The Agent behind the Scenes
Exposing the Universal Mechanism Underlying Conscious Systems

- Joachim Keppler, PhD
- DiWiss, Department of Consciousness Research
- Email: joachim.keppler@diwiss.de
- Web: http://www.diwiss.de/consciousness

Related publications:

- “A new perspective on the functioning of the brain and the mechanisms behind conscious processes”

- “A Conceptual Framework for Consciousness Based on a Deep Understanding of Matter”
  Philosophy Study 2, 689-703 (October 2012)
Central hypothesis: the brain is a highly specialized filter of consciousness

- The universe is imbued with a ubiquitous background field of consciousness that comprises the full phenomenal color palette.
- Conscious systems employ a universal mechanism by means of which they extract phenomenal nuances from this field.
- The key characteristic of the mechanism is the formation of ordered states in the substrate of consciousness.
The zero-point field (ZPF) is a promising candidate for the substrate of consciousness.

Modern physics is based on the conception that the vacuum is imbued with permanent activity, represented by a real, all-pervasive stochastic radiation field, called zero-point field (ZPF).

The ZPF functions as a formative agent behind the scenes that is perfectly qualified for playing the dual role as both the carrier of energy and consciousness.
Electrically charged constituents of every physical system interact permanently with the ZPF, thus behaving as stochastic oscillators.

Under appropriate conditions a balance situation can be reached; the system falls into an attractor and enters the quantum regime.

The formation of an attractor is accompanied by a pattern of phase-locked ZPF modes (ordered state = ZPF information state).
The neurophysiological body of evidence supports the view that conscious states correlate with transiently stable attractors, each of which is accompanied by a specific ZPF information state.

This can be interpreted in such a way that only those brain processes that are able to exert influence on the ZPF have the potential to exceed the threshold to conscious experience.

**Transitionally stable attractors are the neural correlates of consciousness (NCC)**

- **Disordered phase / unconscious phase**
  - Irregular dynamics
  - Spontaneous activity
  - 1/f scaling behavior

- **Brain operates near a critical point of a phase transition**

- **Ordered phase / conscious phase**
  - Long-range correlations (gamma synchrony)
  - Transiently stable attractors

- Appropriate stimulus induces an abrupt phase transition
The brain produces a stream of awareness by periodically imprints information on the ZPF.
The quantity of consciousness of a state is determined by the degree of order in the ZPF.

A universal measure for the quantity of consciousness of a state ($Q_C^{state}$) is the degree of order in the local ZPF.

This measure expresses the information gain of an ordered ZPF state [$p(\Delta \varphi_{ZPF})$] compared to the disordered initial state [$q(\Delta \varphi_{ZPF})$]:

$$Q_C^{state} = \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} p(\Delta \varphi_{ZPF}) \log \left( \frac{p(\Delta \varphi_{ZPF})}{q(\Delta \varphi_{ZPF})} \right) d(\Delta \varphi_{ZPF})$$
Qualia space can be systematically explored by classifying ZPF information space.

- A test person is exposed to a variety of stimuli, inducing conscious states that are subsequently described by the person.
- The ZPF information states associated with the induced conscious states have to be reconstructed from the attractors.
- In this way, ZPF information space can be classified (calibrated) on the basis of the first-person accounts.
Conclusion: consciousness can be reconciled with the laws of nature

- The proposed solution leads to a consistent explanation of the dynamical properties of the neural correlates of consciousness.
- Moreover, the specified mechanism behind conscious systems offers an explanation for the unity of phenomenal awareness.
- The conceptual framework thus defined constitutes a solid basis for a future theory of consciousness.