

Response to Commentary

Response to the Commentary of William A. Adams

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I would like to thank Adams (2010) for his well-considered thoughts on “Hollows of Experience”. His praise is encouraging to me and his doubts give me much to consider. I especially like his summary of the questions I put before myself; in fact, Bill provides a nice summary overall. I especially like his succinct, “Language lets us (actually requires us to) objectify our experience into the idea of a mind-independent reality that can be studied by science.” And I blush to read his praise that “this essay is consistently engaging and thought provoking and for that, a worthwhile read,” for I aim at nothing else.

It is important for me to repeat what I noted in the Preface/Introduction to this issue: My writing is not an unbiased scientific report of observed experimental evidence but more along the lines of aesthetic expression or even old school philosophy in that it is shamelessly speculative, though that speculation is based in reason, learning, observation, and, yes, intuition. Leaps of imagination were necessary to bridge some of the gaps in the theories with which I dealt and to provide a fully coherent vision. Bill expresses some frustration with the ambiguity of some of my material and that it is often not clear which side of an issue I am on, but that is the prerogative of such writing: it seeks to bridge the divide betwixt the binary oppositions of language by finding means to express the paradoxical *no man’s land* between or around them.

However, Bill when Bill chides me, “Memories, thoughts, ideas, hopes, plans, regrets, questions, feelings, confusion, and much more, are all mental experiences, none of which necessarily depends on an environmental change,” he seems to have missed or misunderstood the central point I emphasize that experience, as such, is not the same as conscious experience. When we created a *pause button* between instinctual stimulus and response found in the rest of nature, likely through the symbolization of possible causes and actions, we vastly expanded our repertoire of choices. This is when we “found the time” to think. As far as we know, we humans are the only ones with such a constructed mental time, and thus we are the only ones to have exceeded natural, environmental, experiential, *somatic* reactions with “memories, thoughts, ideas, hopes, plans, regrets, questions, feelings, confusions, and much more,” the mental attributes Bill lists. Bill’s point inadvertently supports my view that we are different in kind from other animals.

Bill is quite right that I use the word, *nature*, quite loosely, even occasionally capitalizing it. I do so out of a vast respect for *all that is*, a respect that borders on pantheism or maybe animism. Yet I do indeed realize that *nature*, like all concepts, is a

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social construct with different meanings to different cultures. In point of fact, we can never really be separate from *Nature*, though we seem to have either escaped or been exiled from the self-regulating balance of nature with our leap into mind and limited freedom of the will.

References

- Adams, W. A. (2010) Playing with your food: review of "Hollows of Experience" by Greg Nixon. *Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research*. 1(3): 342-345.
- Nixon, G. M. (2010) Hollow of experience. *Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research*. 1(3): 234-288.