

**In-Sight Publishing**  
**Ask A Genius 134 – Christof Koch & Consciousness<sup>1</sup>**  
**Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner**  
**March 31, 2017**

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** You say that phrase: “The future is going to kick our asses” – a lot. It is face value descriptive when I think about it more. It is less descriptive when you take into account the various combinations of new people that will arise. New people relative to us now. I mean much more than – as you’ve noted in previous discussions – with the 3 million people, or 1 million people, with insulin pumps in their bodies, or pacemakers, or Parkinson’s pacemakers.

**Rick Rosner:** 1% of the US population, say, has some kind of circuitry in ‘em. Most of them pacemakers. Some of them are cochlear implants. Some of them are insulin pumps. You’ve got the in-brain pacemakers for people with Parkinson’s. Probably a zillion experimental ones like visual arrays in the back of your eyes for blind people.

**SDJ:** Also for augmented consciousness, if you want to take a flight—there was a recent rat study, they looked at its brain. They hadn’t seen it before. It was a neuron that went around the circumference of its brain. Proportioned to us, it is huge. We have large structures that are wired deeply like the corpus callosum.

**RR:** What does that neuron do?

**SDJ:** They think it might be key to consciousness. There’s a researcher named Christof Koch. So he and his team did the research, looked at the rat, and found two other neurons, less big, coming out of, as it turns out, a single area. They emanated from the single source called the claustrum. It has been associated with consciousness. By which they mean, the experience of you being you, and the observation of you being you, and so on.

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<sup>1</sup> Four format points for the session article:

1. Bold text following “Scott Douglas Jacobsen:” or “SDJ:” is Scott Douglas Jacobsen & non-bold text following “Rick Rosner:” or “RR:” is Rick Rosner.
2. Session article conducted, transcribed, edited, formatted, and published by Scott.
3. Footnotes & in-text citations in the interview & references after the interview.
4. This session article has been edited for clarity and readability.

For further information on the formatting guidelines incorporated into this document, please see the following documents:

1. American Psychological Association. (2010). Citation Guide: APA. Retrieved from <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/system/files/28281/APA6CitationGuideSFUv3.pdf>.
2. Humble, A. (n.d.). Guide to Transcribing. Retrieved from <http://www.msvu.ca/site/media/msvu/Transcription%20Guide.pdf>.

**RR:** Let's talk about that for a bit. We believe – you and I – that consciousness is an or goes along with, or emerges from the chatter of the, subsystems of the brain. Every part of the brain chats with every other part of the brain. So every conscious part of the brain knows what is going on in—the conscious parts of the brain that are evolved in being involved in conscious awareness are roughly aware of everything that's going on consciously along with some stuff that's just being reported to consciousness from processors that are themselves not entirely part of consciousness.

That is, you have the chatterers, the expert systems, that are fairly transparent in sharing what they're doing. Then you have other things that we're less conscious of, but still aware of, like walking and breathing. We're aware that we're doing those things without most of the time very consciously very controlling them. But we get status reports. Like right now, I have a semi-bummed knee. I am aware of it.

It makes me slightly more aware of what I am doing while I am walking, but still walking is still not something that we are usually 100% conscious of. That was a lot of babble for not much. But anyway! It seems reasonable that consciousness would be helped by synchronizers or rhythm keepers like music. Some kind of rhythmic stimulation, which helps some people focus. It just kind of keeps every or all expert subsystems rooted in the now.

Maybe, it can prevent you from spacing out. It lets you focus. Some other stuff that lets you focus depending on what your personality is, is some minimally, not painful, but minimal physical stimulation like chewing gum or biting your nails. Sometimes, I bit my nails. I pick at myself when I get tired. There are places on my body where I tend to look for zits or little ingrown hairs.

The stimulation from attacking myself like that helps me focus when I am sleepy. So this giant rat neuron that wraps around the rat's brain. If it is sending some synchronizing signals, it would be a way for the rat – it doesn't cause the rat's consciousness – to maintain focus, more aware than it would be otherwise. And we can assume that we have some kind of stimulating system in our own brains that helps us stay focused.

That stimulation can be itself either conscious or unconscious. A conscious system is something that amps up our excitement and stuff that in any kind of objective reality would not be that exciting, like for guys seeing anything vaguely girl-shaped.

**SDJ:** [Laughing].

**RR:** It revs up our libido-based attention. My dad who just turned 86, but when he was younger was notorious for being fantastically distracted by any woman who gave off any hint of any attractiveness. It was ridiculous. It wouldn't matter that the woman was attractive or not. If she made any kind of gesture in the direction of gender-based attraction, like wearing a skirt, or wearing high heels, or any kind of tight top, it didn't matter how the woman actually looked.

My dad, his jaw would drop and his eyes would be the Tex Avery thing – 'awooga!'.

**SDJ: There's another layer to what you're saying. So there's the time-keeper. Assuming all of the premises that you've laid out, let's assume that the big ol' circumference spanning neuron, the next level is the attention to what, and the attention is to reproduction or anything "girl-shaped" ...**

**RR: ...**That particular thing is based on sex drive. But just about anything that happens to us is important to us way out of proportion to any kind of objective significance.

**SDJ: The world from natural science remains the non-important world. You do not find values in the world. You find values in organisms making evaluations in relation to a world.**

**RR: Yea.**

**SDJ: You don't find meaning in the world as a statement in and of itself as a descriptor.**

**RR: The world itself does not contain meaning, but we provide the meaning.**

**SDJ: In a way, so rather than meaning in the world, you derive meaning from the world, but that "from the world" implies an information processor – in IC language.**

**RR: You have to construct meaning.**

**SDJ: Yea, same with values, but those values are evolutionarily, or biologically, or information processing constrained.**

[End of recorded material]

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