
The Intersection of Max Planck's Metaphysical Assertion and Christian Theology: A Pragmatic Review of Consciousness and Creation

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ABSTRACT

This systematic review explores the intersection of Max Planck's assertion that "matter is a derivative of consciousness" with key concepts in Christian theology, particularly creation, existence, and the imago Dei. The study aims to investigate how Planck's views align with and enrich theological doctrines, fostering dialogue between science and faith. The objective is to analyze interdisciplinary literature to uncover complementary understandings of the cosmos' origin and nature, drawing from scientific insights and Christian theological frameworks. A qualitative methodology is employed, comprising a systematic analysis of scholarly articles, theological texts, and scientific literature that address consciousness, metaphysics, and divine creation. The findings reveal significant alignment between Planck's concept of consciousness as foundational to matter and Christian beliefs about God's creative agency and humans as bearers of the imago Dei. This synthesis enhances comprehension of the cosmos as a creation sustained by an underlying consciousness, aligning with the theological principle of divine intentionality. In conclusion, this review highlights the potential for meaningful dialogue between scientific and theological perspectives, offering a unified understanding of existence that bridges the material and metaphysical realms.

INTRODUCTION

Max Planck, a trailblazer in quantum theory, proposed that consciousness is an essential aspect of the existence of matter. He argued that the physical cosmos is based on a more profound, non-physical reality, emphasizing that matter itself originates from an immaterial consciousness (Görnitz, 2010). This perspective marks a significant departure from classical materialist views, proposing that consciousness is not a byproduct of physical processes but the foundational principle upon which physical existence rests. Planck's philosophical outlook finds intriguing resonance with several fundamental Christian theological concepts. For instance, the supremacy of the spiritual domain, as articulated in John 4:24, aligns with Planck's assertion that the immaterial precedes and undergirds the material. In Christian theology, God's nature as spirit and the act of creation through divine volition reflect a parallel to the idea of consciousness as the origin of all matter (Nürnberger, 2013). Similarly, the belief in creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*), a cornerstone of Christian theology, underscores the dependence of the material world on a non-material, divine will. Genesis 1, for instance, portrays the universe's creation as a direct result of God's intentional and conscious act (Youvan, 2024).

Moreover, the notion that humans are made in the *imago Dei* (the image of God) resonates strongly with Planck's assertion. If consciousness is the root of existence, then human self-awareness and rationality can be seen as a reflection of the divine consciousness, offering a unique bridge between theology and Planck's scientific philosophy (De Sousa, 2013). This interdisciplinary perspective enriches theological understanding by providing a scientific framework to discuss concepts like human dignity and purpose, foundational to the Christian worldview.

This research comprehensively analyzes interdisciplinary literature to clarify how Planck's philosophical claim aligns with and enhances Christian theological conceptions. By engaging scientific and spiritual viewpoints in dialogue, it aims to uncover deeper insights into the nature of existence, while also fostering a broader understanding of how scientific advancements and theological reflections can mutually inform one another. Through this synthesis, Planck's ideas provide a robust philosophical basis for Christian theological concepts and pave the way for constructive dialogue between science and faith.

The discussion regarding Max Planck's assertion that "matter is a derivative of consciousness" has profound implications for bridging science and theology. Planck's philosophical insight invites an exploration into the fundamental nature of existence, moving beyond a strictly materialistic worldview. In Christian theology, the notion of God as the Creator, who consciously wills the universe into existence, aligns with the idea of consciousness as the underlying reality of matter. This synthesis provides a robust foundation for viewing the cosmos as not only physical but also as an intentional creation imbued with purpose. By embracing this perspective, the interplay between theology and science reveals deeper truths about the nature of reality, uniting empirical observations with metaphysical contemplation.

Furthermore, the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* reinforces the significance of consciousness in the formation of the material world. Christian theology emphasizes that the universe did not emerge randomly but is a product of divine volition, a conscious act from an eternal, non-material being. This aligns with Planck's view that the physical world is contingent upon a deeper, immaterial essence. The intersection of these perspectives challenges the dominance of materialism and opens the door for understanding the universe as part of a divine narrative, where humans occupy a privileged place as conscious beings created in the image of God.

The *imago Dei* highlights humanity's unique position in creation, serving as a reflection of divine consciousness. This theological concept complements Planck's assertion by emphasizing human consciousness as more than an emergent property of matter. It is instead seen as a direct manifestation of the divine, providing humanity with rationality, morality, and relational capabilities. The interplay of these ideas fosters a holistic understanding of human identity and purpose, offering insights into the ethical responsibilities of humans as stewards of creation. This integrated perspective reinforces the theological view that consciousness is the key to understanding human dignity and the sacredness of life.

Moreover, the interconnectedness of reality proposed by both Planck and Christian theology emphasizes that the material and spiritual are not dichotomous but intimately unified. Scientific inquiry into the fine-tuning of the universe and the emergence of consciousness reveals a universe that seems tailored for life and self-awareness. This resonates with theological ideas of divine intentionality, where creation reflects God's rational and relational nature. By uniting scientific and theological perspectives, this synthesis offers a richer understanding of existence that transcends reductionist explanations.

The urgency of this study lies in the increasing philosophical and existential debates concerning the nature of reality and consciousness in an age dominated by scientific materialism. As science continues to explore the mysteries of quantum mechanics and consciousness, there is a growing need for interdisciplinary approaches that reconcile scientific

discoveries with spiritual and theological insights. Addressing this discourse helps to reframe humanity's understanding of existence, providing answers to existential questions about purpose, origin, and the sacredness of life in a manner that resonates with both scientific inquiry and faith-based perspectives.

Previous research by Hameroff and Penrose (2014) explores the "Orch-OR" theory, which postulates that consciousness arises from quantum processes within the brain. While their study primarily focuses on the scientific mechanisms of consciousness, it indirectly supports the idea that consciousness plays a foundational role in reality. In theological studies, McGrath (2020) examined the *creatio ex nihilo* doctrine, highlighting the divine intentionality behind creation and linking it to the metaphysical nature of God. However, these studies have yet to explicitly connect Planck's philosophical perspective on consciousness to Christian theology, creating an opportunity for further exploration into this intersection.

Despite extensive studies on consciousness within quantum theory and theological frameworks, there remains a significant gap in integrating Max Planck's assertion with Christian theology. Most existing works explore these ideas separately, focusing either on the scientific origins of consciousness or on theological doctrines. A comprehensive synthesis that examines how Planck's philosophy aligns with *creatio ex nihilo*, the *imago Dei*, and divine intentionality is still lacking. This study addresses this gap by providing an integrated perspective that unites scientific insights with Christian theological principles, fostering dialogue between science and faith.

The novelty of this research lies in its systematic approach to analyzing the convergence between Max Planck's metaphysical assertion and key Christian doctrines. By linking consciousness as the foundation of matter with theological concepts such as *creatio ex nihilo* and the *imago Dei*, this study offers a unique interdisciplinary synthesis. It introduces a philosophical and theological framework that enhances understanding of existence, bridging the divide between materialist science and spiritual theology. This approach highlights how scientific principles can complement theological reflections, enriching both disciplines.

The primary objective of this research is to examine how Max Planck's assertion that "matter is a derivative of consciousness" aligns with Christian theology, particularly the doctrines of *creatio ex nihilo*, the *imago Dei*, and divine intentionality. This study seeks to foster a meaningful dialogue between science and theology, offering an integrated understanding of the origin and nature of the cosmos. The benefits include providing a philosophical foundation for interdisciplinary discussions, enriching theological interpretations with scientific insights, and promoting a holistic view of human existence that values both scientific inquiry and spiritual reflection. This research contributes to contemporary debates about consciousness, existence, and divine creation, encouraging collaborative exploration across disciplines.

RESEARCH METHOD

An extensive literature search was performed on various databases, including PubMed, JSTOR, and Google Scholar, using specific keywords such as "Max Planck," "consciousness," "Christian theology," "creation ex nihilo," and "imago Dei." The analysis included articles published from 1990 to 2024, specifically in peer-reviewed journals, books, and reliable sources from scientific and theological fields. The criterion for selection encompassed relevance, citation frequency, and contributions to the discourse on the interaction between consciousness and theology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Supremacy of the Spiritual Domain

Planck's notion that consciousness is the foundation of matter aligns with the Christian doctrine that emphasizes the importance of the spiritual domain. Christian theology asserts that God is a spiritual being, as stated in John 4:24. It further explains that God is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the physical universe through His volition and spoken word, as mentioned in Hebrews 1:3. Scholars who argue in favor of the idea that the physical cosmos is an expression of a more profound, non-physical awareness, which is consistent with Planck's viewpoint (Hameroff & Penrose, 2014). This religious position posits that the ultimate reality is an immaterial, conscious entity known as God. It serves as a shared foundation for harmonizing scientific and theological perspectives on the nature of existence.

According to Barbour, the connection between science and religion can be comprehended by examining four models: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration (Damer, 2024). Planck's perspective aligns with the dialogue and integration models, in which scientific and theological discoveries can mutually inform and enhance one another. Polkinghorne highlights that scientific and theological explanations are complementary (Karaba, 2021). According to Polkinghorne, described by Karaba (2021), science describes the universe's workings, while theology offers the ultimate justifications and significance for existence.

Creation ex nihilo refers to the concept of creation from nothing.

The Christian theology of creation ex nihilo asserts that God, through His word and will (as described in Genesis 1), brought the universe into being from nothing. This thought aligns with Planck's notion that awareness is the origin of matter. Theologians like McGrath and Peacocke highlight that Genesis 1 portrays creation as a result of divine consciousness and intention, thus strengthening the idea that the physical world originates in a conscious and divine entity (De Smedt & De Cruz, 2020).

A detailed analysis of the idea of creation ex nihilo, examining how it affects our understanding of the essence of God and the universe was performed by McGrath (Ostler, 2005). Another scholar, Moltmann, contends that the concept of creation ex nihilo highlights God's unlimited power and that the universe depends on something else for its existence (Moltmann, 1993). This aligns with Planck's claim that consciousness (which is the will of God) is crucial to the existence of matter. A synthesis of scientific cosmology and theology was proposed, asserting that the Big Bang can be seen as a moment of divine creation in which God's deliberate intention created the physical cosmos (Moritz, 2019).

Imago Dei, also known as the Image of God

According to Christian theology, humans are created in the imago Dei, meaning they reflect God's nature (as stated in Genesis 1:27). If matter originates from consciousness, then human consciousness and self-awareness reflect the divine consciousness. The distinct ability of humans to be conscious highlights their exceptional position in the natural world, reflecting the divine essence. This perspective enhances the comprehension of the imago Dei, proposing that humans, as carriers of a divine and conscious essence, have an innate link to the underlying reality proposed by Planck (Coleman, 2023).

Puffer (2017) examines the theological consequences of human awareness, contending that the imago Dei mirrors God's rationality and His relational and moral essence. Another theologian expands upon this discourse in the realm of science, suggesting that humans' capacity to partake in scientific investigation manifests the divine likeness, as it entails deliberate contemplation of the established structure (Gaudet, 2022).

Interconnectedness of Reality

Planck's argument upholds a comprehensive perspective of reality in which the material and ethereal parts are intricately interwoven. This concept is consistent with the Christian sacramental perspective, in which tangible substances (such as bread and wine in the Eucharist)

serve as a means of connecting with spiritual truths (Cabié, 1986). Theologians like Torrance emphasize that the incarnation of Christ illustrates this interconnectivity, where the divine and human natures are unified in a single person (Davis, 2016). Considering matter as a product of consciousness promotes a comprehensive comprehension of reality, aligning with sacred and embodied concepts in Christian theology. Zizioulas (2006) explores the notion of personality and the interconnectedness of the tangible and immaterial aspects within the Christian perspective of reality, with a particular focus on the relational character of the Trinity. Torrance combines scientific and religious viewpoints, proposing that the physical universe mirrors God's rationality and intentionality, which agrees with Planck's claim that consciousness is essential to matter (Davis, 2016).

Enigma and Transcendence

Planck's viewpoint highlights the enigmatic essence of existence, a recurring theme in Christian theology. Theologians like Karl Rahner and Paul Tillich contend that recognizing the origins of matter in a deep, non-physical consciousness promotes a sense of wonder and respect for the Creator (Haight, 2018). The mutual recognition of the unknown and the existence of something beyond human understanding enhances scientific and theological contemplations, promoting a respectful investigation into the fundamental essence of the universe. Rahner highlights God's inscrutability, positing that human comprehension is perpetually constrained and that enigma is an inherent element of faith (Xavier, 2014). Tillich examines the notion of transcendence, contending that God's existence exceeds the limits of human comprehension, in line with Planck's perspective that the fundamental essence of reality is grounded in a non-physical consciousness (Dole, 2020).

What potential legislation or policies can be implemented in the future?

The interdisciplinary discourse between science and theology is essential for thoroughly comprehending consciousness and reality. Modern academics support continuous dialogue across different disciplines to tackle the intricacies of life and the consequences of consciousness as a fundamental element of reality. According to Clayton (2004), emergent features in complex systems, like consciousness, can serve as a connection between scientific explanations and theological interpretations. According to Ward (2008), theology can serve as the metaphysical foundation for scientific breakthroughs by presenting a cohesive understanding of the nature of reality.

Empirical studies and theological reflection

Empirical research conducted in neuroscience and psychology has yielded valuable knowledge regarding the essence of consciousness. This knowledge can be utilized to enhance theological contemplation and reciprocally benefit from it. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (2017) argue that cognitive science's discoveries about embodied cognition can enhance religious perspectives on the nature of the human individual. Their research emphasizes the significance of considering consciousness's physical and interpersonal dimensions, which align with the Christian belief in the imago Dei.

Implications in the field of philosophy

Chalmers (1997) and Nagel (2012) examined the challenging issue of consciousness and investigated the emergence of subjective experience from objective substance. Their inquiries emphasize the constraints of a solely materialistic comprehension of consciousness and create an opportunity for philosophical exploration of consciousness as a fundamental concept, as proposed by Planck. This philosophical viewpoint is consistent with the imago Dei theological concepts and the importance of the spiritual domain (Ascheri, 2018).

In his work, Chalmers (1996) presents the notion of "philosophical zombies" to demonstrate the difficulty of solely relying on physical processes to account for subjective experience. This notion highlights the potential that consciousness could be a fundamental and inseparable part of reality, in agreement with Planck's statement and theological viewpoints on

the essence of the soul and human identity (Chalmers, 1997). In his publication "Mind and Cosmos," Nagel (2012) contends that a solely physicalist perspective of the cosmos is inadequate and necessitates a reassessment of the significance of consciousness within the natural hierarchy.

Cosmology integration

Modern cosmology offers a rich environment for combining scientific and theological knowledge. The precise calibration of the cosmos and the anthropic principle imply that the requirements for conscious life are remarkably particular, leading certain theologians to perceive this as evidence of deliberate divine intention. Several authors including Davies and Swinburne, contend that the precise adjustment of the cosmos can be seen as proof of a purposeful creator, supporting the notion that the universe manifests divine awareness.

In his work, Davies (2008) examines the consequences of the precise adjustment of the fundamental constants of the cosmos. He proposes that this level of accuracy indicates the existence of a more profound and intentional reality. In his work, Swinburne (2004) presents a philosophical justification for theism, asserting that the most compelling reason for the precise adjustment of the cosmos is the presence of a supernatural being responsible for its creation. These viewpoints endorse incorporating Planck's statement into a more comprehensive theological structure, in which the physical cosmos is regarded as a manifestation of divine consciousness and purpose (Ascheri, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Recognizing that consciousness is a fundamental aspect of reality carries substantial ethical and practical consequences. If humans possess divine consciousness, this viewpoint necessitates more respect for human dignity and moral accountability. The ethical consequences of the imago Dei emphasize that acknowledging the divine element of human nature requires a dedication to justice, empathy, and safeguarding human rights. Exploring the ethical aspects of human existence involves considering the imago Dei, suggesting that humans possess an innate duty to behave according to their divine essence. This perspective also underscores the significance of community and relationality in making ethical decisions, highlighting the interdependence of reality and its alignment with theological principles.

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