

A 21st Century Model of Human Consciousness

Part I: What is Consciousness?

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Abstract

This series of articles will present a 21st century model of human consciousness that will both integrate and transcend ideas and models presented within Eastern and Western mysticism, Western philosophy, science, psychology and metaphysics. Due to the fact that there is so much debate and confusion regarding the subject of consciousness, there is a need to include perspectives from numerous fields of study in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of human consciousness.

This article presents a wide-ranging account of the many different definitions of what consciousness is. The next article in the series will provide a model of what creates consciousness utilizing the basic structure of the brain and mind. Follow-on articles in the series will outline a comprehensive 16 state model of human consciousness drawing upon advancements in psychology, metaphysics and science in the 20th century and up to the present day.

Introduction

Various thinkers and scientists try to evade the hard questions about consciousness by declaring that it is “incomprehensible,” or by saying that “no one can understand consciousness.” Some eastern philosophers and mystics, for example, postulate that “everything is consciousness.” Other experts simply say that we know what it is, but we can't define it. Fortunately, individuals throughout history within many fields of study have put forth various definitions of consciousness. Regardless of the amount of information available on consciousness, there is something incomprehensible about it; there is something about consciousness that is in everything. And while we

have an innate sense of what consciousness is, we struggle to specifically define it.

Unfortunately, language can be limiting in its attempt to define words or concepts. The assumption is that we already understand the inherent meaning of the words or phrases that are used to define a specific word or concept. Therefore, beyond just presenting what each field of study defines as consciousness and how it's created, this article is going to include definitions of the key words that the various fields use in their definitions. By doing so, a more concise and comprehensive model of consciousness becomes possible.

Perspectives on Consciousness

Eastern mysticism is a good place to start in understanding various perspectives on consciousness. In *What the Buddha Taught*, Walpola Rahula (1907–1997), a Buddhist monk and scholar, defines consciousness as a “reaction or response” and the “awareness of the presence of an object.”¹ He goes on to say that consciousness is the base of everything we are. The contemporary American author and therapist, Anodea Judith in *Eastern Body*

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Western Mind says that “Consciousness” is “the final frontier... the vast and indispensable key to the ultimate mystery, endless and unfathomable... the very thing that allows us to look into the mirror of the soul and perceive our existence.” She goes on to say we must “realize that consciousness flows through every quantum of life around us...”² and that:

Mystic sages describe consciousness as a unified field in which all of existence is embedded. Sentient beings have the capacity to tap into that universal field of intelligence, where vast stores of information reside, much as a personal computer can access the Internet. How much consciousness we can tap into depends on our apparatus.³

Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950), an Indian yogi, philosopher and poet, equates consciousness in general with purusha or soul, which is everywhere in material nature. He also relates consciousness to apprehension and cognition, in other words, to “cognitive awareness.” The modern Sufi mystical teacher, scientist and psychologist, A. H. Almaas, creator of the “Diamond Approach to Self Realization,” also equates human consciousness with the soul. He tends to relate consciousness in general with presence, or beingness.

Within Western philosophy, the contemporary American philosopher, John Searle concludes that: “*Consciousness, I say, consists in all of one’s states of awareness.*” The term “Awareness” might seem too restricted, so to cover all forms of consciousness, the terms “*awareness or sentience or feeling,*”⁴ are added. Searle goes on to conclude simply, that “consciousness is a mystery.”⁵ Turning to the neurophilosophical theory of consciousness, a conscious state is described as any cognitive representation. In other words, cognition is viewed as a property of consciousness.

Although David Chalmers—an Australian philosopher and cognitive scientist specializing in the philosophy of mind and language—defines consciousness along strict scientific lines, he also considers it to be a fundamental feature of the world. He points out that “wherever you have complex information processing, you find complex consciousness.”⁶ He further con-

cludes that “no one understands consciousness.”⁷ In similar comments, Francis Crick, winner of the Noble Prize for co-founding the double helix of DNA, says that: “There’s no easy way of explaining consciousness in terms of known science.”⁸

Ervin Laszlo, the Hungarian philosopher of science, defines consciousness within the philosophical perspective known as *panpsychism*. In *Science and the Akashic Field*, and in answer to the question of where consciousness comes from, Laszlo says that “The adherents of panpsychism claim that psyche—the essence of consciousness—is the universal presence in the world. Both matter and mind—*physis* as well as *psyche*—are omnipresent in the universe.”⁹ The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre introduces another theory in which he “considered consciousness to be essentially characterized by intentionality.”¹⁰

The study of consciousness has become a hotly-debated topic within science, although much of the research and conclusions limit consciousness to physical-based processes. Fritjof Capra, like most scientists, assumes a rather physical focus on consciousness. He concludes that “consciousness is a cognitive process, emerging from complex neural activity... It is an emergent property of a particular cognitive process—the formation of transient functional clusters of neurons.”¹¹

The American psychiatrist and dream researcher, John Allan Hobson, simply defines consciousness as our awareness of our environment, our bodies, and our selves. He concludes that “consciousness is compotential... That is to say, consciousness is made up of the many faculties of mind, which are seamlessly integrated into our conscious experience.”¹² To him, the components of consciousness include attention, perception, memory, orientation, intention, thought, narrative, emotion, instinct and volition.

Another scientist and author, William A. Tiller, has been exploring ways in which to integrate scientific theory with metaphysics. His perspective on consciousness is that: “although most of us really don’t know what consciousness is, we tend to think that it relates to the

ability of the natural system to exchange information.”¹³ Consistent with this idea are the thoughts of the Polish visionary, Stanislaw Lem (1921–2006), who maintains that “... all consciousness, not merely the personoid—is in its physical aspect an ‘informational standing wave,’ a certain dynamic invariant in a stream of incessant transformations...”¹⁴ Lem’s conclusion can be interpreted to mean that the dynamic invariant which develops from various forms of information is its consciousness aspect. What is becoming increasingly clear within science is that physical consciousness involves information. In other words, a key component of consciousness is information. An example is my computer, which stores a lot of information, but like the cloud, the information is not consciousness itself.

The management thought leader, physicist and philosopher, Dana Zohar and author of such books as *The Quantum Self*, provides several simple and insightful definitions of consciousness:

Consciousness itself...includes a general capacity for awareness and purposive response...

The unity of our conscious experience, the thread of focused attention that draws together the myriad sensory impressions, underlies all other features of that experience. Like the notes of a melody of the many separate features of apples or more general visual scenes, the contents of our consciousness hang together. They form a whole, a “picture.”

Without this wholeness, this unity, there could be no experience such as we know it, no ap-

ples, no gardens, a sense of self (personal identity or subjectivity), and hence no personal will or purposive decision (intention)—all of which are familiar features of our mental life. This unity is the most essential feature of consciousness, so basic to whatever it is that we mean by consciousness that most of us just take it for granted.¹⁵

E. Roy John, a neurophysiologist from New York University, defines consciousness in objective terms:

... a process in which information about multiple individual modalities of sensation and perception is combined into a unified multidimensional representation of the state of the system and its environment, and integrated with information about memories and the needs of the organism, generating emotional reactions and programs of behavior to adjust the organism to its environment.¹⁶

Finally, one of the new “scientists of wholeness,”

F. David Peat, identifies consciousness as “a subtle order within a delicate, sensitive, and intangible movement that is quite different from the order of explicate matter, yet is inseparable from it within the common spectrum of orders.”¹⁷ David Bohm, who was associated with Peat, concurs in describing consciousness as a “continuum of ordering principle.”

In *The Radiance of Being*, Alan Combs—the Director of the Center for Consciousness Studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies—suggests that “consciousness is essentially a subjective *presence*.”¹⁸ It is the essence of experience and its essential nature is “simple awareness.”¹⁹ Alfred R. Orage (1873–1934), the British intellectual best known for his work with Gurdjieff and his magazine *The New Age*,

The ground-base of consciousness is awareness, which is the information rich workspace that pervades everything including all life forms, sentient beings and levels of spirit and matter. It is neither spirit nor matter, but the relation or mediator between them. Consciousness becomes an emergent property created from the interaction of all facets of spirit with matter. It is a unified field and fundamental feature of the world in which all of existence is embedded.

thought that consciousness was “a universal awareness, which only by the particularized activities of beings becomes defined and limited into specifically human, animal, vegetable modes.”²⁰ Using terms that are consistent with those presented above, Jean Gebser, the Polish linguist and philosopher who described the structures of human consciousness, says that “consciousness is “neither knowledge nor conscience but must be understood for the time being in the broadest sense as wakeful presence.”²¹ And singing to the psychological choir is the Jungian analyst, Murray Stein, who says: “most simply, consciousness is awareness. It is a state of being awake, observing and registering what is going on in the world around and within.”²² He further identifies that both animals and plants can exhibit a form of consciousness. He concludes that consciousness is therefore, “responsiveness and sentient awareness.”²³

Both Ken Wilber and Carl Jung identify consciousness as the “within of things” or “subjective psyche.” As Wilber put it: “the within of things is *consciousness*, without of things is *form*.”²⁴ Another Jungian psychoanalyst, Edward F. Edinger proposes consciousness to be a “substance, a psychic material” that is made up of two factors: “‘knowing’ and ‘withness,’ i.e., knowing in the presence of an ‘other,’ in a setting of twoness.”²⁵ In a view consistent with metaphysics, consciousness is seen as the result from the interaction of a duality (e.g. spirit and matter, I and others, etc.).

Metaphysics is also good source for definitions of consciousness so we turn first, to Harold W. Percival (1868–1953), a Theosophist. Most famous for his magnum opus *Thinking and Destiny*, Percival provides a definition consistent with psychology in the following:

Consciousness: is the Presence in all things... Its presence in every unit of nature and beyond nature enables all things and beings to be conscious as what or of what they are, and are to do, to be aware and conscious of all of the things and beings, and to progress in continuing higher degrees of being conscious towards only one ultimate Reality— Consciousness.²⁶

In quite a few of his written works, the Tibetan Master, Djwhal Khul equates consciousness with sentient energy, the energy which makes Man a soul. He describes consciousness as “the principle of awareness, the faculty of consciousness, that something, inherent in matter (when brought into relation with spirit), which awakens responsiveness to an outer and far-reaching field of contacts.”²⁷ He defines the soul as the “principle of sentience, underlying all outer manifestation, pervading all forms, and constituting the consciousness of God Himself... it expresses itself in all the subhuman kingdoms in nature.”²⁸ And he also introduces a new term by proposing that: “consciousness might be defined as the faculty of apprehension...”²⁹

Since metaphysics introduces the word “sentience” in relationship to consciousness and soul, it's prudent to define this word. According to Djwhal Khul, the energy of sentience is the capacity to respond. He also relates sentience to “sensitive response to contact, and by that means a subsequent growth in knowledge.”³⁰ Helena Blavatsky concurs in emphasizing that “consciousness is a quality of the sentient principle, or, in other words, the soul...”³¹ By defining sentience as “*a sentient state or quality; capacity for feeling and perceiving; consciousness,*”³² Webster's Dictionary comes into line with their thoughts.

Awareness

Awareness is used by many in our various fields of study to define or describe consciousness. This term is fairly simple to relate to, but not easy to define. Webster's Dictionary defines awareness as “knowing or realizing; conscious; informed.”³³ It describes the word “aware” as “having knowledge of something through alertness in observing or interpreting what one sees, hears, feels, etc.”³⁴ This perspective is accurate for humans, but not necessarily for our other kingdoms of nature including animals and plants.

Describing awareness from the Eastern perspective, Deepak Chopra says it is “an evenmore subtle field, not only invisible but needing no energy... Awareness doesn't have

to be human; it seems to pervade all life-forms... I conclude that the field of awareness is our true home, and that awareness contains the secrets of evolution, not the body or even DNA.”³⁵ Lama Surya Das concurs in observing that “intrinsic awareness is the common denominator in all sentient beings.”³⁶

Carl Jung also considers awareness (consciousness) to be a field. So too does Rabbi Robert Cooper, in *God Is a Verb*, his book on the mystical Kabbalah, where he describes this field of awareness as an all-penetrating reality. In *The Self-Aware Universe*, Amit Goswami adds to this idea by equating awareness with the field of consciousness, or our global workspace.

Others, more scientifically minded, take a somewhat different perspective. David Chalmers, who has been quoted early on, considers awareness information.

In particular, the contents of awareness are to be understood as those information contents that are accessible to central systems, and brought to bear in a widespread way in the control of behavior.

... where ever we find consciousness, we find awareness.³⁷

In the integrated field theory developed by Marcel Kinsbourne—a pioneer in the study of brain lateralization—awareness is viewed as a “property of a sufficiently sizable neural network, ‘not of any particular locus in the brain.’”³⁸ He too sees consciousness or awareness, as mentioned above, as an informational standing wave.

It would seem that these different perspectives vary greatly in their understanding of awareness. Without having discussed how awareness is created, this paper concludes that awareness is an information rich workspace that pervades everything including all life forms, sentient beings and levels of spirit and matter. This field of information, based on living experience in matter, becomes a valuable tool in the evolution of all life and matter.

Soul

The term “soul,” as our article has shown, is often equated with consciousness. Therefore “soul” is another name for both consciousness and awareness. Eastern mysticism generally equates soul with purusha, or consciousness at various levels. According to Sri Aurobindo, “Purusha is an inactive conscious existence—it is the Soul the same in itself and immutable forever...”³⁹ This soul is “present everywhere in material Nature.”⁴⁰

Ancient philosophy focuses on the concept of the soul more so than consciousness. Even the early Greek philosophers equated soul with the life principle. Aristotle believed that the soul is in all things. Plato represented the soul as “most likely that which is homogeneous and indissoluble.”⁴¹ Also, soul is “that which moves itself, the cause of vital processes in living creatures.”⁴² Both Plato and St. Augustine imply that the soul has all knowledge within, and all we can do from without is but awaken that knowledge. Much later, Baruch Spinoza was to concur in differentiating soul from substance and relating it to knowledge.

The western theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, also takes soul beyond human nature in his *Summa Theologiae*:

Animate means living and inanimate non-living, so soul means that which first animates or makes alive living things with which we are familiar. Life mostly shows itself in the two activities of awareness and movement...

Immaterial things have only wholeness of nature; and just as the soul is wholly present throughout the body so God is wholly present everywhere within everything.

The way he exists in everything we call existing in things by substance, presence and power.⁴³

Djwhal Khul also provides a powerful metaphysical perspective regarding soul in *A Treatise on White Magic*:

It should be borne in mind that the soul of matter, the anima mundi, is the sentient factor in substance itself... It can be called attractive energy, coherency, sentiency,

aliveness, awareness or consciousness, but perhaps the most illuminating term is that the soul is the quality which every form manifests.

The soul therefore, is neither spirit nor matter but is the relation between them. The soul as a mediator between this duality; it is the middle principle, the link between God and His form.

The soul is the conscious factor in all forms, the source of that awareness which all forms register and of that responsiveness to surrounding conditions which the forms in every kingdom of nature demonstrate.

The soul of the universe is:

- a. Consciousness or that state of awareness in matter itself...

The soul therefore can be regarded as a unified sentiency and the relative awareness of that which lies back of the form of a planet and of a solar system.⁴⁴

The soul is that factor in matter (or rather that which emerges out of the contact between spirit and matter) which produces sentient response in what we call consciousness in its various forms...⁴⁵

From the various explanations above, it is possible to conclude that soul is present everywhere and within everything in manifestation.

Soul can be considered the sentient factor in substance itself; neither spirit nor matter, but a middle principle developed from the relation of spirit with matter. It animates and makes living things aware and present. Soul becomes the unified sentiency and relative awareness of all life.

Consciousness Defined

The first thing to draw from the definitions that have been outlined here is that consciousness manifests in a myriad of forms, levels and ordered structures. Therefore, there are different labels for the various ways in which consciousness expresses. The ground-base of consciousness is awareness, which is the information rich workspace that pervades everything including all life forms, sentient beings and levels of spirit and matter. It is neither

spirit nor matter, but the relation or mediator between them. Consciousness becomes an emergent property created from the interaction of all facets of spirit with matter. It is a unified field and fundamental feature of the world in which all of existence is embedded. This field becomes the natural system for exchange of information. As such, it becomes a universal presence and all penetrating reality.

Consciousness consists of many faculties including the general capacity for response, which in turn, allows for a subsequent growth in knowledge and awareness. Defined as “sentiency,” consciousness has the capacity to animate all living things at all levels and in all states of existence. Therefore, all forms of life from minerals, plants, animals, humans and beyond, exhibit a form of consciousness.

As a “presence” in all things, consciousness awakens responsiveness to an outer and far-reaching field of contacts, thereby becoming the cause of all vital processes in living creatures. As “soul,” it becomes the unified sentiency and the relative awareness which underlies all forms of manifestation in the creative processes of God.

Mechanisms of Consciousness

The origin of consciousness involving the interaction of manifested duality (twoness) in a past incarnation of our universe was fairly crude. As creation progressed, mechanisms were created to facilitate a more efficient development of consciousness and matter. Less important is the history of the development of these mechanisms than how these mechanisms work in creating consciousness at every level within all life. As we shall see later, these mechanisms are powerful facilitators of both awareness and the evolution of consciousness.

Perception

Webster's Dictionary defines perception as the ability to perceive. To “perceive” is “to take hold of, to become aware of.”⁴⁶ The developmental psychologist, Ernest Schachtel (1903–1975) also emphasizes perception over sensation in the following sentence: “In this respect perception differs from sensation, which has a

much more fleeting character and lacks the attempt to take hold of something.”⁴⁷

The early Greek philosophers identify a characteristic of perception by concluding that “perception is the source of *Knowledge*, but is not the Knowledge itself.”⁴⁸ For Aristotle, perception is “an actualizing of the potentiality which the sense organ possesses as its faculty.”⁴⁹ From this, memory becomes the “preservation of perception.”⁵⁰

Highlighting the beginnings of perception, Henri Bergson (1849–1951) the influential French philosopher who emphasized intuition over rationalism and science, states that: “In simple organisms the rudiments of perception are to be found in mechanical responses to external stimulation. Direct contact with bodies, such as we experienced in tactile perception, belongs to this stage.”⁵¹ *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* adds to this idea when it concludes that evolution transforms perception into “the discovery, by means of the senses, of the existence and properties of the external world.”⁵² But it goes on to say that perception lacks “any processes of reasoning or interpretation in it.”⁵³

Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716), the prominent German mathematician and philosopher concurs with aforementioned ideas by stating that: “Things have insensible perceptions, perceptions without consciousness, and men also have such perceptions, in varying degrees.”⁵⁴ He considers perception as an “inner state of the monad representing external things.”⁵⁵ He further considers perception to be unconscious and apperception to be conscious.

From Thich Nhat Hanh, who provides an Eastern perspective, we learn that “perception means the coming into existence of the perceiver and the perceived... The source of our perception, our way of seeing, lies in our store consciousness.”⁵⁶ This perspective separates perception from consciousness itself. Others, such as the philosopher and scientist Peter Carruthers, also maintain that our higher-order awareness is perceptual.

Perception, according to Evan Harris Walker, “refers to the brain imagery and conception of its environment resulting from the information processing of input stimulus signals.”⁵⁷ This

idea coincides with the view of David Bohm who asserts that:

There is a common notion of perception as a sort of passive process... The new studies make it clear that perception is, on the contrary, an active process, in which a person must do a great many things in the course of which actions he helps to supply a certain general structure to what he perceives.

The perceived picture is therefore not just an image or reflection of our momentary sense impressions, but rather it is the outcome of a complex process leading to an ever-changing (three-dimensional) construction which is present to our awareness in a kind of “inner show.”⁵⁸

To bring coherence to these many definitions of perception, I would define perception as the active process by which we discover the existence of external stimulus from the external world. This complex process leads us to create an inner image/picture which represents the outer stimulus. Perception does not include any process of interpretation, only those which allow life to grasp hold of external realities.

Apprehension & Cognition

Webster's Dictionary virtually equates apprehension with perception when it defines perception as the capacity to take hold of and to perceive. It also adds the element of understanding to perception. However, from our definitions of perception above, understanding is definitely not an element of perception.

Most fields of study offer little insight into apprehension, but as always, there are some juicy tidbits to be found. The Stoics believed that there is no “Knowledge until there is apprehension, until the soul was [or has been] gripped by the impression.”⁵⁹ This idea is affirmed by the early 19th century philosopher Georg Hegel who points out that “consciousness appears to be an apprehension of what is immediate, of what *is*,...”⁶⁰ In *The Mystery of Consciousness*, John Searle aims to appraise some of the significant and influential views on the problem of consciousness including discussions with Daniel Dennett and David

Chalmers. He includes a chapter on the conclusions of Israel Rosenfield in his book *The Strange, Familiar and Forgotten: An Anatomy of Consciousness*. Significant from Rosenfield's case studies, Searle asserts that: "it is the act of relating the moments of perception, not the moments themselves, that accounts for consciousness."⁶¹ Carl Jung adds a further dimension to apprehension by saying that: "by 'apprehension' I do not mean simply intellectual understanding, but understanding through experience."⁶²

If perception is the source of knowledge, then apprehension is a mechanism by which perceptions are turned into some form of knowledge or understanding. Apprehension is a middle process, or mechanism, that ultimately results in the formation of ideas and purposeful action. In other words, apprehension is the processing of perceptions in a way that creates understanding, knowledge and awareness. But as highlighted above, this understanding is based on experience, not just thinking.

Cognition, according to Webster's Dictionary, is the "process of knowing in the broadest sense including perception, memory, and judgement; the result of such a process."⁶³ Within cognitive psychology, the "cognitive unconscious" is demonstrated by "unconscious, automatic psychological processes in perception, memory, and action..."⁶⁴ From this definition, we can see that the term "cognitive" seems to have replaced the older term "information processing" in cognitive theory. In neurophilosophical theories of consciousness, the

result of cognition (i.e. cognitive representation) is a conscious state. Therefore, cognition is viewed as a "property of consciousness."⁶⁵

The *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* adds to this by defining cognition in the following way: "cognitive processes are those responsible for knowledge and awareness. They include the processing of experience, perception, and memory, as well as overtly verbal thinking."⁶⁶ The psychologist Rollo May, whose ideas will be explored in greater detail later on, goes further to equate cognition with knowing.

The following remarks from Carl Jung also equate re-cognition with knowledge or knowing.

We speak of "knowing" something when we succeed in linking a new perception to an already existing context, in such a way that we hold in consciousness not only the perception but parts of this context as well. "Knowing" is based, therefore, upon the perceived connection between psychic contents.⁶⁷

Ken Wilber defines different types or levels of cognition including gross, subtle and causal. As he puts it:

This would mean that we could trace the development of different types of cognition (gross, subtle, and causal) as they appear throughout a person's life. Instead of one appearing only after another, they would all develop simultaneously, at least in certain ways.⁶⁸

Also lending some insight into the process of cognition is Rudolph Steiner, who asserts that "Cognition consists in linking a concept with a

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precept in thinking... the act of knowing (cognition) is a synthesis of precept and concept."⁶⁹ Steiner goes on to equate precepts with the "immediate objects of sensation... The precept's connection with its concept is recognized *after* the act of perception..."⁷⁰

Cognizing or cognition is therefore a psychological processing of perceptions (derived from experience) and memories which results in some form of knowing or knowledge. It is characterized by linking new perceptions (precepts) with existing knowledge (concepts). Cognition, in its broadest sense, involves a synthesizing of new experiences with our understanding and knowledge of past experiences.

Apperception & Intentionality

Apperception

The following definition from *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is a good place to start in our efforts to understand the process of apperception. "Apperception denotes a state of conscious or reflecting awareness."⁷¹ Apperception is characterized by acts of concentration and assimilation. It "raises subconscious or indistinct impressions to the level of attention and at the same time arranges them into a coherent intellectual order."⁷² Various German philosophers, such as Theodore Lipps, Gottfried Leibniz and Immanuel Kant contribute to our understanding of the faculty of apperception. Lipps identifies two types of apperception including an activity of classifying and an activity of questioning, while Leibniz equates apperception with the "reflective knowledge of perception."⁷³ Kant considered apperception in an inner sense, conceiving it as that which creates a synthetic unity of sense representations and objects.

Webster's Dictionary defines apperceive as the ability "to assimilate and interpret by the help of past experience."⁷⁴ Unfortunately, that also is a good definition for apprehension. According to one scientific perspective, apperception "provides also the element of certainty with respect to our mental states."⁷⁵

As will be the case with various topics throughout these articles on human conscious-

ness, C. G. Jung is an excellent source in understanding apperception.

Sense-perceptions tell us that something is. They do not tell us what it is. This is told us not by the process of perception but by the process of apperception and this is a highly complex structure.⁷⁶

In *Psychology and Alchemy*, Jung provides an alchemical distinction between perception and apperception.

The senses mediate perception, while the *discretio intellectualis* corresponds to apperception. This activity is subject to the *ratio* or *anima rationalis*, the highest faculty bestowed by God on man.⁷⁷

From these sources, it is possible to understand that apperception is a complex process of assimilating our perceptions. Through concentrated questioning, reflection and classifying our perceptions with knowledge of past experiences, apperception produces a synthetic unity and coherent order to our current experience. Beyond apprehension and cognition, apperception produces a sense of certainty regarding understanding our experiences.

Intention

In *The Intention Experiment*, Lynne McTaggart quotes a definition of intention from Marilyn Schlitz of the Institute of Noetic Sciences. She explains intention as "the projection of awareness, with purpose and efficacy, toward some object or outcome."⁷⁸ Amit Goswami affirms this view in describing intentionality as directed and purposeful.

Another scientific perspective provided by David Bohm, considers intention and meaning to be two sides of one activity. "In this evolution, extended meaning as 'intention' is the ultimate source of cause and effect, and more generally, of necessity... Intention means, I suppose, the tension within. The tension to do something, that state of tension out of which you act..."⁷⁹

An additional definition from *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* simply explains intention as disposition to action and intentionality as a "mode of being within the mind."⁸⁰ The contemporary philosopher David Finkelstein also

equates intention with an inner state. *Webster's Dictionary* uses similar terminology by defining intention as “attention firmly directed or fixed; something planned or designed.”⁸¹ Therefore, the adjective “intentional” is something done purposely or, as Thomas Aquinas explains, that which is accomplished by “an act of will.”

The influential author and existential psychologist Rollo May, devotes an entire chapter on intentionality in his book *Love & Will*. In comments that are similar to those of Bohm, he defines intentionality as “a structure which gives meaning to experience.”⁸² May considers the roots of intentionality to include epistemology (study of knowledge). “Intentionality thus begins as an *epistemology*, a way of knowing reality. It carries the meaning of reality as we know it.”⁸³ From Franz Brentano’s concept of intentionality—Brentano (1838–1917), is regarded as the founder of “act psychology” or intentionalism, which concerns itself with “acts” of the mind—May concludes that “intentionally gives meaningful contents to consciousness.”⁸⁴ He draws from the Latin roots of intention to conclude that “intention is a ‘stretching’ toward something.”⁸⁵ Intentionality becomes an “assertive response of the person to the structure of his world.”⁸⁶

The teachings of Don Juan Matus, as communicated by Carlos Castaneda, provide a unique perspective on intent. Intent is the “purposeful guiding of will... the energy of alignment.”⁸⁷ Another member of the same informal society of sorcerers, Taisha Abelar, learned from one of her teachers that intent is the “force that gives focus to everything. It makes the world happen.”⁸⁸

Intention adds another element to our mechanisms of consciousness. Through a guiding of will, intention projects our awareness in a directed and purposeful way. As an inner disposition to action, intention directs consciousness to give meaningful responses to experience.

Conclusion

One of the main reasons there is so much confusion and misunderstanding of consciousness is that each field of study (in other

words, perspective) excludes wisdom from other fields of study on the subject. It is like the parable of the elephant and four blind men, each approaching the elephant from a different direction. Although each description of the elephant is accurate, it only provides a very limited and partial understanding of the whole elephant. It requires all four and more perspectives to fully comprehend the reality of the elephant.

Creating a precise definition of consciousness requires drawing upon the wisdom from each and every field of study. From them we learn that consciousness predates all forms of life in spirit and matter. It can be seen as the sentient awareness produced from the interaction of various manifested dualities. Consciousness becomes the capacity for unified awareness, or presence, in all things. Consciousness is the ground basis for all of Existence. It exists in all levels and states similar to the evolution of Spirit/Matter.

From the tiniest atom to the inconceivable intra-cosmic Being, which some might call God; consciousness evolves and produces the activity and growth within all forms of Life. The mechanisms that have been created to facilitate the creation of consciousness more efficiently include perception, apprehension, cognition, apperception and intentionality.

Perception is the active process by which we discover the existence of external stimulus from the external world. This complex process leads us to create an inner picture which represents the outer stimulus. Apprehension is a middle process which creates understanding, knowledge and awareness. This understanding is based on experience. Cognition is what links new perceptions with existing memories and knowledge of past experiences.

Apperception is the critical central process of assimilating our perceptions through concentrated questioning, reflection and classifying our perceptions with knowledge of past experiences. It produces a synthetic unity and coherent order to our current experience. Finally, intention adds a key element to consciousness. Through the guided movement of the will, intention projects our awareness in a purposeful

way. As an inner disposition to action, intention directs consciousness to give meaningful responses to experience.

In this first article, the groundwork has been laid for a new model of consciousness by synthesizing theories on consciousness from early Greek philosophers to 21st century science and metaphysics. The next article in this series will utilize the structure of the brain in order to build a model for each mind, brain or sephirah (Tree of Life node) that exists within the human personality at the various levels of energy and matter.

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