

Consciousness, Personal Identity, and Free Will in FOT

Tau-Indeterminacy, the Tau-Address, and the Ground of Autonomy

Author: Stephen Daubney · The Daubney Foundation · thedaubneyfoundation@gmail.com · 2026 · P-CFWL-1 to P-CFWL-6

Abstract

The "hard problem" of consciousness and the free will debate are among philosophy's most persistent puzzles. The Force of Time (FOT) offers a novel framework: consciousness arises from the self-referential complexity of Tau-flow within neural architectures; free will is grounded in Tau-indeterminacy at the helical branch points of the standing wave. This paper develops both claims and derives their implications for personal identity and moral agency.

P-CFWL-1 · The Hard Problem Restated in Tau Terms

Chalmers' "hard problem" asks why physical processes give rise to subjective experience. Physicalism struggles because it maps qualia onto neural correlates without explaining why there is "something it is like" to have them.

P-CFWL-1

In FOT, the hard problem dissolves: subjective experience IS the Tau-flow as experienced from within a Tau-address. There is no explanatory gap between physical process and experience because both are modes of the same substance.

This is not eliminativism. FOT does not deny experience; it relocates it. Experience is what Tau-flow feels like from a particular Tau-address — the universe knowing itself locally.

P-CFWL-2 · Consciousness as Self-Referential Tau-Flow

Simple Tau configurations (rocks, gases) flow without self-reference. Complex helical configurations (brains, ecosystems) generate loops where Tau-flow models its own flow.

P-CFWL-2

Consciousness emerges when Tau-flow becomes sufficiently self-referential that a local Tau-address models the global standing wave. The brain is a Tau-mirror: a region where the universe simulates itself.

This gives a threshold criterion: consciousness correlates with the degree of self-referential Tau-modelling. It predicts a continuum of consciousness across biological complexity, consistent with the observable gradient from simple organisms to humans.

P-CFWL-3 · Personal Identity as Tau-Address Continuity

What makes you the same person over time? Standard accounts appeal to psychological continuity (Locke, Parfit) or physical continuity (animalism). FOT offers a cleaner criterion.

P-CFWL-3

Personal identity is continuity of Tau-address within the standing wave. The "self" is the unbroken thread of a particular Tau-address through the helical structure of time. Sleep, anaesthesia, and cell replacement do not break identity because the Tau-address persists.

Death is redistribution of Tau-flow away from a local address. The address itself — its geometric position in the standing wave — is not destroyed; it becomes unoccupied. This has implications for resurrection doctrines and for what we mean by "the same person".

P-CFWL-4 · Tau-Indeterminacy and the Ground of Free Will

Classical determinism holds that the laws of physics fix all future states. Quantum indeterminacy introduces randomness but randomness is not freedom. FOT introduces a third option: Tau-indeterminacy.

P-CFWL-4

At helical branch points in the standing wave, Tau-flow bifurcates. The resolution of the bifurcation is not determined by prior state alone but by the local Tau-address — the entity itself. This is Tau-indeterminacy: determinism-breaking that is agent-relative, not random.

Tau-indeterminacy is the physical ground of free will. It is not mere randomness because the branch-point resolution is correlated with the agent's Tau-address history — it is genuinely authored by the agent, not dice-rolled.

P-CFWL-5 · Implications for Moral Responsibility

If free will requires Tau-indeterminacy, what follows for moral responsibility? FOT's account grounds responsibility without requiring libertarian contra-causal freedom.

P-CFWL-5

Moral responsibility attaches to a Tau-address in proportion to the degree of self-referential Tau-modelling at the time of action. Greater consciousness = greater responsibility. The permanently impaired Tau-mirror (severe brain damage, psychosis) carries reduced moral weight.

This gives a naturalistic, graduated account of moral responsibility consistent with both common-sense intuitions and the neuroscientific picture of decision-making.

P-CFWL-6 · The Unity of Consciousness and the Tau Standing Wave

The "binding problem" asks how disparate neural processes unify into a single conscious experience. FOT resolves this through the global structure of the standing wave.

P-CFWL-6

The unity of consciousness is the unity of the Tau standing wave. A single Tau-address is embedded in a single global wave structure; the apparent multiplicity of neural processes is unified at the level of the wave, not at the level of individual neurons.

This predicts that disruptions to the global coherence of the standing wave (anaesthesia, seizure, deep sleep) should correlate with loss of unified consciousness — which they do. The binding problem is not a mystery but a consequence of the Tau architecture of mind.

Force of Time is an original theoretical framework by Stephen Daubney. Reproduction for academic commentary is permitted with attribution.