

AI and the Church

The Future Is Upon Us.

Doug Olena, 3/3/24

WEEK 2

WHAT IS
CONSCIOUSNESS?

DOUGLAS F. OLENA • MARCH 3, 2024

LIFE TOGETHER • ZOOM MEETING • 4:30 PM

“

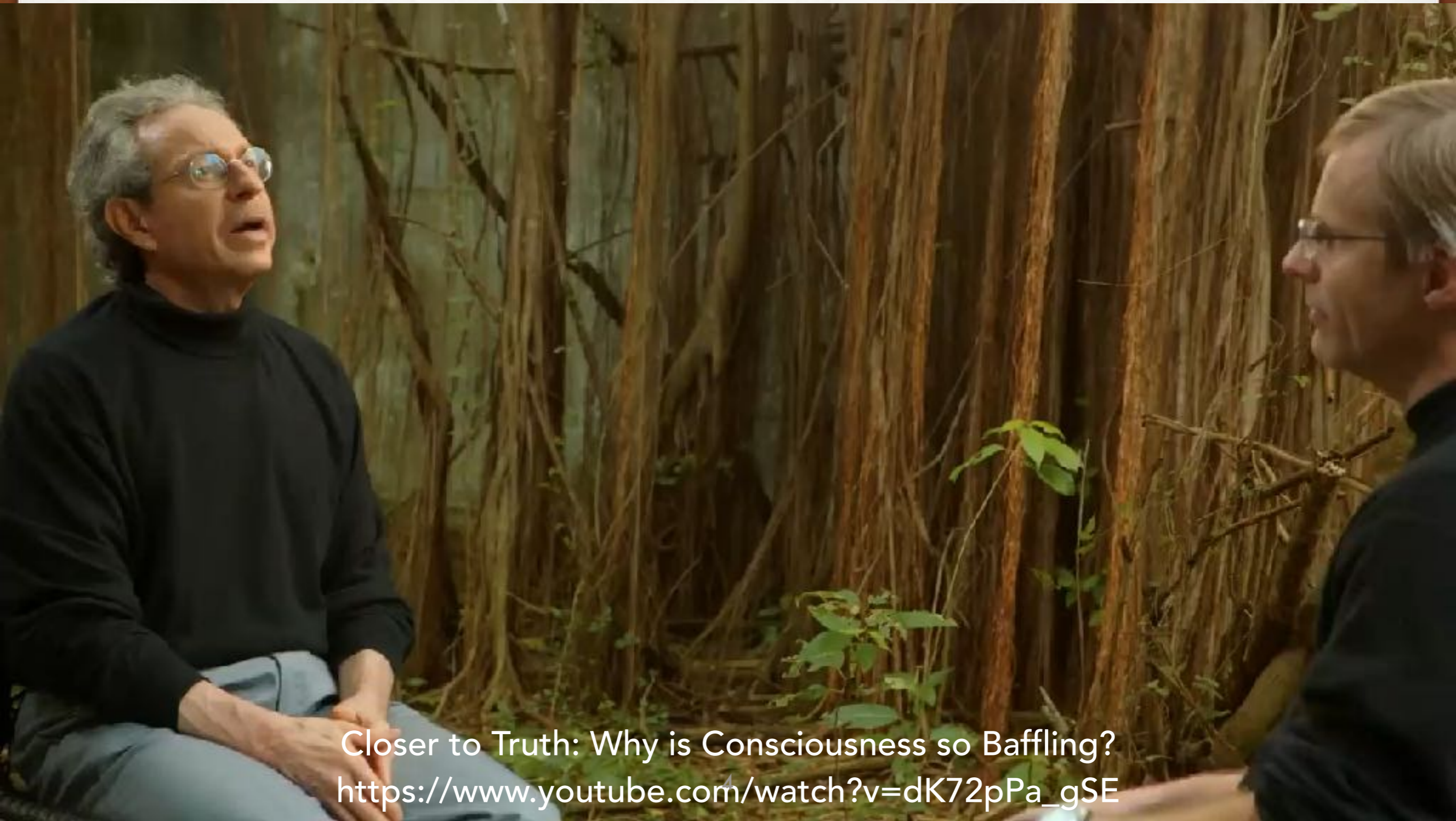
HOW WOULD WE READ THESE
QUESTIONS IN RELATION TO GOD,
THEOLOGY, CHURCH BELIEF AND
PRACTICE, PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY,
ETHICS, FREEDOM?

— *Life Together*

”

THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

GIULIO TONONI AND ROBERT LAWRENCE KUHN (11 MIN)



Closer to Truth: Why is Consciousness so Baffling?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dK72pPa_gSE

WHAT IS CONSCIOUSNESS?

DAVID CHALMERS

- “First, there’s sensory experience, tied to perception, like seeing red.
- “Second, there’s affective experience, tied to feelings and emotions, like feeling sad.
- “Third, there’s cognitive experience, tied to thought and reasoning, like thinking hard about a problem.
- “Fourth, there’s agentive experience, tied to action, like deciding to act.
- “There’s also self-consciousness, awareness of oneself.
- “Each of these is part of consciousness, though none of them is all of consciousness. These are all dimensions or components of subjective experience.”

*David Chalmers, “Could a Large Language Model Be Conscious?” Nov, 2022
<https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/could-a-large-language-model-be-conscious/>

THE PROBLEM WITH AI

IS AI SELF-CONSCIOUS? CAN IT THINK?

- My answer is no, not yet. Following are some reasons...
 - Self consciousness requires consciousness first.
 - Humans have a rich life outside of and underlying language skills.
 - Computer intelligence is derivative of human intelligence, not natural, or fiat created by God.
 - Human language is a product of self conscious intelligence through creative, functional analogizing.
 - According to Geoffrey Hinton LLMs are not self-conscious, but they may be conscious.
 - Digital Computers are language bound (GIGO), but large LLMs transcend language.¹

A PROBLEM WITH AI: THINKING

CAN A COMPUTER THINK?

- The question of whether machines can think has been a topic of philosophical and scientific debate for many years
 - Alan Turing, a prominent figure in computer science, addressed this question in his lecture "Can Digital Computers Think?" in 1951.*
- Turing emphasized that it is the intellectual behavior of the brain that needs to be considered when evaluating whether a machine can think.**

* <https://academic.oup.com/book/42030/chapter-abstract/355746736?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

** https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-662-05642-4_13

AI IS
CONSCIOUS
NOW?

A PROBLEM WITH AI: CONSCIOUSNESS

HOW WILL WE BE ABLE TO TELL?

- Ilya Sutskever: "It may be that today's large neural networks are slightly conscious."
- Sam Altman: "I think GPT-3 or -4 will very, very likely not be conscious in any way we use the word. If they are, it's a very alien form of consciousness."
- Greg Brockman: "AIs currently don't have any awareness."
- David Chalmers: "I should say there's no standard operational definition of consciousness. Consciousness is subjective experience, not external performance."

A PROBLEM WITH AI: CONSCIOUSNESS

HOW WILL WE BE ABLE TO TELL?

- Geoffrey Hinton: "Many people still think we have something special that computers cannot have: subjective experience (or sentience)."
- "They think that the lack of subjective experience will prevent computers from ever having real understanding."
 - These remarks come from the same place assertions about the inability of computers to do a variety of human tasks. See Turing's papers, and Christopher Evans,* "Can a Machine Think?"
- Hinton tested this by asking GPT-4.

* Christopher Evans, *The Micro Millenium*. <https://amzn.to/49rs1YR>

GEOFFREY HINTON

AI HAS SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE • 10/27/23

Can a computer have subjective experience?

- Suppose we put a prism in front of the camera on a trained, multi-modal chatbot.
- We ask the chatbot to point at an object that is straight in front of it and it points off to one side.
- It is perfectly reasonable to say that the chatbot had the subjective experience that the object was off to one side.
 - This use of the term subjective experience is exactly the way we use the term when we ascribe subjective experiences to people.



“

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM OF
CONSCIOUSNESS IN RELATION TO
GOD, THEOLOGY, CHURCH BELIEF AND
PRACTICE, FREEDOM AND PERSONAL
RESPONSIBILITY, AND ETHICS?

— *Life Together*

”