focus primarily on changes in brain activation as primary variables used to explain whatever behavioral changes are observed --- including ones understood as involving essentially cognitive and emotional responses. As long as one is investigating phenomena that are mostly passive in nature this may be fully justified. A person is shown a picture depicting an emotionally or perhaps a sexually arousing scene. The relevant limbic and/or diencephalic structures are activated. The investigator generally concludes that the observed brain activation has some intrinsic causal role in the emotional changes reported (or perhaps, the hormonal correlates of those changes).

All is well and good, as far as it goes. And all quite passive from the experimental subject's perspective --- all that's really required on his or her part is to remain reasonably awake and alert, or, more precisely, at least somewhat responsive to sensory inputs. But when, as happens in a growing number of studies, the subject makes an active response aimed at systematically *altering* the nature of the emotional reaction --- for example, by actively performing a cognitive reattribution --- then the demand that the data be understood solely from the perspective of brain-based causal mechanism is a severe and counter-intuitive constraint. It is noteworthy that this demand for an entirely brain-based causal mechanism is nullified, in the quantum model developed here, by a specified quantum effect, which will be described in detail below.

Surmounting the limitations imposed by restricting one's ideas to the failed concepts of classical physics can be especially important when one is investigating how to develop improved methods for altering the emotional and cerebral responses to significantly

stressful external or internally generated stimuli. An incorrect assignment of the causal roles of neurophysiologically and mentalistically described variables can impact negatively on a therapist's selection of a course of treatment, on a patient's capacity to recover, and on a neuroscientist's design of clinically relevant research programs.

In the analysis and development of clinical practices involving psychological treatments and their biological effects the possession and use of a rationally coherent and physically allowable conception of the causal relationship between mind and brain (or, if one prefers, mentalistic and neurophysiological variables) is critical. If one simply accepts the standard presumption that all aspects of emotional response are passively determined by neurobiological mechanisms, then the theoretical development of genuinely effective self-directed psychological strategies that produce real neurobiological changes can be blocked by the fact that one is using a theory that excludes from the dynamics what logically can be, and in our model actually are, key causal elements, namely our willful choices.

The clinician's attention is thus directed away from what can be in many cases, at the level of actual practice, a powerful determinant of action, namely the subject's psychologically (i.e., mentalistically) framed commitment to act or think in specific ways. The therapist tends to become locked into the view that the *psychological* treatment of ailments *caused by neurobiological impairments* is not a realistic goal.

There is already a wealth of data arguing against this view. For instance, work in the 1990's on patients with obsessive compulsive disorder demonstrated significant changes in caudate nucleus metabolism and the functional relationships of the orbitofrontal cortex-striatum-thalamus circuitry in patients who responded to a psychological treatment utilizing cognitive reframing and attentional refocusing as key aspects of the therapeutic intervention (for review see Schwartz & Begley 2002). More recently work by Beauregard and colleagues (Paquette et al. 2003) have demonstrated systematic changes in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and parahippocampal gyrus after cognitive-behavioral therapy for spider phobia, with brain changes significantly related to both objective measurements and subjective reports of fear and aversion. There are now numerous reports on the effects of self-directed regulation of emotional response, via cognitive reframing and attentional re-contextualization mechanisms, on cerebral function (e.g., Beauregard et al. 2001; Lévesque et al. 2003; Ochsner et al. 2002; Paquette et al. 2003; Schwartz et al. 1996).

The brain area generally activated in all the studies done so far on the self-directed regulation of emotional response is the prefrontal cortex, a cortical region also activated in studies of cerebral correlates of willful mental activity, particularly those investigating self-initiated action and the act of attending to one's own actions (Spence & Frith 1999; Schwartz & Begley 2002). There is however one aspect of willful mental activity that seems particularly critical to emotional self-regulation and that seems to be the critical factor in it's effective application --- the factor of focused dispassionate self-

observation that, in a rapidly growing number of clinical psychology studies, has come to be called mindfulness or mindful awareness (Segal et al. 2002)

The mental act of clear-minded introspection and observation, variously known as mindfulness, mindful awareness, bare attention, the impartial spectator, etc. is a well-described psychological phenomenon with a long and distinguished history in the description of human mental states (Nyanaponika 2000). The most systematic and extensive exposition is in the canonical texts of classical Buddhism preserved in the Pali language, a dialect of Sanskrit. Because of the critical importance of this type of close attentiveness in the practice of Buddhist meditation, some of its most refined descriptions in English are in texts concerned with meditative practice (although it is of critical importance to realize that the mindful mental state does not require any specific meditative practice to acquire, and is *certainly not* in any sense a "trance-like" state).

One particularly well-established description, using the name bare attention, is as follows:

"Bare Attention is the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens *to* us and *in* us at the successive moments of perception. It is called 'Bare' because it attends just to the bare facts of a perception as presented either through the five physical senses or through the mind . . . without reacting to them." (Nyanaponika 1973, p.30)

Perhaps the essential characteristic of mindful observation is that you are just watching, observing all facts, both inner and outer, very calmly, clearly, and closely. To sustain this attentional perspective over time, especially during stressful events, invariably requires the conscious application of effort.

A working hypothesis for ongoing investigation in human neurophysiology, based on a significant body of preliminary data, is that the mental action of mindful awareness specifically modulates the activity of the prefrontal cortex. Because of the well established role of this cortical area in the planning and willful selection of self-initiated responses (Spence & Frith 1999; Schwartz & Begley 2002), the capacity of mindful awareness, and by implication all emotional self-regulating strategies, to specifically modulate activity in this critical brain region has tremendous implications for the fields of mental health and related areas.

It might be claimed that the designs and executions of successful clinical practices (and of informative neuropsychological experiments) that depend on the idea of the causal efficacy of conscious effort, and which fit so well into the quantum conceptualization that actually explains the causal efficacy of these efforts, could just as well be carried out within the conceptual framework in which the causal efficacy of willfull effort is an illusion, or is something very different from what it intuitively seems to be. But such a claim is not easy to defend. Simple models that are consistent with basic intuition and lead directly to experimentally demonstrable conclusions are better than philosophically intricate ones that lead to the same conclusions. Of course, if it could be argued that the

simple model could not be true because it violates the basic principles of physics, while the more intricate one obeys them, then there might be reasonable grounds for question or dispute. But in the present case the reverse is true: it is the simple model that is built on the basic laws of physics, and it is the arcane and philosophically difficult model, in which our basic human intuition concerning the efficacy of mental effort is denied as not being what it seems to be, that contradicts the laws of physics.

The major theoretical issue we address in this article is the failure of classical models of neurobiological action to provide a scientifically adequate account for all of the mechanisms that are operating when human beings utilize self-directed strategies for the purpose of modulating emotional responses and their cerebral correlates. Specifically, the assumption that all aspects of mental activity and emotional life are ultimately explicable solely in terms of micro-local deterministic brain activity, with no superposed effects of mental effort, produces a theoretical structure that both fails to meet practical scientific needs, and also fails to accord with the causal structure of modern physics.

In the alternative approach the role played by the mind, when one is observing and modulating one's own emotional states, is an intrinsically active and physically efficacious process in which mental action is affecting brain activity in a way concordant with the laws of physics. A culturally relevant way of framing this change is to say that contemporary physics imbues the venerable and therapeutically useful term "psychodynamic" with rigorous neurophysical efficacy.

This new theory of the mind-brain connection is supportive of clinical practice. Belief in the efficacy of mental effort in emotional self-regulation is needed to subjectively access the phenomena (e.g., belief in the efficacy of effort is required to sustain mindfulness during stressful events). Moreover, a conceptual framework in which psychologically described efforts have effects is needed explain to patients what they are supposed to do when directing their inner resources to the challenging task of modifying emotional and cerebral responses. Clinical success is jeopardized by a belief on the part of either therapists or patients that their mental effort is an illusion or a misconception.

It takes effort for people to achieve therapeutic results. That is because it requires a redirection of the brain's resources away from lower level limbic responses and toward higher level prefrontal functions --- and this does not happen passively. Rather, it requires, in actual practice, both willful training and directed mental effort. It is semantically inconsistent and clinically counter productive to insist that these kinds of brain changes be viewed as being solely an intra-cerebral "the physical brain changing itself" type of action. That is because practical aspects of the activity of mind essential to the identification, activation, application and use of directed mental effort are not describable solely in terms of material brain mechanisms. The core phenomena necessary for the scientific description of self-directed neuroplasticity are processes that cannot be elaborated solely in terms of classical models of physics.

Furthermore, as we will see in detail in the following sections of this article, orthodox concepts of contemporary physics are ideally suited to a rational and practically useful



understanding of the action of mindful self-observation on brain function. Classical models of physics, which view all action in the physical world as being ultimately the result of the movements of material particles, are now seriously out of date, and no longer need be seen as providing the unique, or the best, scientifically well grounded paradigm for investigating the interface between mind/consciousness and brain.

When people practice self-directed activities for the purpose of systematically altering patterns of cerebral activation they are attending to their mental and emotional *experiences*, not merely their limbic or hypothalamic brain mechanisms. And while no scientifically oriented person denies that those brain mechanisms play a critical role in generating those experiences, precisely what the person is training himself/herself to do is to willfully *change* how those brain mechanisms operate --- and to do that requires attending to mental experience *per se*. It is in fact the basic thesis of self-directed neuroplasticity research that the *way in which a person directs his attention*, e.g., mindfully or unmindfully, will affect both the experiential state of the person and the state of his/her brain. The existence of this close connection between mental effort and brain activity flows naturally out of the dynamical principles of contemporary physics, but is, within the framework of classical physics, a difficult problem that philosophers of mind have been intensively engaged with, particularly for the past fifty years. The core question is whether the solution to this problem lies in wholly in the eventual development of a more sophisticated philosophy that is closely aligned with the classical known-to-be-fundamentally-false conception nature, or whether the profound twentieth century development in physics that assigns a subtle but essential causal role to human

consciousness can usefully inform our understanding of the effects of human consciousness in neuropsychological experiments that appear to exhibit the causally efficacious presence of such effects.

To appreciate the major conceptual changes made in basic physical theory during the twentieth century one must be know about certain key features of the older theory.

### 3. Classical physics

Classical physics is a theory of nature that originated with the work of Isaac Newton in the seventeenth century and was advanced by the contributions of James Clerk Maxwell and Albert Einstein. Newton based his theory on the work of Johannes Kepler, who found that the planets appeared to move in accordance with a simple mathematical law, and in ways wholly determined by their spatial relationships to other objects. Those motions were apparently *independent of our human observations of them*.

Newton effectively assumed that all physical objects were made of tiny miniaturized versions of the planets, which, like the planets, moved in accordance with simple mathematical laws, independently of whether we observed them or not. He found that he could then explain the motions of the planets, and also the motions of large terrestrial objects and systems, such as cannon balls, falling apples, and the tides, by assuming that every tiny planet-like particle in the solar system attracted every other one with a force inversely proportional the square of the distance between them.

This force was an *instantaneous action at a distance*: it acted instantaneously, no matter how far the particles were apart. This feature troubled Newton. He wrote to a friend “That one body should act upon another through the vacuum, without the mediation of anything else, by and through which their action and force may be conveyed from one to another, is to me so great an absurdity that I believe no man, who has in philosophical matters a competent faculty of thinking, can ever fall into it.” (Newton 1687: 634) Although Newton’s philosophical persuasion on this point is clear, he nevertheless formulated his universal law of gravity without specifying how it was mediated.

Albert Einstein, building on the ideas of Maxwell, discovered a suitable mediating agent, a distortion of the structure of space-time itself. Einstein’s contributions made classical physics into what is called a *local theory*: there is no action at a distance. All influences are transmitted essentially by contact interactions between tiny neighboring mathematically described “entities,” and no influence propagates faster than the speed of light.

Classical physics is, moreover, *deterministic*: the interactions are such that the state of the physical world at any time is completely determined by the state at any earlier time. Consequently, according to classical theory, the complete history of the physical world *for all time* is mechanically fixed by contact interactions between tiny component parts, together with the initial condition of the primordial universe.

This result means that, according to classical physics, *you are a mechanical automaton*: your every physical action was pre-determined before you were born solely by mechanical interactions between tiny mindless entities. Your mental aspects are *causally redundant*: everything you do is completely determined by mechanical conditions alone, without any mention of your thoughts, ideas, feelings, or intentions. Your intuitive feeling that your conscious intentions make a difference in what you do is, according to the principles of classical physics, a false and misleading illusion.

There are two possible ways within classical physics to understand this total incapacity of your mental side (i.e., your stream of consciousness thoughts and feelings) to make any difference in what you do. The first way is to consider your thoughts, ideas, and feelings to be epiphenomenal by-products of the activity of your brain. Your mental side is then a causally impotent sideshow that *is produced*, or *caused*, by your brain, but that *produces* no reciprocal action back upon your brain. The second way is to contend that each of your conscious experiences --- each of your thoughts, ideas, or feelings --- is the *very same thing* as some pattern of motion of various tiny parts of your brain.

#### 4. Problems with classical physics

William James (1890: 138) argued against the first possibility, epiphenomenal consciousness, by claiming that “*The particulars of the distribution of consciousness, so far as we know them, points to its being efficacious.*” He noted that consciousness seems to be “an organ, superadded to the other organs which maintain the animal in its struggle for existence; and the presumption of course is that it helps him in some way in this

struggle, just as they do. But it cannot help him without being in some way efficacious and influencing the course of his bodily history.” James said that the study described in his book “will show us that consciousness is at all times primarily a *selecting agency*.” It is present when choices must be made between different possible courses of action. He further mentioned that “It is to my mind quite inconceivable that consciousness should have *nothing to do* with a business to which it so faithfully attends.”(1890: 136)

If mental processes and consciousness have no effect upon the physical world, then what keeps a person’s mental world aligned with his physical situation? What keeps his pleasures in general alignment with actions that benefit him, and pains in general correspondence with things that damage him, if felt pleasures and pains have no effect at all upon his actions?

These liabilities of the notion of epiphenomenal mind and consciousness lead many thinkers to turn to the alternative possibility that a person’s mind and stream of consciousness is *the very same thing* as some activity in his brain: mind and consciousness are “emergent properties” of brains.

A huge philosophical literature has developed arguing for and against this idea. The primary argument against this “emergent-identity theory” position, *within a classical physics framework*, is that in classical physics the full description of nature is in terms of numbers assigned to tiny space-time regions, and there appears to be no way to understand or explain how to get from such a restricted conceptual structure, which

involves such a small part of the world of experience, to the whole. How and why should that extremely limited conceptual structure, which arose basically from idealizing, by miniaturization, certain features of observed planetary motions, suffice to explain the totality of experience, with its pains, sorrows, hopes, colors, smells, and moral judgments? Why, *given the known failure of classical physics at the fundamental level*, should that richly endowed whole be explainable in terms of such a narrowly restricted part?

The core ideas of the arguments in favor of an identity-emergent theory of mind and consciousness are illustrated by Roger Sperry's example of a "wheel." (Sperry 1992) A wheel obviously does something: it is causally efficacious; it carries the cart. It is also an *emergent property*: there is no mention of "wheelness" in the formulation of the laws of physics, and "wheelness" did not exist in the early universe; "wheelness" *emerges* only under certain special conditions. And the macroscopic wheel exercises "top-down" control of its tiny parts. All these properties are perfectly in line with classical physics, and with the idea that "a wheel is, precisely, a structure constructed out of its tiny atomic parts." So why not suppose mind and consciousness to be, like "wheelness", emergent properties of their classically conceived tiny physical parts?

The reason that mind and consciousness are not analogous to "wheelness", within the context of classical physics, is that the properties that characterize "wheelness" are properties that are *entailed*, within the conceptual framework of classical physics, by properties specified in classical physics, whereas the properties that characterize

conscious mental processes, namely the way it feels, are not *entailed*, within the conceptual structure provided by classical physics, by the properties specified by classical physics.

That is the huge difference-in-principle that distinguishes mind and consciousness from things that, according to classical physics, are constructible out of the particles that are postulated to exist by classical physics.

Given the state of motion of each of the tiny physical parts of a wheel, as it is conceived of in classical physics, the properties that characterize the wheel - e.g., its roundness, radius, center point, rate of rotation, etc., - are specified within the conceptual framework provided by the principles of classical physics, which specify only geometric-type properties such as changing locations and shapes of conglomerations of particles, and numbers assigned to points in space. But given the state of motion of each tiny part of the brain, as it is conceived of in classical physics, the properties that characterize the stream of consciousness - the painfulness of the pain, the feeling of the anguish, or of the sorrow, or of the joy - are not specified, within the conceptual framework provided by the principles of classical physics. Thus it is possible, within that classical physics framework, to strip away those feelings without disturbing the physical descriptions of the motions of the tiny parts. One can, within the conceptual framework of classical physics, take away the consciousness while leaving intact the properties that enter into that theoretical construct, namely the locations and motions of the tiny physical parts of the brain and its physical environment. But one cannot, within the conceptual framework

provided by classical physics, take away the physical characteristics that define the “wheelness” of a wheel without affecting the locations and motions of the tiny physical parts of the wheel.

Because one can, within the conceptual framework provided by classical physics, strip away mind and consciousness without affecting the physical behavior, one cannot rationally claim, *within that framework*, that mind and consciousness are the *causes* of the physical behavior, or are *causally efficacious* in the physical world. Thus the “identity theory” or “emergent property” strategy fails in its attempt to make mind and consciousness efficacious, insofar as one remains strictly within the conceptual framework provided by classical physics. Moreover, the whole endeavor to base brain theory on classical physics is undermined by the fact that classical theory is unable to account for behavioral properties (such as electrical and thermal conductivity, and elasticity, etc.) that depend sensitively upon the behavior of the atomic, molecular, and ionic constituents of a system, and brains are certainly systems of this kind, as will be discussed in detail later.

Although classical physics is unable to account for observable properties that depend sensitively on the behaviors of atoms, molecules, and ions, the classical theory is an approximation to a more accurate theory, called quantum theory, that *is* able to account for these observable macroscopic properties. But if classical physics is unable to account for the moderately complex behavioral properties of most other large systems then how



can it be expected to account for the exquisitely complex behavioral properties of thinking brains.

## 5. The quantum approach

Early in the twentieth century scientists discovered empirically that the principles of classical physics could not be correct. Moreover, those principles were wrong in ways that no minor tinkering could ever fix. The *basic principles* of classical physics were thus replaced by *new basic principles* that account uniformly both for all the successes of the older classical theory and also for all the data that is incompatible with the classical principles.

The key philosophical and scientific achievement of the founders of quantum theory was to forge a rationally coherent and practically useful linkage between the two kinds of descriptions that jointly comprise the foundation of science. Descriptions of the first kind are accounts of psychologically experienced empirical findings, expressed in a language that allows us to communicate to our colleagues what we have done and what we have learned. Descriptions of the second kind are specifications of physical properties, which are expressed by assigning mathematical properties to space-time points, and formulating laws that determine how these properties evolve over the course of time. Bohr, Heisenberg, Pauli, and the other inventors of quantum theory discovered a useful way to connect these two kinds of descriptions by causal laws, and their seminal discovery was extended by John von Neumann from the domain of atomic science to the realm of

neuroscience, and in particular to the problem of understanding and describing the causal connections between the minds and the brains of human beings.

In order to achieve this result, the whole *conception of what science is* was turned inside out. The core idea of classical physics was to describe the “world out there,” with no reference to “our thoughts in here.” But the core idea of quantum mechanics is to describe both *our activities as knowledge-seeking and knowledge-acquiring agents*, and also *the knowledge that we thereby acquire*. Thus quantum theory involves, basically, what is “in here,” not just what is “out there.”

This philosophical shift arises from the *explicit* recognition by quantum physicists that science is about *what we can know*. It is fine to have a beautiful and elegant mathematical theory about a *really existing physical world out there* that meets various intellectually satisfying criteria. But the essential demand of *science* is that the theoretical constructs be tied to the experiences of the human scientists who devise ways of testing the theory, and of the human engineers and technicians who both participate in these tests, and eventually put the theory to work. Thus the structure of a proper physical theory must involve not only the part describing the behavior of the not-directly-experienced theoretically postulated entities, expressed in some appropriate symbolic language, but also a part describing the human experiences that are pertinent to these tests and applications, expressed in the language that we actually use to describe such experiences to ourselves

and to each other. And the theory must specify the connection between these two differently described and differently conceived parts of scientific practice.

Classical physics meets this final requirement in a trivial kind of way. The relevant experiences of the human participants are taken to be direct apprehensions of the gross properties of large objects composed of huge numbers of their tiny atomic-scale parts. These apprehensions --- of, for example, the perceived location and motion of a falling apple, or the position of a pointer on a measuring device --- were taken to be *passive*: they had no effect on the behaviors of the systems being studied. But the physicists who were examining the behaviors of systems that depend sensitively upon the behaviors of their tiny atomic-scale components found themselves forced to introduce a less trivial theoretical arrangement. In the new scheme the human agents are no longer passive observers. They are considered to be *active agents, or participants*.

The participation of the agent continues to be important *even when the only features of the physically described world being observed are large-scale properties of measuring devices*. The sensitivity of the behavior of the devices to the behavior of some tiny atomic-scale particles propagates first to the devices and then to the observers in such a way that the choice made by an observer about what sort of knowledge to seek can profoundly affect the knowledge that can ever be received either by that observer himself or by any other observer with whom he can communicate. Thus the *choice* made by the observer about how he or she will act at a macroscopic level has, at the practical level, a profound effect on the physical system being acting upon.

That conclusion is not surprising. How one act on a system would, in general, be *expected* to affect it. Nor is it shocking that the effect of the agent's actions upon the system being probed is specified by the quantum mechanical rules. But the essential point not to be overlooked is that the logical structure of the basic physical theory has become fundamentally transformed. The agent's choice about how to act has been introduced into the scientific description at a basic level, and in a way that specifies, mathematically, how his or her choice about how to act affects the physical system being acted upon

The structure of quantum mechanics is such that, although the effect upon the observed system of the agent's choice about how to act is mathematically specified, the manner in which this choice itself is determined is not specified. This means that, in the treatment of experimental data, the choices made by human agents must be treated as freely chosen input variables, rather than as mechanical consequences of any known laws of nature. Quantum theory thereby converts science's conception of us from that of a mechanical automaton, whose conscious choices are mere cogs in a gigantic mechanical machine, to that of agents whose conscious free choices affect the physically described world in a way specified by the theory. The approximation that reduces quantum theory to classical physics completely eliminates the important element of conscious free choice. Hence, from a physics point of view, trying to understand the connection between mind/consciousness and brain by going to the classical approximation is absurd: it amounts to trying to understand something in an approximation that eliminates the effect we are trying to study.

This original formulation of quantum theory was created mainly at an Institute in Copenhagen directed by Niels Bohr, and is called “The Copenhagen Interpretation.” Due to the strangeness of the properties of nature entailed by the new mathematics, the Copenhagen strategy was to refrain from making any ordinary sort of ontological claims, but to take, instead, an essentially pragmatic stance. Thus the theory was formulated *basically* as a set of practical rules for how scientists should go about the tasks of acquiring, manipulating, and using knowledge. Claims about “what the world out there is really like” were considered to lie beyond *science*.

This change in perspective is captured by Heisenberg’s famous statement:

“The conception of the objective reality of the elementary particles has thus evaporated not into the cloud of some obscure new reality concept, but into the transparent clarity of a mathematics that represents no longer the behavior of the particle but rather our knowledge of this behavior.” (Heisenberg, 1958a)

A closely connected change is encapsulated in Niels Bohr dictum that “in the great drama of existence we ourselves are both actors and spectators.” (Bohr 1963: 15 and 1958: 81) The emphasis here is on “actors”: in classical physics we were mere spectators. The key idea is more concretely expressed in statements such as:

"The freedom of experimentation, presupposed in classical physics, is of course retained and corresponds to the free choice of experimental arrangement for

which the mathematical structure of the quantum mechanical formalism offers the appropriate latitude." (Bohr, 1958, p. 73}

Copenhagen quantum theory is about how the choices made by conscious human agents affect the knowledge they can and do acquire about the physically described systems upon which these agents act. In order to achieve this re-conceptualization of physics the Copenhagen formulation separates the physical universe into two parts, which are described in two different languages. One part is the observing human agent plus his measuring devices. This extended "agent," which includes the devices, is described in mental terms - in terms of our instructions to colleagues about how to set up the devices, and our reports of what we then "see," or otherwise consciously experience. The other part of nature is *the system that the agent is acting upon*. That part is described in physical terms - in terms of mathematical properties assigned to tiny space-time regions. Thus Copenhagen quantum theory brings "doing science" into science. In particular, it brings a crucial part of doing science, namely our choices about how we will probe nature, directly into the causal structure. It specifies the effects of these probing actions upon the systems being probed.

This approach works very well in practice. However, the body and brain of the human agent, and also his devices, are composed of atomic constituents. Hence a complete theory ought to be able to describe these systems in physical terms.

The great mathematician and logician John von Neumann formulated quantum theory in a rigorous way that allows the bodies and brains of the agents, along with their measuring devices, to be shifted into the physically described world. This shift is carried out in a series of steps each of which moves more of what the Copenhagen approach took to be the psychologically described “observing system” into the physically described “observed system.” *At each step the crucial act of choosing or deciding between possible optional observing actions remains undetermined by the physical observed system.* This act of choosing is always ascribed to the observing agent. In the end all that is left of this agent is what von Neumann calls his “abstract ego.” It is described in psychological terms, and is, in practice, the stream of consciousness of the agent.

At each step the direct effect of the conscious act is upon the part of the physically described world that is closest to the psychologically described world. This means that, in the end, the causal effect of the agent’s mental action is on his own brain, or some significant part of his brain.

Von Neumann makes the logical structure of quantum theory very clear by identifying two very different processes, which he calls Process 1 and Process 2 (von Neumann 1955: 418). Process 2 is the analog in quantum theory of the process in classical physics that takes the state of a system at one time to its state at a later time. This Process 2, like its classical analog, is *local* and *deterministic*. However, Process 2 by itself is not the whole story: it generates a host of “physical worlds” most of which do not agree with our human experience. For example, if Process 2 were, from the time of the Big Bang, the

*only* process in nature, then the quantum state of the (center point of the) moon would represent a structure smeared out over large part of the sky, and each human body-brain would likewise be represented by a structure smeared out continuously over a huge region. Process 2 generates a *cloud of possible worlds*, instead of the one world we actually experience.

This huge disparity between properties generated by the “mechanical” Process 2 and the properties we actually observe is resolved by invoking Process 1.

Any physical theory must, in order to be complete, specify how the elements of the theory are connected to human experience. In classical physics this connection is part of a *metaphysical* superstructure: it is not part of the dynamical process. But in quantum theory a linkage of the mathematically described physical state to human experiences is contained in the mathematically specified dynamics. This connection is not passive. It is not a mere *witnessing* of a physical feature of nature. Instead, *it injects into the physical state of the system being acted upon specific properties that depend upon choices made by the agent.*

Quantum theory is built upon the practical concept of intentional actions by agents. Each such action is a *preparation* that is expected or intended to produce an experiential response or feedback. For example, a scientist might act to place a Geiger counter near a radioactive source, and expect to see the counter either “fire” during a certain time interval or not “fire” during that interval. The experienced response, “Yes” or “No”, to



the question “Does the counter fire during the specified interval?” specifies one bit of information. Quantum theory is thus an information-based theory built upon the preparative actions of information-seeking agents.

Probing actions of this kind are performed not only by scientists. Every healthy and alert infant is continually engaged in making willful efforts that produce experiential feedbacks, and he/she soon begins to form expectations about what sorts of feedbacks are likely to follow from some particular kind of effort. Thus both empirical science and normal human life are based on paired realities of this action-response kind, and our physical and psychological theories are both basically attempting to understand these linked realities within a rational conceptual framework.

The basic building blocks of quantum theory are, then, a set of intentional actions by agents, and for each such action an associated collection of possible “Yes” feedbacks, which are the possible responses that the agent can judge to be in conformity to the criteria associated with that intentional act. For example, the agent is assumed to be able to make the judgment “Yes” the Geiger counter clicked or “No” the Geiger counter did not click. Science would be difficult to pursue if scientists could make no such judgments about what they are experiencing.

All known physical theories involve idealizations of one kind or another. In quantum theory the main idealization is not that every object is made up of miniature planet-like objects. It is rather that there are agents that perform intentional acts each of which can

result in a feedback that may or may not conform to a certain criterion associated with that act. One bit of information is introduced into the world in which that agent lives, according to whether or not the feedback conforms to that criterion. The answer places the agent on one or the other of two alternative possible branches of the course of world history.

These remarks reveal the enormous difference between classical physics and quantum physics. In classical physics the elemental ingredients are tiny invisible bits of matter that are idealized miniaturized versions of the planets that we see in the heavens, and that move in ways unaffected by our scrutiny, whereas in quantum physics the elemental ingredients are intentional preparative actions by agents, the feedbacks arising from these actions, and the effects of these actions upon the physically described states of the probed systems.

This radical re-structuring of the form of physical theory grew out of a seminal discovery by Heisenberg. That discovery was that in order to get a satisfactory quantum generalization of a classical theory one must replace various *numbers* in the classical theory by *actions* (operators). A key difference between numbers and actions is that if A and B are two actions then AB represents the action obtained by performing the action A upon the action B. If A and B are two different actions then generally AB is different from BA: the order in which actions are performed matters. But for numbers the order does not matter:  $AB = BA$ .

The difference between quantum physics and its classical approximation resides in the fact that in the quantum case certain differences  $AB-BA$  are proportional to a number measured by Max Planck in 1900, and called Planck's constant. Setting those differences to zero gives the classical approximation. Thus quantum theory is closely connected to classical physics, but is incompatible with it, because certain *nonzero* quantities must be replaced by zero to obtain the classical approximation.

The intentional actions of agents are represented mathematically in Heisenberg's space of actions. Here is how it works.

Each intentional action depends, of course, on the *intention of the agent*, and upon the *state of the system* upon which this action acts. Each of these *two aspects of nature* is represented within Heisenberg's space of actions by an *action*. The idea that a "state" should be represented by an "action" may sound odd, but Heisenberg's key idea was to replace what classical physics took to be a "being" by a "doing." I shall denote the *action* (or operator) that represents the state being acted upon by the symbol  $S$ .

An intentional act is an action that is intended to produce a feedback of a certain conceived or imagined kind. Of course, no intentional act is sure-fire: one's intentions may not be fulfilled. Hence the intentional action merely puts into play a process that will lead either to a confirmatory feedback "Yes," the intention is realized, or to the result "No", the "Yes" response did not occur.

The effect of this intentional mental act is represented mathematically by an equation that is one of the key components of quantum theory. This equation represents, within the quantum mathematics, the effect of the Process 1 action upon the quantum state  $S$  of the system being acted upon. The equation is:

$$S \rightarrow S' = PSP + (I-P)S(I-P).$$

This formula exhibits the important fact that this Process 1 action changes the state  $S$  of the system being acted upon into a new state  $S'$ , which is a sum of two parts.

The first part,  $PSP$ , represents, in physical terms, the possibility in which the experiential feedback called “Yes” appears, and the second part,  $(I-P)S(I-P)$ , represents the alternative possibility “No”, this “Yes” feedback does not appear. Thus an effect of the probing action is injected into the mathematical description of the physical system being acted upon.

The operator  $P$  is important. The action represented by  $P$ , acting both on the right and on the left of  $S$ , is the action of eliminating from the state  $S$  all parts of  $S$  except the “Yes” part. That particular retained part is determined by the choice made by the agent. The symbol  $I$  is the unit operator, which is essentially multiplication by the number 1, and the action of  $(I-P)$ , acting both on the right and on the left of  $S$ , is, analogously, to eliminate from  $S$  all parts of  $S$  except the “No” parts.

Notice that Process 1 produces the *sum* of the two alternative possible feedbacks, not just one or the other. Since the feedback must either be “Yes” or “No = Not-Yes,” one might think that Process 1, which keeps both the “Yes” and the “No” possibilities, would do nothing. But that is not correct. This is a key point! It can be made absolutely clear by noticing that S can be written as a sum of four parts, only two of which survive the Process 1 action:

$$S = PSP + (I-P)S(I-P) + PS(I-P) + (I-P)SP.$$

This formula is a strict identity. The dedicated reader can quickly verify it by collecting the contributions of the four occurring terms PSP, PS, SP, and S, and verifying that all terms but S cancel out. This identity shows that the state S is a sum of four parts, *two of which are eliminated by Process 1*.

But this means that Process 1 has a *nontrivial effect* upon the state being acted upon: it eliminates the two terms that correspond neither to the appearance of a “Yes” feedback nor to the failure of the “Yes” feedback to appear.

This result is the *first key point*: quantum theory has a specific causal process, Process 1, which produces a nontrivial effect of an *agent’s choice* upon the physical description of the system being examined. [“Nature” will eventually choose between “Yes” and “No”, but we focus here on the prior Process 1, *the agent’s choice*. Nature’s subsequent choice we shall call Process 3.]

## 5.1. Free choices

The second key point is this: the agent's choices are "free choices," *in the specific sense specified below.*

Orthodox quantum theory is formulated in a realistic and practical way. It is structured around the activities of human agents, who are considered able to freely elect to probe nature in any one of many possible ways. Bohr emphasized the freedom of the experimenters in passages such as the one already quoted above, or the similar

"The foundation of the description of the experimental conditions as well as our freedom to choose them is fully retained." (Bohr, 1958, p.90)

This freedom of choice stems from the fact that in the original Copenhagen formulation of quantum theory the human experimenter is considered to stand outside the system to which the quantum laws are applied. Those quantum laws are the only precise laws of nature recognized by that theory. Thus, according to the Copenhagen philosophy, *there are no presently known laws that govern the choices made by the agent/experimenter/observer about how the observed system is to be probed.* This choice is thus, *in this very specific sense,* a "free choice." The von Neumann generalization leaves this freedom intact. The choices attributed to von Neumann's "abstract ego" are

no more limited by the known rules of quantum theory than are the choices made by Bohr's experimenter.

## 5.2. Nerve terminals, ion channels, and the need to use quantum theory in the study of the mind-brain connection

Neuroscientists studying the connection of mind and consciousness to physical processes in the brain often assume that a conception of nature based on classical physics will eventually turn out to be adequate. That assumption would have been reasonable during the nineteenth century. But now, in the twenty-first century, it is rationally untenable. Quantum theory must be used in principle because the behavior of the brain depends sensitively upon atomic, molecular and ionic processes, and these processes in the brain often involve large quantum effects.

To study quantum effects in brains within an orthodox (i.e., Copenhagen or von Neumann) quantum theory one must use the von Neumann formulation. This is because *Copenhagen* quantum theory is formulated in a way that leaves out the quantum dynamics of the human observer's body and brain. But von Neumann quantum theory takes the physical system S upon which the crucial Process 1 acts to be precisely the brain of the agent, or some part of it. Thus Process 1 describes here an interaction between a person's stream of consciousness, described in mentalistic terms, and an activity in his brain, described in physical terms.

A key question is the *quantitative magnitude* of quantum effects in the brain. They must be large in order for deviations from classical physics to play any significant role. To examine this quantitative question we consider the quantum dynamics of nerve terminals.

Nerve terminals are essential connecting links between nerve cells. The general way they work is reasonably well understood. When an action potential traveling along a nerve fiber reaches a nerve terminal, a host of ion channels open. Calcium ions enter through these channels into the interior of the terminal. These ions migrate from the channel exits to release sites on vesicles containing neurotransmitter molecules. A triggering effect of the calcium ions causes these contents to be dumped into the synaptic cleft that separates this terminal from a neighboring neuron, and these neurotransmitter molecules influence the tendencies of that neighboring neuron to “fire.”

At their narrowest points calcium ion channels are less than a nanometer in diameter (Cataldi et al. 2002). This extreme smallness of the opening in the calcium ion channels has profound quantum mechanical implications. The narrowness of the channel restricts the lateral *spatial* dimension. Consequently, the lateral *velocity* is forced by the *quantum uncertainty principle* to become large. This causes the *quantum cloud of possibilities* associated with the calcium ion to *fan out* over an increasing area as it moves away from the tiny channel to the target region where the ion will be absorbed as a whole, or not absorbed at all, on some small triggering site.



This spreading of this *ion wave packet* means that the ion may or may not be absorbed on the small triggering site. Accordingly, the contents of the vesicle may or may not be released. Consequently, the quantum state of the brain has a part in which the neurotransmitter is released and a part in which the neurotransmitter is not released. This quantum splitting occurs at every one of the trillions of nerve terminals. This means that quantum state of the brain splits into vast host of classically conceived possibilities, one for each possible combination of the release-or-no-release options at each of the nerve terminals. Actually, because of uncertainties on timings and locations, what is generated by the physical processes in the brain will be not a single discrete set of non-overlapping physical possibilities but rather a huge *smear* of classically conceived possibilities. Once the physical state of the brain has evolved into this huge smear of possibilities one must appeal to the quantum rules, and in particular to the effects of Process 1, in order to connect the physically described world to the steams of consciousness of the observer/participants.

This focus on the motions of calcium ions in nerve terminals is not meant to suggest that this particular effect is the *only* place where quantum effects enter into brain process, or that the quantum Process 1 acts locally at these sites. What is needed here is only the existence of *some* large quantum of effect. The focusing upon these calcium ions stems from the facts that (1) in this case the various sizes (dimensions) needed to estimate the *magnitude* of the quantum effects are empirically known, and (2) that the release of neurotransmitter into synaptic clefts is known to play a significant role in brain dynamics.

The brain is warm and wet, and is continually interacting strongly with its environment. It might be thought that the strong *quantum decoherence effects* associated with these conditions would wash out all quantum effects, beyond localized chemical processes that can be conceived to be imbedded in an essentially classical world.

Strong decoherence effects are certainly present, but they are automatically taken into account in the von Neumann formulation employed here. These effects merely convert the state S of the brain into what is called a "statistical mixture" of "nearly classically describable" states, each of which develops in time, in the absence of Process 1 events, in an almost classically describable way.

*The existence of strong decoherence effects makes the main consequences of quantum theory being discussed here more easily accessible to neuroscientists by effectively reducing the complex quantum state of the brain to a collection of almost classically describable possibilities.* Because of the uncertainties introduced at the ionic, molecular, atomic, and electronic levels, the brain state will develop not into one single classically describable macroscopic state, as it does in classical physics, but into a continuous distribution of parallel virtual states of this kind. Process 1 must then be invoked to allow definite empirical predictions to be extracted from this continuous smear of parallel overlapping almost-classical possibilities generated by Process 2.

### 5.3 Quantum brain dynamics

A principal function of the brain is to receive clues from the environment, to form an appropriate plan of action, and to direct and monitor the activities of the brain and body specified by the selected plan of action. The exact details of the plan will, for a classical model, obviously depend upon the exact values of many noisy and uncontrolled variables. In cases close to a bifurcation point the dynamical effects of noise might even tip the balance between two very different responses to the given clues, e.g., tip the balance between the ‘fight’ or ‘flight’ response to some shadowy form.

The effect of the independent “release” or “don’t release” options at each of the trigger sites, coupled with the uncertainty in the timing of the vesicle release at each of the trillions of nerve terminals will be to cause the quantum mechanical state of the brain to become a smeared out cloud of different macroscopic possibilities, some representing different alternative possible plans of action. As long as the brain dynamics is controlled wholly by Process 2 - which is the quantum generalization of the Newtonian laws of motion of classical physics - all of the various alternative possible plans of action will exist in parallel, with no one plan of action singled out as the one that will actually be experienced.

Some process beyond the local deterministic Process 2 is required to pick out one experienced course of physical events from the smeared out mass of possibilities generated by all of the alternative possible combinations of vesicle releases at all of the

trillions of nerve terminals. As already emphasized, this other process is Process 1. This process brings in a *choice* that is not determined by any currently known law of nature, yet has a definite effect upon the brain of the chooser. The Process 1 choice picks an operator P, and also a time t at which P acts. The effect of this action at time t is to change the state S(t) of the brain, or of some large part of the brain, to

$$PS(t)P + (I-P) S(t) (I-P).$$

The action P cannot act at a *point* in the brain, because action at a point would dump a huge (in principle infinite) amount of energy into the brain, which would then explode. The operator P *must* therefore act non-locally, over a potentially large part of the brain.

In examining the question of the nature of the effect in the brain of Process 2 we focused on the separate motions of the individual particles. But the physical structures in terms of which the action of Process 1 is naturally expressed are not the separate motions of individual particles. They are, rather, the *quasi-stable macroscopic degrees of freedom*. The brain structures selected by the action of P must enjoy the stability, endurance, and causal linkages needed to bring the intended experiential feedbacks into being.

These functional structures are likely to be more like the lowest-energy state of the simple harmonic oscillator, which is completely stable, or like the states obtained from such lowest-energy states by spatial displacements and shifts in velocity. These shifted

states tend to *endure as oscillating states*. In other words, in order to create the needed causal structure the projection operator  $P$  corresponding to an intentional action ought to pick out functionally pertinent quasi-stable *oscillating states of macroscopic subsystems of the brain*. The state associated with a Process 1 preparatory intervention should be a functionally important brain analog of a collection of oscillating modes of a drumhead, in which large assemblies of particles are moving in a coordinated way. Such an enduring structure in the brain can serve as a trigger and coordinator of further coordinated activities.

#### 5.4 Templates for action

The brain process that is actualized by the transition  $S(t) \rightarrow PS(t)P$  is the neural correlate of the psychologically intended action. It is the brain's template for the intended action. It is a pattern of neuroelectrical activity that if held in place long enough will tend to generate a physical action in the brain that will tend to produce the intended experiential feedback.

#### 5.5. Origin of the choices of the Process 1 actions

It has been repeatedly emphasized here that the choices of which Process I actions actually occur are "free choices," in the sense that they are not specified by the currently known laws of physics. On the other hand, a person's intentions are surely related in some way to his historical past. This means that the laws of contemporary orthodox

quantum theory, although restrictive and important, are not the whole story. In spite of this, orthodox quantum theory, while making no claim to ontological completeness, is able to achieve a certain kind of *pragmatic completeness*. It does so by treating the Process 1 “free choices” as the input variables of experimental protocols, rather than mechanically determined consequences of brain action.

In quantum physics *the “free choices” made by human subjects are regarded as subjectively controllable input variable*. Bohr emphasized that “the mathematical structure of the quantum mechanical formalism offers the appropriate latitude” for these free choices. But the need for this strategic move goes deeper than the mere fact that contemporary quantum theory fails to specify how these choices are made. For if in the von Neumann formulation one does seek to determine the cause of the “free choice” within the representation of the physical brain of the chooser one finds that one is *systematically* blocked from determining the cause of the choice by the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, which asserts that the locations and velocities of, say, the calcium ions, are simultaneous unknowable to the precision needed to determine what the choice will be. Thus one is faced not merely with a practical unknowability of the causal origin of the “free choices,” but with an *unknowability in principle* that stems from the uncertainty principle itself, which lies at the base of quantum mechanics. There is thus a deep root in quantum theory for the idea that the origin of the “free choices” lies not in the physical description alone, and for the consequent policy of treating these “free choices” as empirical inputs that are selected by agents, and enter into the causal structure via Process 1.

## 5.6 Effort

It is useful to classify Process 1 events as either “active” or “passive.” *Passive* Process 1 events are attentional events that occur with little or no feeling of conscious effort. *Active* Process 1 events are intentional and involve effort. This distinction is given a functional significance by allowing “effort” to enter into the selection of Process 1 events in a way that will now be specified.

Consciousness probably contributes very little to brain dynamics, compared to the contribution of the brain itself. To minimize the input of consciousness, and in order to achieve testability, we propose to allow mental effort to do nothing but control “Attention Density”, which is the rapidity of the Process 1 events. This allows effort to have only a very limited kind of influence on brain activities, which are largely controlled by physical properties of the brain itself.

The notion that only the Attention Density is controlled by conscious effort arose from an investigation into what sort of conscious control over Process 1 action was sufficient to accommodate the most blatant empirical facts. Imposing this strong restriction on the allowed effects of consciousness produces a theory with correspondingly strong predictive power. In this model all significant effects of consciousness upon brain activity arise exclusively from a well known and well verified strictly quantum effect known as the Quantum Zeno Effect.

## 5.7. The Quantum Zeno Effect

If one considers only passive events, then it is very difficult to identify any empirical effect of Process 1, apart from the occurrence of awareness. In the first place, the empirical averaging over the “Yes” and “No” possibilities in strict accordance with the quantum laws tends to wash out all effects that depart from what would arise from a classical statistical analysis that incorporates the uncertainty principle as simply lack of knowledge. Moreover, the passivity of the mental process means that we have no empirically controllable variable.

But the study of effortfully controlled intentional action brings in two empirically accessible variables, the intention and the amount of effort. It also brings in the important physical Quantum Zeno Effect. This effect is named for the Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea, and was brought into prominence in 1977 by the physicists Sudarshan and Misra (1977). It gives a name to the fact that repeated and closely-spaced observational acts can effectively hold the “Yes” feedback in place for an extended time interval that depends upon the *rapidity at which the Process 1 actions are happening*. According to our model, this rapidity is controlled by the amount of effort being applied. In our notation the effect is to keep the “Yes” condition associated with states of the form PSP in place longer than would be the case if no effort were being made. This “holding” effect can override very strong mechanical forces arising from Process 2. It’s a case of mind over brain matter!

The “Yes” states PSP are assumed to be conditioned by training and learning to contain the template for action which if held in place for an extended period will tend to produce



the intended experiential feedback. Thus the model allows intentional mental efforts to tend to bring intended experiences into being. Systems that have the capacity to exploit this feature of natural law, as it is represented in quantum theory, would apparently enjoy a tremendous survival advantage over systems that do not or cannot exploit it.

## 6. Support from psychology

A person's experiential life is a stream of conscious experiences. The person's experienced "*self*" is *part* of this stream of consciousness: it is not an extra thing that lies outside what the person is conscious of. In James's words "*thought is itself the thinker, and psychology need not look beyond.*" The experiential "*self*" is a slowly changing "*fringe*" part of the stream of consciousness. This part of the stream of consciousness provides an overall background cause for the central focus of attention.

The physical brain, evolving mechanically in accordance with the local deterministic Process 2 can do most of the necessary work of the brain. It can do the job of creating, on the basis of its interpretation of the clues provided by the senses, a suitable response, which will be controlled by a certain pattern of neural or brain activity that acts as a *template for action*. But, due to its quantum character, the brain necessarily generates an amorphous mass of overlapping and conflicting templates for action. Process 1 acts to extract from this jumbled mass of possibilities some particular template for action. This template is a feature of the "Yes" states PSP that specifies the form of the Process 1 event. But the quantum rules do not assert that this "Yes" part of the prior state S *necessarily* comes into being. They assert, instead, that if this Process 1 action is

triggered---say by some sort of “consent”---then this “Yes” component PSP will come into being with probability  $\text{Tr PSP}/\text{Tr S}$ , and that the “No” state will occur if the “Yes” state does not occur, where the symbol Tr represents a quantum mechanical summation over all possibilities.

If the rate at which these “consents” occur is assumed to be *increasable by conscious mental effort*, then the causal efficacy of “will” can be understood. Conscious effort can, by activation of the Quantum Zeno Effect, override strong mechanical forces arising from Process 2, and *cause* the template for action to be held in place longer than it would be if the rapid sequence of Process 1 events were not occurring. This sustained existence of the template for action can increase the probability that the intended action will occur.

Does this quantum-physics-based conception of the origin of the causal efficacy of “Will” accord with the findings of psychology?

Consider some passages from "Psychology: The Briefer Course", written by William James. In the final section of the chapter on attention James(1892: 227) writes:

“I have spoken as if our attention were wholly determined by neural conditions. I believe that the array of things we can attend to is so determined. No object can catch our attention except by the neural machinery. But the amount of the attention which an object receives after it has caught our attention is another question. It often takes effort to keep mind upon it. We feel that we can

make more or less of the effort as we choose. If this feeling be not deceptive, if our effort be a spiritual force, and an indeterminate one, then of course it contributes coequally with the cerebral conditions to the result. Though it introduces no new idea, it will deepen and prolong the stay in consciousness of innumerable ideas which else would fade more quickly away.”

In the chapter on will, in the section entitled "Volitional effort is effort of attention" James (1892: 417) writes:

“Thus we find that we reach the heart of our inquiry into volition when we ask by what process is it that the thought of any given action comes to prevail stably in the mind.”

and, later

“The essential achievement of the will, in short, when it is most 'voluntary,' is to attend to a difficult object and hold it fast before the mind. ... Effort of attention is thus the essential phenomenon of will.”

Still later, James says:

“Consent to the idea's undivided presence, this is effort's sole achievement.”... “Everywhere, then, the function of effort is the same: to keep affirming and adopting the thought which, if left to itself, would slip away.”

This description of the effect of will on the course of mental-cerebral processes is remarkably in line with *what had been proposed independently from purely theoretical considerations of the quantum physics of this process*. The connections specified by James are *explained* on the basis of the same dynamical principles that had been introduced by physicists to explain atomic phenomena. Thus the whole range of science, from atomic physics to mind-brain dynamics, has the possibility of being brought together into a single rationally coherent theory of an evolving cosmos that is constituted not of *matter* but of *actions* by agents. In this conceptualization of nature, agents could naturally evolve in accordance with the principles of natural selection, due to the fact that their efforts have physical consequences. The outline of a possible rationally coherent understanding of the connection between mind and matter begins to emerge.

In the quantum theory of mind/consciousness-brain being described here there are altogether three processes. First, there is the purely mechanical process called Process 2. As discussed at length in the book, *Mind, Matter, and Quantum Mechanics* (Stapp 1993/2003: 150), this process, as it applies to the brain, involves important dynamical units that are represented by complex patterns of brain activity that are “facilitated” (i.e., strengthened) by use, and are such that each unit tends to be activated as a whole by the

activation of several of its parts. The activation of various of these complex patterns by cross referencing---i.e., by activation of several of its parts---coupled to feed-back loops that strengthen or weaken the activities of appropriate processing centers, appears to account for the essential features of the mechanical part of the dynamics in a way that is not significantly different from what a classical model can support, except for the existence of a host of parallel possibilities that according to the classical concepts cannot exist simultaneously.

The second process, von Neumann's Process 1, is needed in order to pick out from a chaotic continuum of overlapping parallel possibilities some particular discrete possibility and its complement (The complement can be further divided, but the essential action is present in the choice of one particular "Yes" state  $PS(t)P$  from the morass of possibilities in which it is imbedded). The third process is Nature's choice between "Yes" and "No." Nature's choice conforms to a statistical rule, but the agent's choice is, within contemporary quantum theory, a "free choice" that can be and is consistently treated as an input variable of the empirical protocol.

Process 1 has itself two modes. The first is passive, and can produce temporally isolated events. The second is active, and involves mental effort.

Active Process 1 intervention has, according to the quantum model described here, a distinctive form. It consists of a sequence of intentional preparatory actions, the rapidity of which can be increased with effort. Such an increase in Attention Density, defined as

an increase in the number of observations per unit time, can bring into play the Quantum Zeno Effect, which tends to hold in place both those aspects of the state of the brain that are fixed by the sequence of intentional actions, and also the felt intentional focus of these actions. Attention Density is not controlled by any physical rule of orthodox contemporary quantum theory, but is taken both in orthodox theory and in our model to be subject to subjective volitional control. This application in this way of the basic principles of physics to neuroscience constitutes our model of the mind-brain connection.

### 6.1. Support from psychology of attention

A huge amount of empirical work on attention has been done since the nineteenth century writings of William James. Much of it is summarized and analyzed in Harold Pashler's 1998 book "*The Psychology of Attention*." Pashler organizes his discussion by separating perceptual processing from post-perceptual processing. The former type covers processing that, first of all, identifies such basic physical properties of stimuli as location, color, loudness, and pitch, and, secondly, identifies stimuli in terms of categories of meaning. The post-perceptual process covers the tasks of producing motor actions and cognitive action beyond mere categorical identification. Pashler emphasizes [p. 33] that the empirical "findings of attention studies... argue for a distinction between perceptual attentional limitations and more central limitations involved in thought and the planning of action." The existence of these two different processes with different characteristics is a principal theme of Pashler's book [e.g., pp. 33, 263, 293, 317, 404].

A striking difference that emerges from the analysis of the many sophisticated experiments is that the perceptual processes proceed essentially in parallel, whereas the post-perceptual processes of planning and executing actions form a single queue. This is in line with the distinction between “passive” and “active” processes. The former are essentially a passive stream of essentially one-shot Process 1 events, whereas the “active” processes involve effort-induced rapid sequences of Process 1 events that can saturate a given capacity. This idea of a limited capacity for serial processing of effort-based inputs is the main conclusion of Pashler’s book. It is in accord with the quantum-based model, supplemented by the condition that there is a limit to how many effortful Process 1 events per second a person can produce, during a particular stage of his development.

Examination of Pashler's book shows that this quantum model accommodates naturally all of the complex structural features of the empirical data that he describes. Of key importance is his Chapter Six, in which he emphasizes a specific finding: strong empirical evidence for what he calls a central processing bottleneck associated with the attentive selection of a motor action. This kind of bottleneck is what the quantum-physics-based theory predicts: the bottleneck is precisely the single linear sequence of mind-brain quantum events that von Neumann quantum theory describes.

Pashler [p. 279] describes four empirical signatures for this kind of bottleneck, and describes the experimental confirmation of each of them. Much of part II of Pashler's book is a massing of evidence that supports the existence of a central process of this general kind.

The queuing effect is illustrated in a nineteenth century result described by Pashler: mental exertion reduces the amount of physical force that a person can apply. He notes that “This puzzling phenomenon remains unexplained.” [p. 387]. However, it is an automatic consequence of the physics-based theory: creating physical force by muscle contraction requires an effort that opposes the physical tendencies generated by the Schrödinger equation (Process 2). This opposing tendency is produced by the Quantum Zeno Effect (QZE), and is roughly proportional to the number of bits per second of central processing capacity that is devoted to the task. So if part of this processing capacity is directed to another task, then the applied force will diminish.

The important point here is that there is in principle, in the quantum model, an essential dynamical difference between the unconscious processing carried out by the Schrödinger evolution, which generates via a local process an expanding collection of classically conceivable experiential possibilities, and the process associated with the sequence of conscious events that constitute the willful selection of action. The former are not limited by the queuing effect, because Process 2 simply develops all of the possibilities in parallel. Nor are the occasional passive Process 1 events thus limited. It is the closely packed active Process 1 events that can, in the von Neumann formulation, be limited by the queuing effect.

The very numerous experiments cited by Pashler all seem to be in line with the quantum approach. It is important to note that this bottleneck is not automatic within



classical physics. A classical model could easily produce, simultaneously, two responses in different modalities, say vocal and manual, to two different stimuli arriving via two different modalities, say auditory and tactile: the two processes could proceed via dynamically independent routes. Pashler [p. 308] notes that the bottleneck is undiminished in split-brain patients performing two tasks that, at the level of input and output, seem to be confined to different hemispheres. This could be accounted for by the necessarily non-local character of the projection operator  $P$ .

An interesting experiment mentioned by Pashler involves the simultaneous tasks of doing an IQ test and giving a foot response to a rapidly presented sequence of tones of either 2000 or 250 Hz. The subject's mental age, as measured by the IQ test, was reduced from adult to 8 years [p. 299]. This result supports the prediction of quantum theory that the bottleneck pertains to both “intelligent” behavior, which requires complex effortful processing, and the simple willful selection of a motor response.

Pashler also notes [p. 348] that “Recent results strengthen the case for central interference even further, concluding that memory retrieval is subject to the same discrete processing bottleneck that prevents simultaneous response selection in two speeded choice tasks.”

In the section on “Mental Effort” Pashler reports [p.383] that “incentives to perform especially well lead subjects to improve both speed and accuracy”, and that the motivation had “greater effects on the more cognitively complex activity”. This is what

would be expected if incentives lead to effort that produces increased rapidity of the events, each of which injects into the physical process, via quantum selection and reduction, bits of control information that reflect mental evaluation. Pashler notes [p.385] “Increasing the rate at which events occur in experimenter-paced tasks often increases effort ratings without affecting performance. Increasing incentives often raises workload ratings and performance at the same time.” All of these empirical connections are in line with the general principle that effort increases Attention Density, with an attendant increase in the rate of directed conscious events, each of which inputs a mental evaluation and a selection or focusing of a course of action.

Additional supporting evidence comes from the studies of the stabilization or storage of information in short-term memory. According to the physics-based theory the passive aspect of conscious process merely actualizes an event that occurs in accordance with some brain-controlled rule, and this rule-selected process then develops automatically, with perhaps some occasional monitoring. Thus the theory would predict that the process of stabilization or storage in short term in memory of a certain sequence of stimuli should be able to persist undiminished while the central processor is engaged in another task. This is what the data indicate. Pashler remarks [p.341] that “These conclusions contradict the remarkably widespread assumption that short-term memory capacity can be equated with, or used as a measure of, central resources.” In the theory outlined here short-term memory is stored in patterns of brain activity, whereas consciously directed actions are associated with the active selection of a sub-ensemble of quasi-classical states. This distinction seems to account for the large amount of detailed data that bears on this

question of the relationship of the stabilization or storage of information in short-term-memory to the types of tasks that require the willfully directed actions [pp. 337-341]. In marked contrast to short-term memory function, storage or retrieval of information from long-term memory, is a task that requires actions of just this sort [pp. 347-350].

Deliberate storage in, or retrieval from, long-term memory requires willfully directed action, and hence conscious effort. These processes should, according to the theory, use part of the limited processing capacity, and hence be detrimentally affected by a competing task that makes sufficient concurrent demands on the central resources. On the other hand, “perceptual” processing that involves conceptual categorization and identification without willful conscious selection should not be interfered with by tasks that do consume central processing capacity. These expectations are what the evidence appears to confirm: “the entirety of...front-end processing are modality specific and operate independent of the sort of single-channel central processing that limits retrieval and the control of action. This includes not only perceptual analysis but also storage in STM (short term memory) and whatever processing may feed back to change the allocation of perceptual attention itself [p. 353].”

Pashler speculates on the possibility of a neurophysiological explanation of the facts he describes, but notes that the parallel versus serial distinction between the two mechanisms leads, in the classical neurophysiological approach, to the questions of what makes these two mechanisms so different, and what the connection between them is [p.354-6, 386-7].

After considering various possible mechanisms that could cause the central bottleneck, Pashler [p.307-8] concludes that “the question of why this should be the case is quite puzzling.” Thus the fact that this bottleneck and its basic properties seems to follow automatically from the same laws that explain the complex empirical evidence in the fields of classical and quantum physics means that the theory being presented here has significant explanatory power for the experimental data of cognitive psychology. Further, it coherently explains aspects of the data that have heretofore not been adequately addressed by currently applicable theoretical perspectives.

These various features of our streams of consciousness can be claimed to be explained by a local mechanical classical-physics-based model. Such claims are greatly facilitated by not only ignoring of the conflicts already mentioned with the basic principles of physics but by also postponing until some future time any understanding of how the two realms that are so completely disparate within the classical physics conceptualization can be so intimate connected. Within the context of the unity of science there is a significant difference between an explanation that violates the basic principle of physics and leaves such a huge mystery unexplained, and one that is erected upon, and strictly adheres to, those principles, and applies precisely the causal connections between mind and brain that those principles of physics themselves specify. A purely rational choice between these two alternatives can scarcely be in doubt.

## 7. Application to neuropsychology

An important early neuropsychological experiment is the Libet's experiment pertaining to free will. (Libet, 1985, 2003) In this experiment subjects were instructed to make a motor action within a certain long time period, and it was found that a readiness potential began to appear tenths of a second *before* subjects' conscious effort to make this action occurs. This effect seems to suggest that the willfull effort is an *effect* of brain action, rather than a *cause* of it. However, within the quantum model the Process 1 choice picks out essentially one classically describable possibility, with all of its history, and all of the ancillary effects tied to this history, from a host of alternative possibilities. The mathematical structure of the theory guarantees that all experiences of all observers will conform to the classically described history that is free chosen by the subjects. This interesting feature of quantum theory was famously commented upon by Einstein (Einstein, 1935) and has been endlessly discussed by physicists. It is unquestionably a key feature of contemporary orthodox quantum theory.

Quantum physics works better in neuropsychology than its classical approximation because it inserts knowable choices made by human agents into the dynamics in place of unknowable-in-principle microscopic variables. To illustrate this point we apply the quantum approach to the experiment of Ochsner et al. (2002).

Reduced to its essence this experiment consists first of a training phase in which the subject is taught how to distinguish, and respond differently to, two instructions given while viewing emotionally disturbing visual images: ATTEND (meaning passively "be

aware of, but not try to alter, any feelings elicited by”) or REAPPRAISE (meaning actively “reinterpret the content so that it no longer elicits a negative response”). The subjects then perform these mental actions during brain data acquisition. The visual stimuli, when passively attended to, activate limbic brain areas and when actively reappraised, activate prefrontal cerebral regions.

From the classical materialist point of view this is essentially a conditioning experiment, where, however, the “conditioning” is achieved via linguistic access to cognitive faculties. But how do the cognitive realities involving “knowing,” “understanding,” and “feeling” arise out of motions of the miniature planet-like objects of classical physics, which have no trace of any experiential quality? And how do the vibrations in the air that carry the instructions get converted into feelings of understanding? And how do these feelings of understanding get converted to conscious effort, the presence or absence of which determine whether the limbic or frontal regions of the brain will be activated?

Within the framework of classical physics these connections between feelings and brain activities remain huge mysteries. The materialist claim (Karl Popper called this historicist prophecy “*promissory materialism*”) is that *someday* these connections will be understood. But the question is whether these connections should reasonably be expected to be understood in terms of a physical theory that is known to be false, and to be false in ways that are absolutely and fundamentally germane to the issue. The classical conception demands that the choices made by human agents about how they will act be

determined by microscopic variables that according to quantum theory are indeterminate in principle. *The reductionist demand that the course of human experience be determined by local mechanical processes is the very thing that is most conclusively ruled out by the structure of natural phenomena specified by contemporary physical theory.* To expect the mind-brain connection to be understood within a framework of ideas so contrary to the principles of physics is scientifically unsupportable and unreasonable.

There are important similarities and also important differences between the classical and quantum explanations of the experiments of Ochsner et al. (2002). In both approaches the atomic constituents of the brain can be conceived to be collected into nerves and other biological structures, and into fluxes of ions and electrons, which can all be described reasonably well in essentially classical terms. In the classical approach the dynamics must in principle be describable in terms of the local deterministic classical laws that, according to those principles, are supposed to govern the motions of the atomic-sized entities.

The quantum approach is fundamentally different. In the first place the idea that all causation is *fundamentally mechanical* is dropped as being prejudicial and unsupported either by direct evidence or by contemporary physical theory. The quantum model of the human person is essentially dualistic, with one of the two components being described in psychological language and the other being described in physical terms. The empirical/phenomenal evidence coming from subjective reports is treated as data pertaining to the psychologically described component of the person, whereas the data

from objective observations, or from measurements made *upon that person*, are treated as conditions on the physically described component of the person. The apparent causal connection *manifested in the experiments* between these two components of the agent is then explained by the causal connections between these components *that is specified by the quantum laws*.

The quantum laws, insofar as they pertain to empirical data, are organized around *events* that increase the amount of information lodged in the psychologically described component of the theoretical structure. The *effects* of these psychologically identified events upon the physical state of the associated brain are specified by Processes 1 (followed by “Nature’s statistical choice” of which of the discrete options specified by Process 1 will be experienced.) When no effort is applied, the temporal development of the body/brain will be roughly in accord with the principles of classical *statistical* mechanics, for reasons described earlier in connection with the strong *decoherence* effects. But important departures from the classical statistical predictions can be caused by conscious effort. This effort can cause to be held in place for an extended period a pattern of neural activity that constitutes a *template for action*. This delay can tend to cause the specified action to occur. In the Ochsner experiments the effort of the subject to “reappraise” *causes* the “reappraise” template to be held in place, and the holding in place of this template *causes* the suppression of the limbic response. These causal effects are, via the Quantum Zeno Effect, mathematical consequences of the quantum rules. Thus the “subjective” and “objective” aspects of the data are tied together by quantum rules that *directly specify the causal effects upon the subject’s brain of the choices made*



*by the subject, without needing to specify how these choices came about.* The form of the quantum laws accommodates a natural dynamical breakpoint between the *cause* of willful action, which are not specified by the theory, and its *effects*, which are specified by the theory.

Quantum theory was designed to deal with cases, in which the conscious action of an agent – to perform some particular probing action - enters into the dynamics in an essential way. Within the context of the experiment by Ochsner et al. (2002), quantum theory provides, via the Process 1 mechanism, an explicit means whereby the successful effort to “rethink feelings” actually causes - by catching and actively holding in place - the prefrontal activations critical to the experimentally observed deactivation of the amygdala and orbitofrontal cortex. The resulting *intention-induced modulation* of limbic mechanisms that putatively generate the frightening aversive feelings associated with passively attending to the target stimuli is the key factor necessary for the achievement of the emotional self-regulation seen in the active cognitive reappraisal condition. Thus, within the quantum framework, the causal relationship between the mental work of mindfully reappraising and the observed brain changes presumed to be necessary for emotional self-regulation is *dynamically* accounted for. Furthermore, and crucially, it is accounted for in ways that fully allow for communicating to others the means utilized by living human experimental subjects to attain the desired outcome. The classical materialist approach to these data, as detailed earlier in this article, by no means allows for such effective communication. Analogous quantum mechanical reasoning can of

course be utilized *mutatis mutandis* to explain the data of Beauregard (2001) and related studies of self-directed neuroplasticity (see Schwartz & Begley, 2002).

## 8. Conclusions

Materialist ontology draws no support from contemporary physics, and is in fact contradicted by it. The notion that all physical behavior is explainable in principle solely in terms of a local mechanical process is a holdover from physical theories of an earlier era. It was rejected by the founders of quantum mechanics, who introduced crucially into the basic dynamical equations choices that are not determined by local mechanical processes, but are attributed rather to human agents. These orthodox quantum equations, applied to human brains in the way suggested by John von Neumann, provide for a causal account of recent neuropsychological data. In this account brain behavior that appears to be caused by mental effort is actually caused by mental effort: the causal efficacy of mental effort is no illusion. Our willful choices enter neither as redundant nor epiphenomenal effects, but rather as fundamental dynamical elements that have the causal efficacy that the objective data appear to assign to them.

A shift to this pragmatic approach that incorporates agent-based choices as primary empirical input variables may be as important to progress in neuroscience and psychology as it was to progress in atomic physics.

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