

Conduit Monism

A Theory of Consciousness

Draft Framework v2.0

Abstract

Conduit Monism proposes that consciousness is not generated by biological systems but is rather permitted entry through them. There exists a singular, undifferentiated substrate of experiential capacity—referred to here as the Source—which is non-physical, non-individual, and devoid of identity, memory, or intention. The Source may be understood as coextensive with existence itself: the brute fact that anything is at all.

Biological organisms of sufficient complexity act as conduits, allowing this experiential capacity to interface with the physical realm. This capacity did not evolve because consciousness confers survival advantage; rather, it emerged as an incidental byproduct of the information-processing complexity required for autonomous problem-solving. The result is conscious experience: the subjective witnessing of reality from a localised perspective.

Core Propositions

1. The Source is singular and coextensive with existence

There is one undifferentiated field of experiential capacity. It possesses no identity, no memory, no preferences. It is not a being but a substrate—the raw capacity for experience to occur. The question "What is the Source?" collapses into the question "Why does anything exist at all?" The Source is not a separate realm requiring its own explanation; it is the inside of existence itself.

2. Biology is the conduit; consciousness is a byproduct

Through evolutionary processes operating over millions of years, biological systems developed sufficient complexity to interface with the Source. This was not selected for directly. Evolution required organisms capable of autonomous reasoning—flexible intelligence that could solve novel problems. The architecture that enables such reasoning happens to also permit connection to the Source.

Consciousness emerged as a spandrel: an incidental consequence of structures selected for other purposes.

3. The body determines content; the Source provides the fact of experience

All personality, memory, perception, and decision-making are products of neurochemical processes within the physical body. The Source contributes only the bare fact of subjective experience—the "light behind the projector." It witnesses but does not act. It does not choose what is experienced; it is the medium through which experience occurs at all.

4. Individuality is mechanical, not spiritual

The felt sense of being a unique self arises entirely from the particular configuration of one's biological machinery. No two bodies are identical; therefore, no two experiences are identical. The Source itself remains unchanged and undivided. Separation is apparent, not fundamental—a consequence of experiencing through distinct biological systems.

5. The witness is passive

Consciousness, as provided by the Source, does not intervene in the physical world. It does not choose, judge, or remember. The body's programming—shaped by genetics, environment, and prior experience—determines action. The conscious witness observes these events unfolding, much like watching a film, rather than directing them.

6. Death severs the connection

When the biological system ceases to function, the conduit closes. No information transfers between realms. The Source is not diminished; it simply no longer interfaces through that particular aperture. There is no personal continuity beyond the body.

7. Connection exists on a gradient

There is no sharp threshold at which consciousness "switches on." Rather, connection to the Source exists on a spectrum correlated with information-processing complexity. Simple organisms may have shallow, limited connection. Complex neural architectures—human brains being one example among potentially many—permit deeper, more immersive interfacing. The capacity is always present; the depth of access varies with the sophistication of the machinery.

Mechanism

The physical universe operates according to fixed laws—time, matter, entropy, causality. Within this framework, biology emerged as a solution for organised matter to persist and replicate. Over evolutionary time, certain organisms developed information-processing systems of increasing sophistication: sensory organs to gather data, nervous systems to compute responses, brains to model environments and predict outcomes.

When simple DNA-encoded responses proved insufficient for survival, evolution favoured organisms capable of independent thought and flexible reasoning. The neural architecture required for such autonomy—the capacity to model, predict, and respond to novel situations—happens to be the same architecture that permits interfacing with the Source.

The body gathers information about the physical realm through its sensory apparatus. This information is processed, filtered, and constructed into a model of reality. The Source, interfacing through the body like light through a lens, experiences this model from the body's localised perspective. The experience is shaped entirely by the machinery: faulty sensors produce faulty experience; altered neurochemistry produces altered consciousness.

The Nature of the Source

Atemporality

The Source exists outside time. There is no duration, no sequence, no before or after. It does not experience moments flowing into one another; it exists in pure presence—an eternal now that is not a moment within time but the condition underlying all moments.

From within time (our perspective), the Source appears to flow through moments as conduits open and close. From the Source's nature (if such phrasing even applies), there is no flow—only instantaneous, complete presence. Every conduit that ever existed or will exist is equally present to it, not sequentially but simultaneously in a manner our temporal vocabulary cannot capture.

No information transfer

The Source and the physical realm do not exchange information. There is no transfer of data between dimensions. The Source does not retain memories because retention requires time. It does not accumulate experience because accumulation requires sequence. Each moment is complete and isolated from the Source's perspective—though "perspective" imports spatial metaphors that may not apply.

The relationship might be understood through analogy: the physical realm's complexity creates deformations or "dimples" in the fabric of existence, and the Source—being existence itself—is present wherever existence is present. But this presence does not constitute communication or exchange. The Source is affected by the physical realm only in the sense that existence is present wherever things exist.

Beyond spatial location

The Source is not spatially located. It may be dimensionally structured in ways our mathematics cannot yet describe, but it does not occupy space within this universe. Matter may not exist in the Source's nature; energy might, but in forms without analogue in physical vocabulary. The rules governing this aspect of reality remain unknown and may be unknowable from within a time-bound, spatially-located perspective.

On Experience Without Duration

A significant tension exists in describing the Source as "experiencing" anything. Experience as we know it involves temporal extension—a note held, a thought unfolding, a sensation rising and falling. If the Source has no time dimension, its relationship to what we call experience would be radically unlike anything we can imagine.

Perhaps the Source does not experience in the sense of witnessing events. Perhaps it is better understood as the condition for the possibility of experience—the light that makes seeing possible rather than a seer. The English language fails here. We built words to navigate objects, causes, sequences. Describing something atemporal and undifferentiated with these tools is like trying to paint silence.

Consider: the human eye does not see discrete frames. It perceives continuous presence. The Source may be analogous but more fundamental—not a sequence of nows, but nowness itself without succession. Duration is not chopped into pieces;

it is continuous in a way that precedes the concept of continuity.

Implications

On free will

If the Source only witnesses and does not act, then conscious will is epiphenomenal. Decisions are made by the biological machinery according to its programming. The felt sense of choosing is real as experience but illusory as causation. The machinery does the work; consciousness watches it happen.

On identity

The self is a construction of the body, not a property of the Source. Personal identity does not persist beyond biological death. The question "Where do I go when I die?" is malformed; there is no "I" independent of the body to go anywhere. The "I" is a domain of the Source manifesting through particular machinery—not a transferable entity.

On unity

All conscious beings draw from the same Source. Separation is apparent, not fundamental—a consequence of experiencing through distinct biological systems. This does not necessitate moral conclusions but may inform them. The framework naturally explains why contemplatives across traditions report experiences of "oneness" or dissolution of individual identity: practices that quiet the machinery may reveal something true about the underlying substrate.

On meaning

The Source does not bestow purpose. It does not judge a life well or poorly lived. Meaning, if it exists, is constructed locally—within the physical realm, by the machinery, in relation to other machinery. There is no cosmic ledger, no external validation. What we make of existence is what we make of it.

On other beings

All animals capable of sufficient information processing participate in the Source. Humans are one example, not the exception. If beings exist in other dimensions or on other worlds, and if they possess machinery of adequate complexity, they would tap into the same Source through their own conduits. The Source is not anthropomorphic; it does not privilege human experience.

Distinctions from Related Theories

Cartesian Dualism

Proposes individual souls that persist and carry identity. Conduit Monism rejects individual souls; the Source is singular and impersonal. Death ends the individual entirely.

Panpsychism

Proposes that consciousness is intrinsic to matter at a fundamental level. Conduit Monism proposes that consciousness flows through matter from an external substrate when sufficient complexity is achieved. Simple matter does not possess experience; it may permit shallow connection at most.

Property Dualism

Proposes that consciousness is a non-physical property that emerges from physical processes. Conduit Monism agrees that consciousness is non-physical but frames it as permitted rather than emergent—and identifies the Source with existence itself rather than positing a separate ontological category.

Epiphenomenalism

Proposes that consciousness is causally inert. Conduit Monism incorporates this but situates consciousness as originating from an external, atemporal substrate rather than being a byproduct of physical processes alone.

Open Questions

The interface mechanism

What property of neural complexity creates an interface with the Source? If the Source is non-spatial and outside physical law, what characteristic of information integration permits connection? This remains unspecified and may require frameworks beyond current scientific vocabulary.

Artificial consciousness

If human-made machinery achieved sufficient complexity and was structured to simulate the relevant characteristics of biological neural networks, might the conduit open for it as well? The framework suggests this is possible in principle, though we lack criteria for determining when or whether it has occurred.

Perturbations at the interface

If the conduit is a genuine interface between realms, could influence flow in unexpected directions? Might intrusive thoughts, sudden shifts in awareness, or the sense that something attends from behind attention represent perturbations from the Source's side? This edges toward mysticism but follows from the framework's logic.

Falsifiability

What would it mean for Conduit Monism to be wrong? The framework risks unfalsifiability in a way that makes it more poetry than philosophy. Identifying empirical predictions or conceptual tests that could challenge the framework remains an open task.

Conclusion

Conduit Monism offers a framework for understanding consciousness that preserves the intuition that subjective experience is categorically distinct from physical process while grounding personality, identity, and agency firmly in biology. It ties the mystery of consciousness to the deeper mystery of existence itself, suggesting they may be the same question differently phrased.

The theory does not promise comfort. There is no personal immortality, no cosmic judgment, no purpose bestowed from beyond. What it offers instead is a coherent account of experience that honours both the strangeness of consciousness and the machinery that shapes it—while removing the anthropocentric bias that assumes human experience is privileged or central.

Like understanding that the Earth is spherical rather than flat, this framework attempts to step outside human-centric assumptions. The Source does not look like us, think like us, or care about us. It is not a god. It is the fact of existence experiencing itself through countless apertures, of which we are one temporary configuration among many.

Author's Note

This framework is provisional and intended for continued development. It represents an independent attempt to interpret the nature of conscious experience through first-principles reasoning, developed through dialogue and refined through challenge. The language frequently fails; what is being pointed at may exceed what words can capture. Refinement will follow.

Recommended next steps: engage with existing literature on panpsychism, integrated information theory (IIT), and the phenomenology of pure awareness. Sit with the framework experientially—not thinking about the Source, but noticing what in present experience might be the Source manifesting through this particular conduit.

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v2.0 — Revised December 2024