

Claus Janew

Omnipresent Consciousness and Free Will

Freedom of Choice: A Real Solution to the Problem

– New Translation –

Abstract: *This article is not an attempt to explain consciousness in terms of quantum physics or neurobiology. Instead, I would like to place the concept of “consciousness” on a broader foundation. I will therefore start from everyday reality, from precisely the point where we experience ourselves as conscious beings. I will define the concept so broadly that the question of whether only humans possess consciousness or whether a thermostat does as well is resolved; the difference is considerable, but not fundamental: every effect consists in the perception of consciousness. Accordingly, I will address its freedom of choice, which I consider the most important source of creativity. The problem of a truly conscious decision does not disappear by mixing determination with a dash of chance. Both must merge into a higher unity. It will then become clear that a certain degree of freedom of choice is just as ubiquitous as consciousness – an inherent part of reality itself.*

Can we freely choose between several alternatives?

One is quick to say: “Of course! I’m constantly deciding something.” We all have the subjective feeling of being relatively free in our choices. But can an objective fact be derived from this sensation alone? Are the available options real alternatives? Or is the outcome already predetermined by external circumstances, with our so-called “decision” being nothing more than an illusion? Is free will merely an illusion, as some scientists and philosophers claim?

To answer this age-old question, we must at least understand the basics of what consciousness is. For we can only speak of an active *decision* if it is made *consciously*. Everything else is not decided by *us*, by our conscious being. So let us first clarify how we are aware of the alternative possibilities.

Interestingly, the nature of this awareness corresponds to our awareness of an object, which is why we will turn our attention to it first.

Circumscription by feedback

Let's take any object from our surroundings, say this book. We perceive it as an extended surface or an extended body. Furthermore, it represents a unity of various texts, illustrations, and gaps. We know that this unity is relative, for we can focus on individual texts or tear their pages out of the book while forgetting the others. We also know that every text consists of individual letters, which, however, only form sentences in their sequential context.

On the other hand, we always read only one letter or one word at a time. And each photoreceptor cell in our eye can capture only a tiny part of a letter. This photoreceptor cell is by no means elementary, but consists of molecules and atoms, which in turn are composed of elementary particles. At this (quantum physical) level, there are no "fixed" parts at all, for the indeterminacy of a "body" is considered a principle there. Otherwise, we would ultimately end up with infinitely small (infinitesimal) particles – that is, with nothing.

But nothing comes from nothing. And letters do not become text unless they merge into flowing sentences. Although we perceive only a part of a sentence at any given moment, we retain the sentence *as a whole* in our minds. We have stored it and can now retrieve its words one after another, that is, repeat the sentence. In doing so, we perform a feedback loop through which we become aware of the sentence *as a whole*. We do this even when we grasp it briefly through simple reading, but recognize its entirety not in the sum of the words, but in their mutual *relationship* to one another. The words merely *circumscribe* the wholeness of the sentence.

Furthermore, the written form of the sentence is neither its meaning nor does it reflect its meaning. Instead, the latter is *intuitively* grasped. The thoughts, images, and feelings (associations) triggered in the reader by the individual words coalesce into a holistic meaning. The sentence is therefore merely the circumscriptive shell of its deeper content. On the other hand, no statement could acquire meaning without expressing itself in some kind of shell. It would be *nothing*.

The same applies to every single letter, an article, or the entire book. Regardless of how deep the associations go, we perceive the respective whole only through conscious or subconscious feedback between the individual parts. Sometimes this movement is followed with the eyes, and sometimes it takes place only in the mind. There, it can only exist through the simultaneous interaction of the "individual" pieces of visual information.

We perceive *everything* in this way. Without circumscription by feedback, every effect would be vanishingly small – spatially *and* temporally. We would perceive "points" instead of surfaces and "moments" instead of time periods. In this way, we could recognize *nothing*. There would be no differences, which can only ever be determined through comparison, that

is, feedback. There would be no space because it is only circumscribed by objects. There would be no structure, which, after all, only achieves wholeness through the feedback interaction of its parts. There would be nothing “tangible” at all, for we can only “grasp” an *entirety* of parts. **It is solely through the constant circumscription of central zero points and moments – which in themselves are meaningless – that we perceive *objects*.**

“Minimal” consciousness

If we assume that the external world exists objectively, we must also grant such a circumscribing “perception” to all things different from ourselves, for they evidently interact with one another in a real way.

As is well known, a body arises through the interaction of its molecules with one another. This is feedback, that is, the circumscription of infinitesimal centers within and between the particles, in all subentireties as well as in the whole. Every whole circumscribed as a body interacts with other such wholes, so that together they form a higher, feedback-based whole, and so on, whereby none can be reduced to anything elementary, but only to other circumscriptions. A circumscribed *object*, in turn, circumscribes something else, and so on.

It should also be noted that it is only the comparative interrelation *with the environment* that enables a concrete whole, which thus differs in a *certain* way from its surroundings but at the same time forms *another* whole with them.

Let us now consider that feedback also underlies our consciousness. For what else is its defining characteristic, if not the feedback-based perception of a supposedly external object? We become aware of its existence. The same applies when an object appears only before our mind’s eye. We seem to perceive something other than ourselves, with which we interact. Without this feedback, there would be no mental content. Consciousness thus circumscribes the wholeness of our relationship to the physical or mental object under consideration. Even when we take our ego as the object (self-consciousness), it is no different.

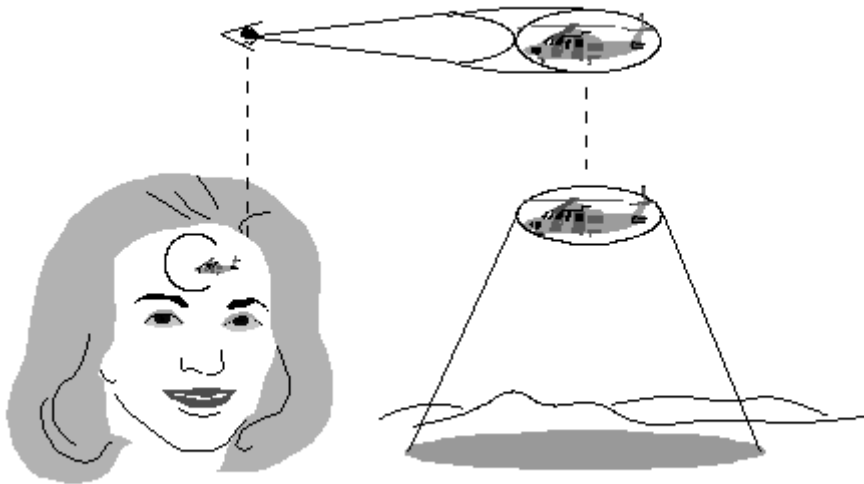


Figure 1: The woman recognizes the helicopter only through a circumscriptive comparison of its details. This perception itself constitutes a feedback relationship between the woman and the helicopter, thus forming a circumscribed whole. When the observer turns away, the image remains in a feedback loop within her mind. The interaction between the helicopter and the ground is also based on feedback and circumscription. Likewise, their distinction from one another.

Since every interaction implies a feedback-based perception of the other party for the involved sides and collectively circumscribes a whole, **at least a simple consciousness is attributed to every existing thing**, which always constitutes such a circumscription.

What does that mean? Does it mean that every elementary particle circumscribed by vibrations can think – that is, “experience reflections”? Apparently so. Of course, in its own way and not as complexly as we do. Rather, elementary thought processes are meant to show us here how freedom of choice fundamentally comes about.

Before we can delve into this, however, we must first address another fundamental property of reality that is inseparable from feedback.

Structure and wholeness

We have already seen that *interaction* only makes sense in its entirety. It is essentially the circumscribed whole *itself*, because it cannot be fully reduced to parts – ultimately to nothing. Only the circumscription lifts an object out of the infinitesimal into existence.

The circumscribing *movement*, however, entails relatively uncertain or blurred boundaries of the object. (When we walk along the shore of a large lake, we never see the entire lake at

once and consequently cannot prove that it has a closed surface. Only through feedback with our memory of the other shores do we perceive the entire body of water.)

Yet the *entirety* of the feedback defines the object as a whole against the backdrop of the broader indeterminate (against the lake's surroundings, which may be a barren desert, a blooming garden, or anything else, so long as it is not washed over and swallowed by the lake).

Meanwhile, the circumscribing interaction also *distinguishes* its sides in a comparative sense. In contrast to this circumscribing *structure*, the integrating whole appears relatively diffuse or continuous. (Compared to the different shores, the entirety of the lake is a relatively uniform phenomenon.)

The unity of determination and indeterminacy described in this way applies to both quantum-physical and ordinary human observations. It makes no difference here whether we are dealing with the entirety of a physical body or that of a more complex consciousness. *Neither* can exist without this unity.

Every structure is a whole and is composed of such wholes, yet wholes are also formed solely by structures – those of their circumscription and those of their distinguishing comparison with other things. (Only a specific combination of seats, engine, sheet metal, and wheels conveys to us the wholeness of a car, and if we do not clearly distinguish it from a pile of scrap, we would never think of driving it.)

Structure and wholeness are thus interrelated, and indeed *at every point of reality*. Only their unity, extending down to the infinitely small, can *produce* reality. Reality is infinitesimality-structured. It is important that in this way all seemingly separate things are connected to one another, for the perception of their separation is already the circumscription of their connection, which *entails* relative separation. The infinitesimality structure also connects everything with the *unrecognized*. How, we shall see.

The following follows from what has been said so far: Whenever we perceive a whole – that is, an object or a relationship – *we perceive its infinitesimality structure*. (Otherwise, we would perceive *nothing*.) In doing so, it is not necessary to recognize its composition down to the infinitely small. The relative *continuity* of its wholeness is already a sufficient expression of an infinitely fine structure. Of course, we generally bypass this as well by not accounting for how wholeness and structure differ. We perceive both together at every point, united *in an infinitesimal way!*

The integrating sensation associated with every perception may make this clearer. Without it, *we* cannot perceive anything. If you are attentive, you will realize that even the sight of an abstract line triggers a sensation within you “contained” in its image.

The determinate and the indeterminate

But even an infinitesimality structure can be more or less structured, for it describes realms of reality with varying degrees of articulation, which it in turn connects with one another in an infinitesimality-structured manner. Only in this way can transitions between relatively discontinuous and more continuous parts of reality be explained, such as between interacting objects and their mediating motion. And for the same reason (though it is not the same thing), we can make a *relative* distinction between a structured movement of circumscription and the circumscribed, more uniform whole. Both are infinitely finely woven, as is their connection or wholeness. **From the infinitely fine structural network emerge the more or less structured formations of our reality, which in turn are linked together into a single, shiftable mesh.**

It is this very nature that allows us to perceive differences within a whole, particularly intuitively distinct concentrations. The more significant the whole is in relation to the distinguished parts, the more it concentrates centrally within its circumscription, since its outer details require less attention. The totality “condenses,” so to speak, in the center and is extremely intensified in an infinitely small point. The “condensate” represents the determinate within the diffuse enclosure, within the indeterminate, self-referential movement. Meanwhile, this same movement defines the whole in relation to *external* indeterminacy. The always derivable infinitesimal center into which the circumscription *merges*, however, also connects directly with the *indeterminate identity* of all infinitesimalities that are *not* aware by circumscription, as well as with the circumscribed “in themselves.”

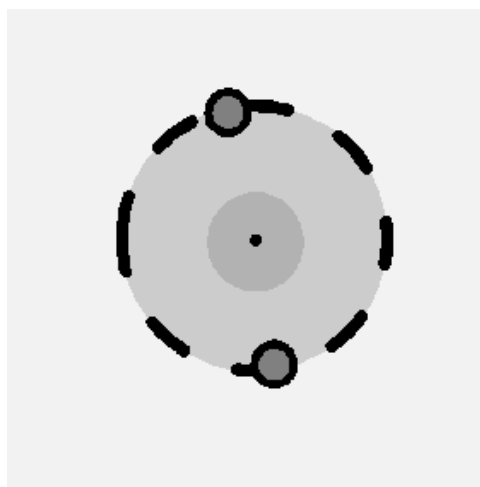


Figure 2: The circumscribed wholeness of a structure is concentrated primarily at its center. Fine and coarse structure, the determinate and the indeterminate merge into one another.

We grasp all of this *together*. Only the inseparable unity of identity *and* distinction, of blurriness *and* contrast, of determination *and* indeterminacy yields a realistic perception. The latter is, for the same reason, primarily intuitive. It is the perception of the infinitesimality-structured (including infinitesimal) unity of interrelationships and their cores.

Freedom of choice

The same applies when we weigh several alternatives against one another.

Imagine you are a hunter tracking a herd of game (or a group of poachers). The trail suddenly forks, and you must choose one of the two paths. First, you try to read the trail more closely, taking into account the known habits of the prey and your own potential benefit – that is, you try to logically deduce your decision. If you arrive at a clear conclusion in the process, the path you should take is obvious. It is predetermined, and you do not need to choose.

If, on the other hand, you do not reach a clear conclusion, you can also flip a coin and let chance “decide.” That, too, is not a conscious choice. (At most, it is the decision *not* to choose for yourself.)

If the former is not possible and the latter does not appeal to you, you will make your decision “emotionally” or “instinctively.” Is this now random or determined? Or perhaps both?

If, for example, you *happen* to notice another important clue on the trail *as a result of your efforts*, both chance *and* determination are involved. Your logically consistent efforts lead to chance discoveries, which then flow into your next considerations, and so on.

Yet every chance encounter is, viewed from a different, more comprehensive perspective, clearly predetermined. On the other hand, any chain of cause and effect can only be traced back so far before it ends in something impossible to grasp. Even the *mixture* of determination and chance in a process such as the act of conscious searching does not yet result in a choice. For although they influence one another, they remain themselves. The result is predictable in sections and determined by the unknown in between, but by no means freely *chosen*. Nor is it any different in the interplay between logic and chance while you are deliberating.

Your deliberative mental activity, on the other hand, describes a feedback loop between the alternative paths. Let us recall what this means: a whole is circumscribed, down to an infinitesimal center. The circumscribing interrelation also *distinguishes* the alternatives, and the outermost structure and innermost core form an infinitesimality-structured unity.

This unites determinacy and indeterminacy at some point *completely*. In such a unity, *both* are no longer themselves, nor are they even partially separable from one another. Only from this new state can a conscious decision, a truly free choice, take place. If made *entirely* arbitrarily, however, it would no longer be such a choice, but pure chance. A conscious decision must make sense to the decision-maker; that is, its arbitrariness and the feedback-generating, meaning-giving connections that perform the circumscription of the whole must intuitively converge. They are identical at the moment of choice.

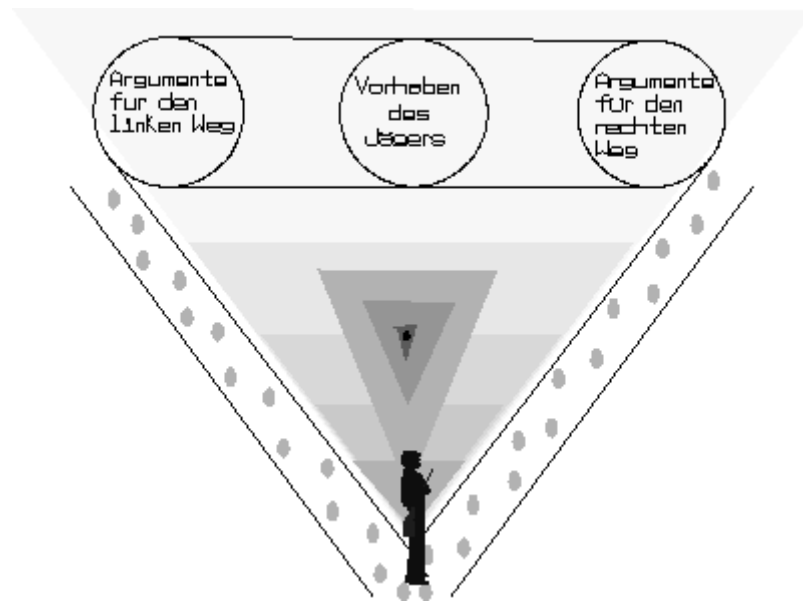


Figure 3: All factors important to the decision-making process initially converge in the hunter's deliberations – shown here as a darker shading toward the bottom. Yet their complete unification within him is *not* the moment of his free choice; rather, this arises from the total unity of the point of identity *with the distinction* of all factors, with their structured relationship to one another, which is what gives this point its meaning in the first place. Such a state can no longer be depicted visually: the transition to it is merely indicated by the middle triangles.

As a hunter, you thus intuitively grasp the uncertain situation and make an intuitive decision. Logical considerations and random influences flank this decision by necessarily leading to the moment of choice. Both are *involved* in this moment, as they are infinitesimally (structured) connected to it.

However, you can only choose the left *or* the right trail as a continuation, which then opens the feedback loop. Your free decision therefore signifies a meaningful determination within the indeterminacy of the path ahead. You create this determination from your identity with the *neutral* point at the center of the totality of your possibilities, a point *determined* by infinitesimal delimitation. Thus, the decision cannot be predetermined from any perspective. Only after the indeterminacy of the *alternative* paths to be pursued and the holistic relationships have been fully *united* with the neutral, “unbiased” determination can they return to a real determination – your freely chosen path.

Thus, the decision has been made, and moments of choice such as this are present *everywhere and at all times* in the *infinitesimality-structured* world, through us and all other conscious wholes. **A certain degree of freedom of choice is therefore an essential characteristic of all consciousness.**

The broader context

The degree of freedom, of course, depends on the given possibilities. And here, the more complex, so to speak, collective consciousnesses with their manifold, branching relationships offer greater leeway than the simplest ones, in which we believe we cannot discern any alternatives at all. Yet every feedback loop probes the paths of its opening. Thus, even the most primitive consciousness seeks choices that are by no means illusory.

For apparent simplicity is no reason to doubt the activity of consciousness. Chaos theory teaches us that no feedback loop repeats itself *exactly*, since everything is connected to everything else and influences one another. According to holistic theories, which examine relationships in their entirety, all phenomena are encoded within each individual one. Both of these points imply that a consciousness *incorporates* the informational content of its infinite, more complex, and seemingly merely external environment – as its inner self. So, fundamentally, it cannot be that simple. Nor can its available possibilities be clearly fixed. Every determining influence from the outside acts only cooperatively with the consciousness in question, which thus always *participates* in the decision regarding its further development.

The information about its infinite environment, which it (to use a term of David Bohm) enfolds, remains largely hidden. It merges into an *infinitesimal* enfolding. The infinitesimality structure thus by no means describes only the unity of the respective superficial forms of existence; rather, even the tiniest circumscription already encompasses the information for the unfolding of the entire universe. However, it unfolds this totality only in a more or less limited form, as a relatively simple manifestation in our reality.

This does not mean that the *complex* wholeness, which remains largely subconscious, determines everything for its simpler embodiments. Nor does it mean that the decision-making process of a consciousness is carried out via an infinite hidden path.

The infinitesimality structure of the world reveals to us in all things the *identity* of the entire infinite universe – mediated through its structure *and* (two words are already too many!) *immediately* as the identity of all points at every point. **Thus, every concrete consciousness utilizes, individually and within the context of its specific environment, the *in itself indeterminate* potential of the *nearby* infinite totality within it.** It truly chooses *for itself*,

without having to rely entirely on the decisions of others or of its subconscious. Its relatively free will is real.

Résumé

Let us summarize the most important points once more:

Feedback and infinitesimality structure are characteristics of every form of existence and constitute it as consciousness. At the same time, they form the “mechanism” that leads to creative decisions, which every consciousness therefore makes ceaselessly within the framework of its given possibilities. The infinite interconnection of all consciousnesses also enters into the infinitesimality structure of each individual, thereby keeping the respective framework of possibilities open and contributing to the decision-making process without completely determining it.

Each of the infinitely densely packed points, characterized by a feedback-based, comparative distinction of relatively separate entities, is already surrounded by its own independent consciousness. **Reality thus signifies an infinitely complex, interwoven fabric of consciousnesses that emerge as the cause and effect of mutually attuned yet relatively free universal creativity.**

Certainly, much of what has been said is ultimately graspable only intuitively. And the relationships that we have broken down into a relatively separate form require a different way of thinking than the one we are accustomed to in order to be understood. As the infinitesimality structure of the world shows us, a deeper unity of analytical and intuitive insight is required to transcend one-dimensional limitations and the apparent contradictions resulting from them in our experience. Then we will also rediscover the underlying community and personal responsibility in all our relationships.

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The ideas I discuss in this article have already been developed in much greater detail. My book [How Consciousness Creates Reality: The Full Version](#) puts them in a wider context and examines them within the framework of subconscious processes, subjective experience and the creation of a relatively stable reality. I recommend reading the abridged version [How Consciousness Creates Reality](#) first.

The following explanation of the infinitesimality structure emphasizes the focus dynamic, which is described in detail in the aforementioned book and, in particular, in the article [Dynamic Existence](#).

Infinitesimality structure

Multitude cannot exist without oneness, and oneness cannot exist without being determined by multitude.

Oneness, however, means identity, and identity, in its final consequence, through all "stages," is a *zero point*. On the other hand, this infinitesimal center needs to be circumscribed by *details*. So, despite the details' identity in oneness, they as individuals have to find their way into circumscription. And as individuals, they contain infinitesimal centers by themselves, etc. Therefore, the circumscription of such a center is a *changing* between single points.

This means that an existing structure includes both extremes: absolute identity and absolute separation. *Their* unity must also be constituted by change – now between the common point of identity and separateness. Both are nothing at all without this change, by which they are determined only. The unity built that way of oneness and multitude in turn has its infinitesimal center of identity...

The same is valid for every area on every scale. A continuum of this kind is the precondition of permanent objects. Through the omnipresent change between the extremes of identity and separation, any point is *immediately* joined with each other, as well as continuously *mediated* and also *apart* from the others.

<https://free-will.de>