

Ontology of Consciousness

Percipient Action

edited by Helmut Wautischer

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Preface

The defining traits of human experience—consciousness, sentient action, and discourse—have traditionally developed along the trajectory pathways for knowledge provided by culture, religion, philosophy, and science. Such natural progression of knowledge presumably gives a kind of objectivity that anchors and validates itself. It is a well-grounded claim, but valid only up to a point, as a more careful assessment of percipient action will soon reveal that a desire for objectifiable causation can be substantiated only in defined spaces. One only needs to take a close look at any culture's evolved cognitive patterns to see that its chains of causation are demonstrated by reference to its established cognitive entities. So whatever further "truths" get established thus have an element of parochialness. Such selection is not necessarily bad, since all viable systems will have valid experiential basis for their assertions. Likewise, percipient action proceeds tangentially to established belief. History shows us it can be a useful means to get out of disadvantageous cultural ruts. Nonetheless, at the level of physical causation, any interference with undefined causation might trigger localizable action, but cannot account for action assessment of the undefined "other." Such action will manifest in micro- and macroscopic levels of reality, and in "people" of all sorts, including humans, plants, rocks, and even planets. Stipulating broad concepts of consciousness that extend their presumed properties to "everything that exists" is surely not helpful to touch directly on the down-to-earth particularities of a given percipient action. A productive approach is to consider field variables that may influence spontaneous action, and perhaps sentience itself. This requires attention to all percipient actions, including those spontaneous ones that at times generate paradigm shifts.

At the level of humans, reflective action manifests in a variety of experience that spans from self-centered personhood to degrees of relationship with whatever one can sense as "other." For the human enterprise, such experience is the story of mankind. In its most barren manifestation, the Darwinian model can serve as suitable metaphor, but in a domain of sentient evolution there is no solace in conquest, since at the core of subtle awareness is one's realization of interconnectedness. This anthology presents in one volume a significant selection of such experience: archaeological epistemology

derived from a collective record of human experience, together with a daring scientific map that unites theoretical rigor with the described practical skills. The ontological claim presented in this anthology will challenge the reader beyond his or her comfort zones, since when perceived in its liberating capacity, percipient action delivers objective knowledge to the generative potentiality of personal manifestation.

Scientific methodologies, by definition, must allow for objectifying manipulation of the given research subject. It is no surprise that current theories of consciousness effectively assess what consciousness *is not*. Intentional alteration of a subject's behavior or its corresponding neurophysiological activity does not reveal the originating source of conscious agency. Consciousness research will require a similar methodological shift that is noted in anthropological research when participatory ethnographers merge with the cultures of their studies by "going native." Similarly, consciousness research will benefit from validating first-person experience as an authentic and legitimately valid account of mentality.

Undoubtedly there is a boom in consciousness studies with the steadily increasing number of researchers who "do consciousness." It has become a trendy subject with most perplexing actors. There is also no doubt that any lofty metaphysics that originates in belief or faith has no place in science. Once we have come to a full realization of what it means that each and every one of us could be, in principle, no different from any pile of dirt, only then have we matured to accept the courage, full responsibility for, and beauty of reclaiming the ontology of existence. Building from the ashes of reason a foundation of wisdom that shines its irresistible presence through the ever-present vibration of being is a noble pursuit in the exploration of human consciousness.

This anthology has been in the making for nearly ten years. I wish to express my thanks and gratitude to all authors for their perseverance with this task. Three of the contributors, Julia Watkin, Armand Labbé, and Mircea Steriade, have passed away during the preparation of the book. I am grateful for their foresight and motivation to press toward the final editing of their respective chapters. It was only months later that I understood some of their comments during the editorial dialogues. Thank you. Generous support was given by the Institute of Noetic Sciences who helped with a seed grant. Numerous readers and copyeditors have helped with fine-tuning the language of different writing styles into a coherent volume. Thanks to Anita Rosenfield, Maitreya Hawthorne, Lisa A. Smith, Elizabeth Judd, Stephanie Levin, and Evelyn McKenna for their valuable help. My gratitude to Thomas E. Stone, Senior Editor at MIT Press, for his perseverance to endorse the project, to all the support staff at MIT Press, and to Suzanne Haddon for her artistic design of the book cover. Some copyright clearance was needed for portions of chapters 8, 13, 16, and 17, and full credits are given in the Notes sections.

Here is a toast to friends and colleagues who care to touch with truthful communication, in an unending desire for continuous delight in the creation of mindful spontaneous presence.