

Response to Commentary

Response to the Commentary of Richard W. Moodey

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It's good to see that Richard Moodey readily agrees with my differentiation of experience-in-itself from conscious experience in my first essay, "Panexperientialism"; however, he would also like to differentiate experience-in-itself from non-conscious experience, as well as be more specific with a number of terms that I lumped generically together. I would say that if experience is not conscious experience than it can only be non-conscious (or unconscious or preconscious experience). I cannot conceive of any experience that is neither conscious nor unconscious. We ourselves have created that dichotomy and, though there may be many vague degrees of partially conscious or unconscious experience, surely all experience can be classified within this continuum.

Of course "consciousness without a mind" and "experience without an experiencer" seem contradictory on first reading, but, again, I see them as fundamentally equivalent to the idea of non-conscious (unconscious or preconscious) experience, which also seems contradictory on first glance. I presume that being aware, i.e., conscious (if you must), but having no central perspective like that which we refer to as a "mind" is consciousness-without-a-mind or consciousness-without-a-self and I see that as equivalent to non-conscious experience, or close enough to make my point. The same thing applies to experience-without-an-experiencer. Experience is happening but there may be no central entity that *is* "having" the experience. How is this possible?

I maintain that experience is relational; in its early, most rudimentary stages it takes place in what might be described as frictional sensation wherever parts of a dynamic field or system encounter each other, or when parts of two separate dynamic fields or systems encounter each other. Such friction is felt as sensation only locally, at the place where the two foreign elements meet, so there is no central experiencer, yet that local encounter will affect the behaviour of the whole system(s). When such localized sensations become remembered where they occurred and perhaps anticipated, the entire system/field may come to recognize them. At that instant, I would suggest that the amorphous system or field becomes an entity in the world, for that recognition of previously displaced sensation internalizes the feeling as one of belonging to the whole. At that point, experience has created experiencers, and fields have produced entities (that may or may not become organisms).

I equate non-conscious experience with "core consciousness" simply because the definition perfectly describes what I mean. Wikipedia (2010) states: "In biological psychology the core consciousness describes a hypothesized level of awareness facilitated by neural structures of most animals that allows them to be aware of and

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react to their environment.” This is exactly what I would call experience without consciousness. This concept was popularized by the eminent neurologist, Anthony Damasio (1999), so I thought it was worth repeating.

Moodey seems to miss my point about radical constructivism. I quite agree with him that the world we experience is not the product of individual or even voluntary group construction. In fact, the construction of experience – and this includes the experiencing world – is only partially the result of the conscious reflection of experience back upon itself. It is mostly, I maintain, simply unconscious experience itself in action, taking place without differentiation between world and self, so that inner and outer are essentially one thing, the experience of environmental interaction. Since experience is not objective reality (neither is it subjective reality), the world of experience must be its own construction.

References

- Damasio, A. (1999). *The feeling of what happens: Body and emotion in the making of consciousness*. New York: Harcourt-Brace.
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- Wikipedia (accessed, 25 May, 2010). "Core Consciousness" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Core_consciousness .