

# Review of: "Planetary consciousness incites probably transcendent feelings and deepens the polarization of worldviews"

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This is a wide-ranging text, ambitious in its scope and highly speculative in its proposals. The possibility of a supra-individual consciousness (not necessarily at the planetary level) is certainly an attractive topic worth discussing. Theoretically, there does not seem to be any logical objection to it. In a way, it could even be argued that all the social sciences thrive on the assumption that there are supra-individual entities (societies, economies, cultures, etc.) whose behaviour is somehow independent (though emergent) from / transcendent of the individual human beings that compose them. Let me just raise two possible objections to the existence of this supra-individual consciousness. First, though the authors are certainly cognizant with the literature on consciousness studies they do not mention Tononi's Integrated Information Theory of consciousness (IIT). Of course, this is just one among many other approaches to the question (hard problem) of consciousness. The interesting aspect of IIT, as far as the authors' objective is concerned, is that it makes room for different levels of consciousness above (and below) individual consciousness. However, IIT makes it clear that those potential levels of consciousness are mutually exclusive. In other words, if a supra-individual consciousness emerged out of interactions between individual minds, say, through the internet, that would immediately turn off those individual consciousnesses. Therefore, according to IIT, even though different levels of consciousness are accepted as possible, they cannot be all in operation simultaneously. This would certainly make highly problematic the authors' proposal of a planetary consciousness, for in this case, were it to come into existence, it would 'disconnect' the consciousnesses of individual human beings. Furthermore, a possible argument in favour of the exclusivity of individual consciousness, and against supra-individual consciousness, would be the failure of social sciences to predict the evolution of the supra-individual entity they postulate. The economy provides us with a case in point. The failure of economists' sophisticated mathematical models to predict (with a reasonable level of certainty) the evolution of the economy is due to the fact the economy is not a (conscious) agent. On the contrary, there is always a feedback loop between the economists' predictions and the behaviour of individual conscious agents that (precisely) debunks those predictions. Otherwise stated, it is precisely because there is no 'conscious economy' but only conscious individuals who perform economic acts, that we cannot predict the former's actions because, properly speaking, there is no such a thing. A second point, closely related to this one, is that even making allowances for the possibility of different levels of consciousness acting simultaneously, it could also be plausibly argued that those different levels are likely to be radically different in kind. In other words, in the same way as a brain is not just a neuron 'writ large', a conscious mind is likely to be qualitatively different from the consciousness that might exist (if at all) at the neuronal level. Therefore, if some form of

consciousness emerges at the planetary (or other supra-individual) level, this is bound to be very different indeed from any other form of consciousness apprehensible at the inter-individual level. And just one last observation concerning miracles, apparitions and the transcendental. It seems to me rather implausible to account for these phenomena by reference to an alleged planetary consciousness. But there is another more intriguing possibility. The mystery of miracles is not so much the actual event or fact of the miracle itself, which normally has a perfectly naturalistic explanation, but the belief in its supernatural causation. Why so many people throughout the ages have entertained this, to all intent and purposes, clearly counterintuitive belief? Maybe the connection between the transcendental and supra-individual consciousness emerges through the belief in that transcendental, rather than through its purported reality.

Anyway, these are just some brief comments on an interesting and thought-provoking paper.