

the idea of a conscious Creator all the more plausible.

The Genesis account states, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them.” (Genesis 1:27) Much thought has been given to what it means to have been created in the image of God. The purpose of being made in God’s image is rather obvious: so that we might have a relationship with Him. “I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God...” (Jeremiah 24:7) This requires that we be conscious creatures, able to make a conscious choice to respond to our Creator, placing ourselves in a relationship with Him.

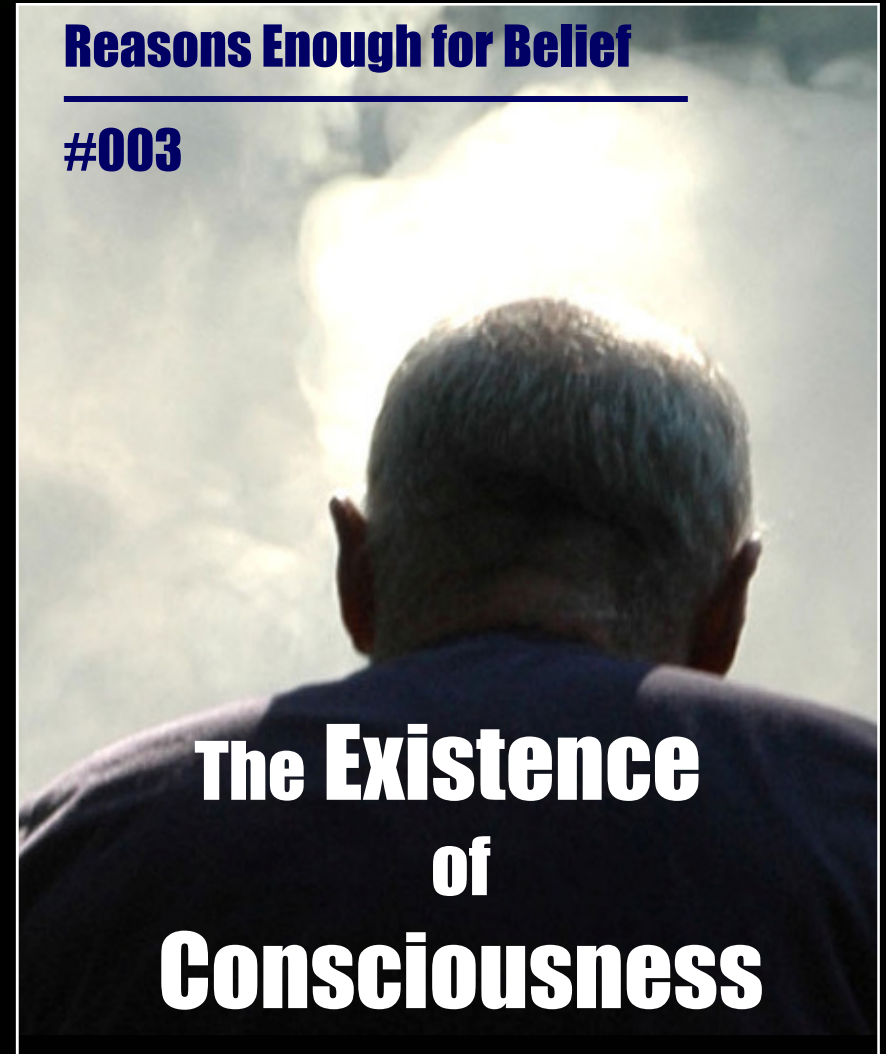
Consciousness is something totally distinct from any electrical or chemical process of the brain. There’s really no adequate explanation for the existence of consciousness other than believing that the Creator, who is supremely conscious, created us this way! As His conscious creation we are not only conscious of self and of the world around us, we were created to be conscious of our Creator, and to live accordingly. This is, when it’s all said and done, the ultimate conscious choice that we can make!

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Reasons Enough for Belief

#003



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Faith Files

Series: *Reasons Enough for Belief*

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The Existence of Consciousness

Why are we aware? Why are we aware that we are aware? Consciousness is an amazing mystery. In the previous two *Faith Files* we've reflected on the source of energy and matter and the origin of life, suggesting that there's reason enough to believe that God is the creator of it all. Consciousness is another area, quite apart from energy and matter and life, that also should prompt us to ask, "Where did it come from?"

Consciousness Is the Icing on the Cake

For us humans (and the more highly developed animals, which also seem to be conscious), being sentient appears to be a bonus: not essential for thriving, but certainly a wonderful extra. When talking with someone who believes in a purely natural evolutionary process, it could be argued that there's no benefit to being conscious. Certainly plants and most lower forms of animal life thrive very well without being conscious. Higher forms of animal life appear to thrive well on instinct, without thinking, doing what they need to do to survive and multiply their kind. In fact, it could be argued that being self-aware could be as much of a detriment to survival as a benefit. For instance, our worry about our own survival could keep us awake at night and make us less alert to threats to our life.

Darwin's theory of evolution does not appear to explain the existence of consciousness. If we are just the product of a body and brain that have evolved, where did consciousness come from? How can the conscious come from that which is unconscious?

Approximately 85 billion neurons make up the human brain. Each one is connected to 10,000 others. These neurons fire a signal on the synapses between them. The brain's process for thinking is a matter of these neurons firing or not firing; you could call them biological on and off switches. How can consciousness arise from these simple firings of neurons?

The Brain and the Computer

The function of a computer is based on how the brain works, all computer computations being just a bunch of 0s and 1s, much like the firing or not firing of the brain's neurons. These 0s and 1s, in long strings and combinations, allow a computer to process data.

Since the development of the computer we've had the ambition to create a computer that can think like we do: a computer that is conscious. In Arthur C. Clarke's novel and movie *2001: a Space Odyssey*, there was HAL the computer who was self-aware, and who set out to murder his human companions on board the spaceship. My favorite is Data, the android in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, who appeared to be human and wanted to become fully human. We want to create a computer in our own image, but can we?

Dr. Roaslin Picard, a Christian who is the founder and director of the Affective Computing Research Group at MIT, is heading the effort to give computers the ability to sense and respond to emotional clues. Will they ever have emotions? Dr. Picard stated that "We are working on methods that give machines what I say are mechanisms of emotion... We can make the computer smile and look like it's happy, act like it's happy, and retrieve happier words. We can make a computer write poetry that's more iambic, but it doesn't have the same internal experience, or self, that we have." (*A Place for Truth*, Editor: Dallas Willard, IVP Books)

In other words, we can program computers to simulate emotions by writing code so they respond in ways that seem emotional, but they aren't really feeling anything. When IBM's Watson computer won the game of Jeopardy over humans it couldn't be happy about the win. Watson wasn't truly "thinking," just crunching vast amounts of 0s and 1s to arrive at the right answer. The world's largest computer, currently the Tihane-2 in China, can process at 33.86 petaflops per second but it isn't thinking or feeling. It's unlikely that when a computer achieves an even higher number of computations per second it will become self-aware, having true consciousness and feelings.

No computer code, no matter how long or complex or how fast it runs, is going to become conscious; code can't be conscious. We can program computers to mimic consciousness, but not to experience it. If the 0s and 1s of computer code are never going to achieve consciousness, there's no reason to believe that switching on and off the firing of the neurons of any brain will generate consciousness.

The Source of Consciousness

The most logical source of consciousness is that it was created by the One who is supremely conscious: God. Perhaps a natural evolutionist can be at peace believing that matter, energy, and life have evolved to the point of where we find things now, but the existence of consciousness is a very different matter. Consciousness is a subject that stands on its own as demanding an explanation of how and why it exists. For many of us it makes