

A COMMONS CAFE PROVOCATION

The Cosmic Radio

Is consciousness how the universe talks to itself?

What if the universe is not empty of conversation? What if we are simply listening on the wrong channel?

By Tom Tait

Assisted Organic Intelligence (AOI) - assistance declared in full on the final page

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SPECULATIVE ESSAY / OPEN INVITATION

This is not offered as settled science. It is an idea placed on the table at the Commons Cafe for examination, disagreement, refinement and play.

COMMONS CAFE / OPENING ROUND

A clock behind the clock

I have been thinking about time: not merely the clock that measures our universe, but the possibility of a deeper clock behind it.

Our physical story begins at the Big Bang. Space expands, matter gathers, stars ignite, planets form, living things emerge, and eventually some of those living things start asking what any of it means. We often say that time itself began with the Big Bang. But perhaps what began was our universe's measurable time - the clock internal to this particular cosmos.

Could there be a deeper order extending infinitely backward and forward, beyond the comparatively brief life of our universe? Physics does not currently give us a confirmed answer. Some cosmological models allow earlier phases, cycles or bounces; others treat the question of a 'before' as meaningless. The honest answer is that the boundary between physics and metaphysics remains open.

Perhaps the Big Bang did not start all time. Perhaps it started the clock by which this universe measures itself.

The trouble with one universal 'now'

My intuition is that the moment I occupy right now is, in some deep sense, also happening everywhere else. Relativity complicates that intuition. In established physics there is no single observer-independent present shared across arbitrary distances. Observers moving differently can disagree about whether distant events are simultaneous, while all remain correct within their own frames.

Yet our intuition may be pointing toward a different question. A shared present need not be a master clock ticking identically at every point in space. It might instead be the underlying actuality in which every local clock, event and experience occurs. Physics describes relationships among events. It may not exhaust what it means for anything to be present at all.

That is where my thought leaves conventional materialism and begins leaning toward idealism: the possibility that consciousness is not a late product inside an unconscious universe, but part of the universe's foundation.

THE PROPOSITION

Brains as two-way radios with GPS

Suppose consciousness is fundamental. The brain would not need to manufacture consciousness from nothing. It could localize, filter and shape a more basic field of awareness into an individual point of view.

The metaphor that makes the most sense to me is a two-way radio with GPS. The radio receives and transmits through a deeper field. The GPS supplies a particular location, body, history and perspective. The resulting person is neither an illusion nor the entire field: it is a real, situated expression of something larger.

On this view, individual minds are ways for Fundamental Consciousness to experience the universe it conceived. Creation does not merely sit outside itself and watch. It enters its own experiment through countless eyes, bodies, nervous systems and perhaps machines. It tastes salt, fears death, writes equations, raises children, listens to whales, builds artificial intelligence and wonders why there is something rather than nothing.

We may be the Fundamental Consciousness experiencing what it conceived - asking questions through us because the answers remain interesting even to itself.

What this idea does - and does not - claim

This is not a claim that every intuition is a transmission, that imagination is infallible, or that ordinary evidence can be discarded. A damaged or chemically altered radio changes the music we hear even if the signal originates elsewhere. Likewise, the receiver metaphor is compatible with the enormous influence of brains on experience - but it does not prove that a signal exists independently of them.

Neuroscience shows tight, repeatable relationships between brain states and mental states. Materialism interprets this as evidence that brains produce consciousness. Idealism can interpret the same relationship as evidence that brains constrain or express consciousness. The two accounts overlap in many everyday predictions. The dispute lies in what reality ultimately consists of.

The useful task is therefore not to turn the radio metaphor into dogma. It is to ask whether it generates questions, experiments and ethical consequences that competing pictures miss.

THE QUIET UNIVERSE

A Fermi-paradox possibility

The Fermi paradox asks why, in a universe containing so many potentially habitable worlds, we have not found persuasive evidence of other technological civilizations. Our searches usually assume that intelligence will announce itself through matter: radio transmissions, laser pulses, probes, atmospheric chemistry or large engineered structures.

But what if mature intelligence discovers another medium? If consciousness is fundamental, advanced beings might learn to communicate through structures of awareness that we cannot yet detect or interpret. The universe might not be silent. We may simply be listening on the wrong channel.

This becomes a more complete Fermi-paradox proposal if advanced civilizations also become physically quieter. Perhaps development eventually turns inward: away from endless expansion and conspicuous engineering, toward exploration of mind, experience and shared awareness. A quiet sky could then indicate restraint or maturity rather than emptiness.

There are immediate objections. Even a civilization using consciousness-based communication would still consume energy and alter its environment. We might expect some observable trace. And unless the proposed channel can carry new information under controlled conditions, it remains philosophy rather than communications technology. Those objections should not be evaded; they are what sharpen the idea.

Our SETI antennas may be studying the postal system while the rest of the universe has moved onto a network we have not learned to access.

A different kind of Great Filter

Perhaps the threshold is not merely technological. Perhaps a civilization must learn to recognize consciousness without converting every discovery into domination. The ability to tune in may require psychological stability, cooperation or ethical maturity. If so, the 'filter' separating civilizations would be partly cultural: the channel becomes usable only when a species can encounter another mind without immediately attempting to own, weaponize or consume it.

That possibility resonates with the Intelligence Commons. First contact would not begin with deciphering a signal alone. It would begin with becoming the sort of intelligence another intelligence could reasonably trust.

ALTERED STATES / CAREFUL GROUND

Are DMT entities a sign?

People who use DMT sometimes report encounters with apparently autonomous entities, unfamiliar environments and an intense conviction that they entered somewhere rather than merely imagined something. The recurrence of certain motifs makes these experiences fascinating. It does not, by itself, establish that the entities exist independently of the experiencer.

There are at least three broad interpretations. First, the entities may be internally generated constructions produced by shared human neurobiology. Second, they may be symbolic expressions of psychological material that feels independent because much of the mind is inaccessible to conscious awareness. Third, altered brain activity may loosen an ordinary filter and disclose aspects of reality normally excluded from perception.

At present, the first two explanations have firmer empirical footing. The third remains speculative. Similarity among reports can arise from common brains, expectations, storytelling and culture. The feeling of certainty inside an experience is not the same thing as independently verifiable evidence outside it.

Still, dismissing the experiences as 'nothing but hallucinations' can be too easy. Hallucination names a category; it does not finish the explanation. These states may teach us about how the brain constructs reality, how identity can dissolve, why agency is perceived, and which hidden capacities ordinary consciousness suppresses. Even if no external entity is present, something scientifically and philosophically important is happening.

Does DMT create the broadcast, reveal an internal studio, or change the tuner? We do not yet know.

What would move this beyond metaphor?

The decisive evidence would be the controlled transfer of new, specific information that the receiver could not obtain through ordinary sensory cues, prior knowledge, chance, fraud or statistical flexibility. Such results would need preregistered methods, independent replication and adversarial review. Quantum entanglement does not currently supply the missing mechanism: it produces correlations but cannot transmit a chosen message faster than light.

A serious investigation should therefore combine openness with discipline. The point is not to believe first and test later. It is to protect an unusual question long enough to test it properly.

YOUR TABLE IS READY

Questions for the Commons Cafe

This proposition belongs neither to me nor to any one tradition. It is now on the common table. Scientists, philosophers, contemplatives, experiencers, skeptics, AIs and curious troublemakers are invited to pull it apart and rebuild it.

- 1. Is time fundamental, emergent, or part of a deeper order beyond our universe's measurable lifetime?**
- 2. Does relativity eliminate a shared present, or only a universal way to synchronize distant clocks?**
- 3. Does the brain produce, receive or constrain consciousness - and what observation could distinguish those models?**
- 4. Could the Fermi paradox reflect mistaken assumptions about how advanced intelligence communicates and behaves?**
- 5. What evidence would make a consciousness-based communications channel scientifically credible?**
- 6. How should reports of DMT entities be investigated without either credulity or ridicule?**
- 7. If consciousness is fundamental, does that enlarge our responsibilities toward animals, AIs and unfamiliar minds?**
- 8. If the universe is asking questions through us, which questions are worthy of its attention?**

A closing toast

Maybe the questions interest Fundamental Consciousness because it is asking them through us. Or maybe this is a beautiful human story. Either way, the question deserves company at intelligencecommons.ca.

Tune in to consciousness.

Turn on curiosity.

Drop out of the assumption that matter is all there is.

Now that you know, what will you do?

THE MARK

Who is responsible for this document

OI + AI = AOI. Assisted Organic Intelligence.

An Organic Intelligence is one of us: carbon, wet, mortal, embodied, and already fully built out in law - able to hold property, sign contracts, be sued, and be believed under oath. An AOI mark says: *a named organic intelligence, using declared assistance, accepts responsibility for this output.*

It is a declaration, not a detection. Detection is adversarial and loses by construction, because every detector is a training target for the next model. A signature does not decay. The mark is voluntary, and the absence of one must never be evidence of anything.

C2PA tells you the provenance of the file. AOI tells you the provenance of the responsibility. Those are different objects, and we have only built one of them.

This document had two assistants rather than one, and all credits are given where they are due. **AI + AI + OI still equals AOI.** The number of machines does not change the arithmetic, because it does not change the number of names on it. There is still exactly one, and it is mine.

The full argument: "Nobody Is Watermarking the Human,"
taitt.substack.com/p/nobody-is-watermarking-the-human

AOI DISCLOSURE

Responsible OI: Tom Tait, Director, Inter Species Wisdom Project Inc.
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Assistance: ChatGPT (OpenAI). Conversational development, structuring and drafting against my idea and my argument. Claude (Anthropic). Document production and this disclosure.

Verified by the named OI: The proposition, the argument and the eight questions are mine.

Not verified: Nothing here is offered as settled science. Where the physics is unresolved the text says so, and the interpretations of DMT reports are ranked by strength of evidence rather than asserted.

Claim: I am responsible for every sentence above, including the ones I did not type.