

The Hidden Spring: Controversial new book addresses where consciousness originates

Why doesn't all the neural information processing go on "in the dark" with no consciousness at all? The term "the hard problem of consciousness" was coined by Australian philosopher David Chalmers in 1995, and in *The Hidden Spring*, South African psychoanalyst Mark Solms offers a solution to this problem that is grounded in neuroscience and physics and expressible in mathematics and information theory.

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Solms argues that consciousness is affect and the reason affect exists is to enable us to decide what to do next. If we are tired, we must sleep. If we are hungry, we must eat. If we are thirsty, we must drink. What we do next depends on environmental context. Our needs must be prioritised by prevailing external conditions. However, our multiple needs cannot be reduced to a single common denominator (e.g., pleasure and pain as in classical utilitarianism). We cannot drink instead of eat. We have to do both. In the wild, this might entail different foraging routes. If we are lions, we might have to decide between heading north to the river for a drink or south to the zebra herd for a feed. We cannot say 3/10 of hunger and 1/10 of thirst equals 4/10 of total need. Each need must be met in its own very biologically specific way.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the full article here**](#)