

Characteristics of Pre-Reflective Consciousness in Theory and Practice

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Wider Research Program:
How does accessing phenomenological experience transform thinking, foster ethical action, enhance creative process, facilitate scientific discovery?

INTRODUCTION

In order to study pre-reflective experience one must be able to identify and observe it. In this study descriptions of pre-reflective consciousness are identified across domains and in human examples.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How is pre-reflective consciousness described in various domains?

How does pre-reflective awareness show up in the noting practice of meditators trained in awareness of continual flow of experience?

How does pre-reflective consciousness function in the creating process?

METHODS

In Theory: Transdisciplinary

Domain Selections

- Phenomenology
- Microphenomenology
- Theoretical physics
- Theoretical biology
- Human or cognitive science
- Early Buddhism
- Contemplative practice
- Creativity studies

Coding:

- Constructivist grounded theory
- Theme of non-separation of matter and mind or non-representational consciousness/experience

Three Levels of science (and research):

Philosophical/theoretical
Normative

Methodological/technological

Systemic Theoretical:

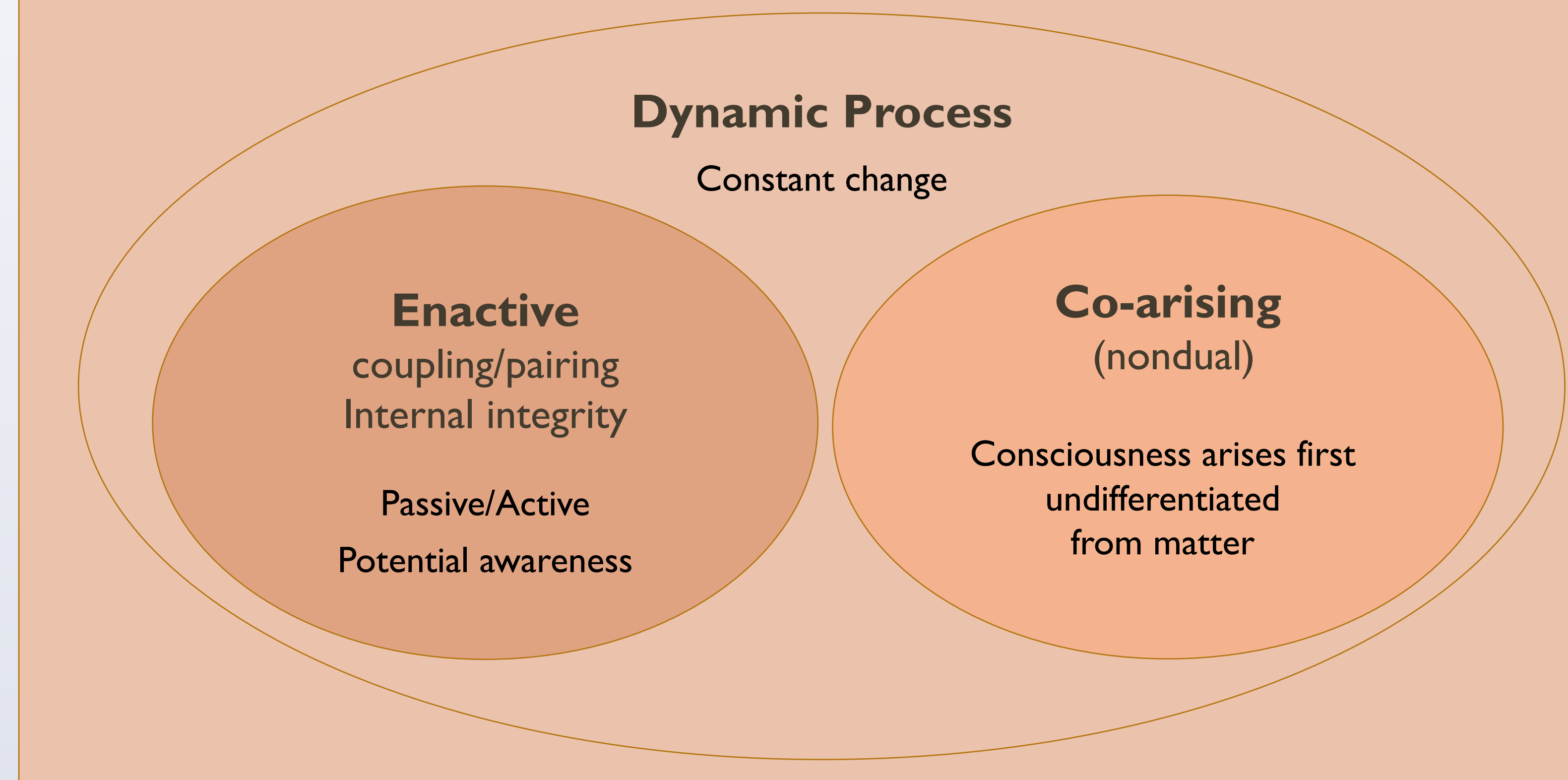
- Why domains chosen
- Contributions and distinctions
- Integration

Integration:

- Gather and compare in cross-domain tables
- Winnow or discriminate through imaginative variation of phenomenology

RESULTS: IN THEORY

How is pre-reflective consciousness described in various domains?



RESULTS: IN PRACTICE

In noting practice: How does pre-reflective awareness show up in the noting practice of meditators trained in awareness of continual flow of experience?

Generalized diachronic/dynamic process

Settling in (active receptive)

Exploring sense experience (active and passive):

- "Relaxing the jaws. Relaxing the throat...feeling into [active]" Lilly
- "mild shaking [passive]" Carl
- "Noticing the heart beating in the chest. Quite loud. Actually, blood thumping throughout the torso- starting in the belly [passive] Ann

Ideas or concepts arising (active and passive):

- "some thoughts about friends [passive] Lilly
- "a train of thought...if this happens I need to do this. If this happens, you know, it was like that. Narrative. Narration [passive] Carl
- "thinking re deep structure and surface structure thus about this process [passive to active engagement – no longer pre reflective] Amy

Silence/stillness/openness and deepening of silence:

- "feeling spaciousness form within the body [passive]" Lilly

Individually unique experiences

Intentional close (continued next column)

Synchronic experiences unique in meditations

Dream states

Possible transmodal experience:

- "Hearing the wind and sort of sensing it on my skin. ... like feeling it. It is like hearing the wind being in the wind." Lilly
- "Wanting more coffee, tasting it, noticing the inclination, the intention toward, but resisting it. Counter to body inclination" (Amy - *vedanā*)

Stillness and emptiness:

- "awareness appears ... like blank screen, no sense of perception ..., nor markers or anchors, nothing missing ...No push or pull... demanding my attention; not a defined experience; doesn't have thingness; ... stateness either... wasn't knowing; wasn't the normal seer there; wasn't anything to name; there wasn't a sensation; It didn't feel like arising; it seemed like nothing. ..." Carl

Emotion arising and transforming

In creative process: How does pre-reflective consciousness function in the creating process?

Wynton Marsalis (2008) : Parallel - Playing jazz

requires technical skill and continual awareness of the flow of the music from within and relationship to the dynamics of the moment, non-conceptual, pre-reflective experience.

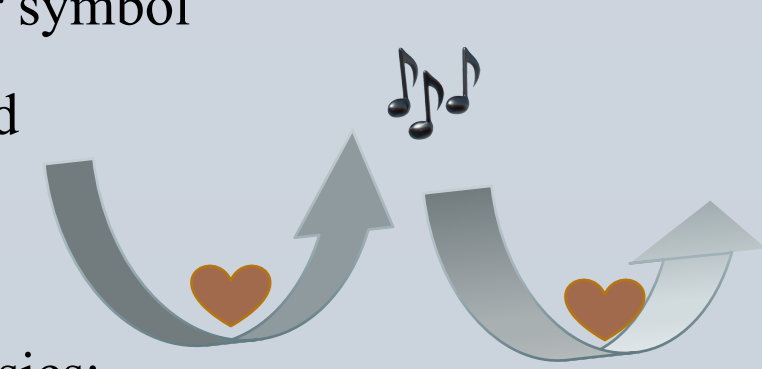
- Adjusting to changes without losing your equilibrium
- Mastering moments of crisis with clear thinking
- Living in the moment and accepting reality instead of trying to force everyone to do things your way
- Concentrating on a collective goal even when your conception of the collective doesn't dominate
- Knowing how and when to extend your individual energy

Leonard Cohen: Recognizing Truth

- "[Songs] have to resonate with the kind of truth that I can recognize. "
- About his song Anthem: "[It] was completely finished. I listened to it. ...There was a lie somewhere in there. There was a disclosure that I was refusing to make. ... There was something wrong with the damn thing. All I knew is that I couldn't sing it....).
- Not meaning he is trying to express but experience.

Applebaum: composition or symbol

- deep music communicated
- to listeners' deep hearing
- all making music



Einstein: In theoretical physics:

- started with unspecifiable feelings
- the succession of images
- detailed concepts eventually emerged

Summary and Future Study

- constant change to describe lawfulness of the universe:
- exploring embodied experience may bring awareness of constant change
- awareness allows access before assumptions take hold
- multiple ways to describe non-representational experience
- cross domain patterns connect - verify each other
- active and passive processes occur
- awareness impacts processes
- subtle awareness develops with training
- potential for intentional development
- humans are organically creating with these methods
- noting practice across domains may expand knowing
- constructs are revealed for use in further studies