

Is Your Sense of Self the Same as Mine?

Your sense of self is the conscious awareness you feel when you are “paying attention” to a particular task or thought. It is the feeling of mind and identity you have when you are self-reflecting on your life or on some current thoughts. Sometimes your sense of self may ask “What am I doing now in this body?” or “How did I come to inhabit this body?” or “Will I survive the demise of this body?”

When you invoke your conscious sense of self and “pay attention”, you are able to perform the current task much better than when your mind wanders over other distractions. Your sense of self helps to complete what [Douglas Hofstadter](#) calls the self-referential “strange loops” that are part of your thoughtful analysis of the current situation. Your sense of self is the awareness that makes you “not a zombie”. It feels like your “inner self”, the “real you”.

But if the latest [field theories of consciousness](#) are correct, your sense of self may not belong to you at all. It may actually be a feeling that is shared with every other person, and maybe even with some animals. In Conscious Field Theory (CFT), conscious feelings and experiences are caused by the brain interacting with an omnipresent background electromagnetic (EM) zero-point field (ZPF). Neurons in the brain produce coherent EM oscillations that resonate with EM attractor states within the ZPF. The phase-locked coupling of these resonant frequencies produces a ZPF information state that manifests itself as inherent ZPF properties. These properties correspond to conscious states that we experience as the color blue or the auditory middle C tone, or to conscious feelings that we experience like happiness and sadness.

And yes, the ZPF is rich enough that it includes an attractor state that corresponds to the sense of self. So “sense of self” is similar to “sense of sight” or “sense of taste” in that the conscious experiences (or “[qualia](#)”) of self are drawn from the ZPF in the same way as we experience the blueness of a blue sky or the sweet taste of sugar. This means that you and I share the same sense of self as we do when we share the same sensory experiences associated with the color of a deep blue sky or the musical sounds of a symphony concert.

Also, just as for sight and sound qualia, you and I do not create our sense of self experiences. Rather, we invoke and experience pre-existing conditions and properties from the ZPF.

But, you may ask, if it’s true that you and I experience the same sense of self, why do you and I have so many differences in feelings, opinions and decision-making? Well now, that’s because the sense of self doesn’t have any opinions of its own, nor does it make any decisions. All the sense of self does is make us aware of the opinions we

have and the decisions we make within our own brains. So you do own your own opinions and decisions even if you don't own your awareness of them.

Conscious Field Theory leads some people to believe that there is some amount of consciousness within everything in the Universe, i.e. "[panpsychism](#)". But the ubiquitous availability of potential feelings and experiences in an omnipresent ZPF does not mean that everything in the Universe can actually access them. In fact, it is becoming clear from recent research that the human brain uses highly advanced technology to access the conscious experiences of the ZPF. (See "[What is Consciousness](#)".) So while it does appear that we do share conscious qualia experiences of sight, sound, taste, smell and touch with other animals, it doesn't necessarily follow that the brains of these other animals also possess the technology needed to access the sense of self quale. That particular ability may be limited to the human community.