Article

# The Phenomenology of Self-Projection as a Value of Intersubjectivity

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**Abstract**: Central to the discourse on the intentional structure of consciousness encompasses further forms of experience, for instance, the notion of one's direct experience of others. In essence, one's experience of others is materialized through intersubjective engagement which is fundamental in comprehending the relation of the Self and Other. Intersubjective engagement between the two cognizing subjects is evidently interactive negotiation of understanding, thus necessarily meditational. This paper will substantiate the meditational or reflective nature of intersubjective engagement with the phenomenology of self-projection, giving emphasis on the experience of the Self in relation to Others. The activity of self-projection onto others which is argued to take place through introspection, incorporates modes such as representation, simulation, imitation, empathic interaction and self-attribution. Furthermore, this paper will conclude intersubjectivity as an advent of joint construction of meaning and representation between the two cognizing subjects, thus, the collaborative endeavor of shared construction of meaning and representation is attained throughout the process.

**Keywords**: consciousness, intersubjectivity, introspection, self-projection, simulation

The nature of consciousness is probably the most taxing matter to comprehend central to the progressing discussion of the human mind. Questions relevant to the features and characterization of consciousness compelled philosophers and the intellectuals in the field of neuroscience to develop philosophical theories and analysis, and computational and psychological models, with an aim to provide a concrete and objective explanation on the subject. Although there has not been a universal and final account on the said notion, differences in the approach of philosophers and intellectuals provide an extensive illumination in determining the nature and characteristics of consciousness.

Part of the discourse about consciousness is the percipience that it means something about higher order thought, or access, or monitoring, or self-reflection[1] and it is something that we all have available to us on the basis of our experience[2]. That is, the idea of consciousness rests primarily on the cognitive phenomenon of a cognizing subject which presents the sense of thinking and reasoning. It connotes multiple things, from a particular alert or awake state of the mind[3], to its state of acquiring objectivity on information, representations, memories, as well as the sense of one's social nature of all we know of knowing.[4] In this sense, albeit the focus on cognitive process on the account of consciousness, it now furthered to social and affective phenomenon, as the social nature of knowledge is manifested through one's common or shared knowledge with others who are also bearers of knowledge. Although this take on consciousness has changed since René Descartes construed it to be individualistic, private, independent of the collective, thus, accessible to itself through self-reflection, taken into account in his *cogito ergo sum*.[5] Furthermore:

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[1] Susan Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness* (Oxford: New York, 2005), 24.

[2] *Ibid.*, 27.

[3] Philippe Rochat, *Others in Mind: Social Origins of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge University Press: United Kingdom, 2009), 50.

[4] *Ibid.*, 51.

[5] *Ibid.*, 50.

The crucial point and what gives the specificity of consciousness is that it is the result of a process that depends primarily on the individual's self-reflection and thinking. It acknowledges the fact that there is a state of mind where we can think primarily for ourselves, making discoveries on our own and seemingly for ourselves ...[6]

As consciousness is by nature a first-person perspective, its dependence on self-reflection confers to one's subjective experience. Subjective experience incorporates 'self-awareness' through the act of introspection, in which the act itself leads to understanding other minds relative to the Self; and this understanding of others has to do with how the self experiences the other's behavior through his/her own interpretative lens.[7] In this sense, self-awareness arises from interactive experiences,[8] inherently relational in approach, conducting collaborative process,[9] on the basis of self-understanding—thus participating in an intersubjective engagement. As intersubjective engagement is chiefly the active and interactive negotiation of understanding between cognizing subject, this communicative competence between them demonstrates social, cognitive, and affective phenomenon. Hence, intersubjective engagement is attained with the advent of one's distinction of the Self in relation to Others, which is occurs through the act of introspection, thus embodying the act of self-projection. Self-projection, on the latter part of the discussion, is deliberated as a value of intersubjectivity.

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[6] Rochat, *Others in Mind,* 52.

[7] R.D. Laing, H. Phillipson, and A.R. Lee, *Interpersonal Perception: A Theory and a Method of Research* (London: Tavistock, 1996), 131.

[8] Jeremy I.M. Carpendale and Charlie Lewis, "Reaching, requesting and reflecting: From interpersonal engagement to thinking," in *Moving Ourselves, Moving Others: Motion and Emotion in Intersubjectivity, Consciousness and Language*, ed. Ad Foolen, et al. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.), 244.

[9] Susan R. Fussell, et. al., "Visual Cues as Evidence of Other's Minds in Collaborative Physical Tasks," in *Other Minds: How Human Bridge the Divide between Self and Others*, ed. Bertram F. Malle and Sara D. Hodges (New York: The Guildford Press, 2005), 91-92.

## ON THE ACCOUNT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The account of 'consciousness' oftentimes situated similar to the terminology 'awareness,' as both may imply the idea that if one is conscious, one is aware of things. In this sense, consciousness is simplified as the awareness of things directly perceived or observed, displaying no confusion between the meaning of the two, for both terms are considered synonymous as ordinary language denote. Typically, when one utters "I am aware that the floor is slippery," we understand it as similar to the utterance "I am conscious of the fact that the floor is slippery" whether by learning that the floor is slippery by a signage or noticing that the floor is wet, or by realizing it through stepping on the floor and almost slipping. The words 'conscious' and 'aware' denote the knowledge of the person that the floor is wet, therefore impelling the person to take extra precaution when walking on the wet floor. The manner of usage of the two words displays the function of ordinary language in making one's knowledge or understanding clear and easy to express and comprehend. However, Daniel Dennett argued that these concepts have significant difference asserting the Intentional and non-Intentional uses of these:

> On the Intentional side, we speak of being conscious *of* this or that, aware *of* this or that, aware *that* such and such is the case, and— less naturally—conscious *that* such and such is the case. On the non-Intentional side, we speak of being just plain conscious or unconscious, and of being a conscious form of life, and, in rather artificial speech, of someone's simply being aware, in the sense of being 'on the qui vive' or sensitive to the current situation. We also speak of conscious and unconscious motives or desires, but these can be assimilated under the Intentional idioms, as motives and desires we are conscious *of*.[10]

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[10] Daniel C. Dennett, *Content and Consciousness* (London: Routledge, 1969), 114-115.

This categorization brings clarity on the proper sense of which we are to use the words 'conscious' and 'aware'—the latter speaks of being aware of or conscious of a particular object or a thing, implying intentionality, thus categorized as Intentional, and the former speaks of distinction from sub-consciousness or unconsciousness, simply a fancy way of stating alertness, thus non-Intentional. Thus, when one say "I am aware that the floor is slippery," the person is implying the acquired knowledge that the floor is slippery and the awareness' intentionality is on the floor being wet. On the contrary, the non-Intentional use of the word 'conscious' will be applicable in such instance that one is attentive of the surroundings, that when it feels like the floor is slippery as s/he walks on it, s/he will certainly realize it. Another, in the instance that you are supposed to meet with your male friend in a coffee shop at a particular time, you are inclined to look for him on the basis of his physical features to distinguish him from the crowd. You will look for someone who is tall, brown skinned, pointed nose and full-bearded man who might be sitting in one corner sipping his espresso while waiting for you. Your full awareness is directed to this physical appearance while you search through the crowd, ignoring those who do not fit with physical feature you have in your mind. Others are simply objects or individuals who fill up the space of the coffee shop, giving you the experience of a busy coffee shop. You are simply 'conscious' or attentive enough that the coffee shop has a lot of customers enjoying their drinks while having conversation, but you are 'aware' that there is your friend with certain physical features sitting in one corner waiting for you. Your awareness of the presence of your friend displays your Intentionality to a certain person with certain features, thus being 'aware,' while you simply know the existence of other people in the coffee shop in a non-Intentional way, thus being 'conscious.' Generally, this distinction between the terms *awareness* and *consciousness*, indicating that of Dennett's Intentional and non-Intentional usage, provided not only the proper usage of each term relevant to its meaning but also providing proper usage in context. Significantly, this will sustain the perspective or situation

being expressed without confusion or misplaced synonymity fashioned by the ordinary language.

On the other hand, the nature of awareness could be situated into two aspects: one is awareness of things for maneuvering in the environment, and the second is the ability of introspection reports.[11] The former aspect infers to awareness and its link to a certain setting, governing one's behavior, while the latter aspect infers to one's description of own experience of a certain thing. Both aspects provide a different involvement as one is into the occurrence of things around while the other is into the introspection of private and covert experience. In the aforementioned example of awareness of the floor being slippery, it is anticipated that the person who is aware that the floor is slippery, there will be a significant change in his/her behavior, from being clumsy to being cautious for him/her not to slip while walking on the slippery floor. This illustrates the aspect of awareness that induces maneuver in the environment. Control in one's behavior is displayed to act accordingly to the context or setting where one is situated, thus manifesting proper actions or response applicable to certain circumstances. In the instance that you are crossing the main road intersection, your awareness constraints you from being careless to being mindful and alert of the vehicles driving fast, that when you are already in the middle of the pedestrian lane and there is this reckless motorcycle driver swiftly passed by, you can take a quick step back or move away hastily, preventing yourself from being hit. Your senses will warn you of the danger as your awareness of the surroundings is heightened. In this manner, your awareness is involved with the events around you and most probably, the sense of Intentionality of awareness is towards vehicles and the whole crossing space. This feature of consciousness is certainly perceivable in humans as humans are involved in their environment and response is exhibited as part of his/her contingency to it. However, this might be questionable with the

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[11] Dennett, *Content and Consciousness,* 115-116.

consciousness of animals, since animals are also contingent to their environment and they respond to the occurrences of things that surround them. If in the same instance, crossing the main road intersection, the cat crosses in the pedestrian lane and suddenly a motorcycle swiftly passed by, the cat can save itself from being hit. The cat's reaction to the sudden event will exhibit not only its agility but as well as its awareness of what is happening around it, thus manifesting Intentionality. Though cat's awareness in an Intentional manner still poses questions on the extent of its involvement to the environment, on the similarity of the experience of awareness that humans have with what the cat has or animals have in general, and the cat's or animals' perception of the objects conceived in relation to them. No particular account asserts the certainty nor uncertainty that animal consciousness is analogous to that of the humans, even on the observed overt and controlled behavior of animals, unless animals themselves happen to tell us, directly expressing the distinct experience for our comprehension of their minds. This means of ascribing one's immediate experience is probable in the second aspect of consciousness that is yet to be mentioned, the ability of introspective reports. Dennett puts it:

> The reason we feel safe in ascribing awareness of things *as* certain things to people is that they tell us. We do not know what it is like to be a bee or a bird, but we know what it is like to be blind or myopic or to have tunnel vision, because people suffering from these conditions can describe their experiences. The human capacity for making introspective reports is seen as a mode of access to the content of awareness, and in virtue of the invulnerability to error... its deliverances are seen as reliable—indeed conclusive—evidence of the content of awareness.[12]

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[12] Dennett, *Content and Consciousness,* 116.

In introspection reports, the content of awareness can be specifically quantified relevant to what is ascribed by the person who has the experience, and in this manner, what is affirmed by the person will be apprehended truthfully, as the experience itself is private and could oftentimes not be subject to observance. As the content of awareness is oftentimes covert, one's direct access to other's experience is through the articulation of it, regardless of the behavior exhibited being or not being aligned to what is articulated. One might argue that introspective reports could still pose question on the authenticity of the articulated experience as one can be subject to faults in describing the events and recollections. On the contrary, relying solely on the observed behavior could also pose questions in the instance that it is possible to ascribe one's behavior simply by the subjective understanding of others. Both might have its own limitations, but this could be resolved if both features are considered and used in the process of understanding consciousness.

Introspective reports exhibit subjective dispositions as private experiences are what is articulated. If you and your friend were asked "How much pain are you feeling" after being in an accident while crossing the intersection, you will certainly have a different answer with your friend, depending on how much impact you got, what body part you got hit, or how much pain your body can tolerate. While being asked, you will tend to be fully aware of the pain you are feeling to be able to comprehend the sensation of pain you are experiencing. Your mind is retrieving the sensation from your body to fathom the feeling of being in pain. Or probably, you feel the sensation of pain you are experiencing to fathom the sensation of pain that your friend is experiencing, trying to place yourself in the experience of others by understanding the same occurrence you have experienced formerly. Bernard Baars remarked that questions about consciousness in the account of subject activity such as "'what is it like to be you or me?' —you get into the classic mind-body paradoxes where you end up with the three classical positions in the mind-body problem:

mentalism, physicalism, and dualism.[13] David Chalmers explicated the mind-body problem as a subject matter that:

> … covers a multitude of sins. One is this question: 'How is it that the brain can support subjective experiences?' Another one is: 'How can the brain support thought, or rationality and intelligence?' Maybe that is not quite the same problem, because it's closer to the domain of behaviour. Another question is: 'How can the mind affect the physical world?' That's very closely related. But they are slightly different problems. We can think of the hard problem as the real core of the mind-body problem.[14]

Chalmers have identified easy problems and hard problems as categories of the approach in mind-body problem, remarking that the former focuses more on the relevance of consciousness in the physical world, that is, the mechanisms of the environment affecting consciousness as well as the processes of systems built in the materiality of the brain, while the latter poses questions relevant to the subjective experience of the person. Chalmers posit easy problems in consciousness as that which 'explain the various behaviors and functions associated with consciousness…explain how it is that my eye distinguishes and separates different sensory stimuli, how my brain integrates that information, how that leads to certain kinds of verbal reports and responses on my part',[15] whereas the hard problems are questions asserting and explaining how all these mechanisms, functions, and behaviors operate in the subjective experience of a person. Bernard Baars placed the association of consciousness, its content and emergence, with the workings of the brain, which displays the physicalist approach in the mind-body problem, categorized as the easy problem:

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[13] Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness*, 12.
[14] *Ibid.*, 41-42.
[15] *Ibid.*, 48.

There is a pathway from the eyes to the visual cortex. Below the cortex the pathway does not seem to involve consciousness. The visual cortex, in a very simplified way, can be thought of as a staircase: at the beginning of the staircase you have a map of your visual field with just very simple pixels, black and white dots; a little bit further on you have lines, and contrast edges between white lines and black lines; a little bit further on you have motion representation; and further on you have colour, and so on. At every step you add a little bit more analysis of the information that flows into your eyes. When you follow the staircase from visual region to region you finally come to object recognition cells in the bottom half of the temporal cortex, the cortex that is close to the temples of the head; and as you come to the end of the lower temporal cortex you finally come to the top of the staircase where you have object representation. And the best evidence that we have today—which comes from a dozen years of single-cell studies of all these different steps on the staircase—is that things become conscious on the top of the staircase, where you have cells that represent objects. Now that is over-simplified, but it's not a bad quick summary![16]

Baars explained in simple details the corresponding regions of the brain that is responsible in making object representation upon perceiving an object. From the sensory input originating from the eyes, travels through the visual cortex of the brain, retrieving the form, color, outline, and/or movement of the perceived object, and in the latter part, being conscious of what is being perceived—the brain develops what will be the eventual content of consciousness, either Intentional or non-Intentional use. Formation of mental images or thoughts or the activity of recollecting memories are bound to the systematic mechanisms of the brain, thus, the content of the awareness is formed by the workings of the brain. The primary function of the nervous system, as far as we know, is to encode

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[16] Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness*, 13.

knowledge, to know things; and the technical term that's often used for this is representation,[17] however, this explication on the emergence of consciousness seems lacking for this only concentrates on the physicalist mechanisms of the brain. For Chalmers:

> … subjective experience can't be reduced to a brain process. No explanation solely in terms of brain processes will be such that we can deduce the existence of consciousness from it. I think someone could know all the physical facts about the world and still not know about consciousness.[18]

Ned Block seems to have the same sentiment as that of Chalmers as he asserts that the physiology of the human brain is what will determine one's phenomenology, thus, not neglecting the significance of subjective experience. For Block, consciousness is something about higher-order thought, or access, or monitoring, or self-reflection[19] coining it as phenomenal consciousness. This ascription to consciousness pertains to self-consciousness where one has the capacity to access his/her own way of thinking, monitor his/her behavior and responses, and has the ability to contemplate on these. This access to one's own consciousness and behavioral responses procures knowledge of one's self which shapes one's own subjective experience. Self-knowledge parallels to awareness of one's own sensations, thoughts, and feelings—what is inside of you—and is only attainable through contemplation or self-reflection, that is, accessing your own consciousness in a third person perspective. For an instance, you are a novice in mountain climbing, no experience at all, but recognized your enthusiasm and consider yourself brave that despite the dangers you might encounter, you still decided to join a group of experienced mountain climbers to conquer the trail. However, you realized how frightened you

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[17] Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness*, 12.
[18] *Ibid.*, 42.
[19] *Ibid.*, 24.

were when you were already in the middle of the trail, seeing how high you have already climbed, then decided not to continue and instead climb down the mountain. You might ask yourself "Am I brave enough to climb the mountain despite me failing eventually?" or "Is me being enthusiastic equal to me being brave?" or "Is it right for me to back down when I realized that I am frightened? What if I continued so? Will I be able to develop real bravery?" You might also arrive to realizations such as "I thought I am brave, but I realized I am actually not" or "At least I have already experienced it. The next time I will do it, I will be ready enough that I will no longer feel frightened anymore!" These questions exhibit one's self-knowledge. The novice knows him/herself as a person who is enthusiastic to try out new things, brave enough to surpass even the dangers of mountain climbing, and self-willed to decide to do it. These questions also exhibit self-reflection, that the novice tried to comprehend or access his/her feelings of frightfulness, his/her thoughts asking him/herself what if she did not back out, his/her behavior and responses during the time that s/he was terrified, and the understanding of what it truly feels when s/he is terrified of something. All these questions lead the novice to fully comprehend self-awareness—internalizing what it feels like to be him/herself, what is it like to have this experience—that is, incorporating him/herself within his/her own subjective experience. This subjective experience, as what has already been mentioned, is a private account, and the probability of accessing this private account of experience is by asking the kind of question Ned Block asked, "what is it like to be you or me?" For one to be able to understand the subjective experience of that novice, one has to rely not only on the novice's introspective reports, but also putting him/herself in the position of the novice, and that is the manner of projecting one's self-attributes onto others.[20] The next section of this paper will attempt to explicate the manner of accessing other's consciousness

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[20] Jean Decety, "Perspective Taking as the Royal Avenue to Empathy," in *Other Minds: How Human Bridge the Divide between Self and Others*, ed. Bertram F. Malle and Sara D. Hodges (New York: The Guildford Press, 2005), 143-157.

through self-projection, emphasizing its significance in relating to one's self and to others.

## SELF-PROJECTION: THE EXPERIENCE
## OF OTHERS' CONSCIOUSNESS

The question "what is it like to be you or me" posits a complex understanding of consciousness, for it seeks to understand involvement of one's self in the experience of his/her own being and in the experience of others. Its complexity is not limited to the systematic mechanism of the brain processes, but encompasses subjective experience that is quite not absolutely explainable in terms of the objective processes in science. If subjective experience is posited, one can instead rely on the phenomenalistic encounter of a person that is only accessible by others through articulation. Self-knowledge plays a significant locus in accessing one's consciousness as this serves as the grounds on how you are to see and comprehend other's behaviors and thoughts, as remarked by Jean Decety:

> ... one's own perspective is the default mode (and the prepotent one) by which we relate to others. We see others as similar to ourselves on a variety of dimensions and consequently assume that they act as we act, know what we know, and feel what we feel. This default mode is based on a shared representation mechanism between self and other.[21]

Our perspective on others has its reference to our knowledge of ourselves for we understand others on the basis of how we know ourselves, and this manner is what was mentioned as shared representations, that is, our thought processes, responses, sense-perceptions and such are parallel to that of others. Moreover, since the consciousness that is most accessible to us is our own, what we do by default is to look internally and associate

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[21] Decety, "Perspective Taking as the Royal Avenue to Empathy," 143.

our own attributes to others, thus, making our own perception and action as the primary base of our understanding of others. In the aforementioned instance of mountain climbing, you would be able to empathize with the novice's disappointment of not fulfilling the goal s/he has set for him/herself, by situating yourself in the position of being a novice and trying to feel the same feeling the novice had felt—frightened. You tend to look at the possibilities that triggered the fright, probably the extremity of the trail or lack of preparation or mistaken bravery, and the like, and will ask yourself  "If I am in the same situation, will I respond the same? Or different? Will I be frightened enough or not? Will I back out in case I became frightened? Or will I bravely continue the trail?" You will certainly have an answer to this but on the basis of how much you know yourself, not on how much you believe the novice is capable of doing so. As you measure your own capability to finish the trail without being frightened, you might exclaim "You should have been brave enough to continue the trail!"

This tendency of affirming ourselves in the disposition of others and being biased toward the self-perspective is a general condition of human cognition.[22] This most likely to happen if you have an experience similar with the other person, that you have encountered the same instance and surpassed it, and you have a strong belief that if an ordinary person like you can overcome something, others would definitely as well. Recollection can immediately take place and as we are bound to refer ourselves on to these, we project our own attributions to others. Furthermore, Decety asserted that:

> While the projection of self-attributes onto the other does not necessitate any significant store of knowledge about the other, empathic understanding requires the inclusion of other characteristics within the self.[23]

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[22] Decety, "Perspective Taking as the Royal Avenue to Empathy, " 146.
[23] *Ibid.*, 144.

This self-attribution to others only requires self-knowledge as we deemed reflect about different occurrences around us on the basis of the extent of our awareness and understanding of ourselves. The empathic understanding that compels one to be involved in other's disposition is displayed as the perceiver or the observer pretends to be in a certain state where the perceived or observed person is in. One might or might not realize that s/he is in the act of empathic understanding when tend to ask, "What would I be thinking if I were him/her?," What would I be doing if I am in his/her situation?," but these very questions infer to the belief or feelings of others by situating one's self with self-reflection. This act is what Glenn Reeder asserted as simulation:

> ... that perceivers mentally place themselves in the other person's shoes, attempting to simulate what the target thinks... imagining the perceptual input the other person experiences (what the other sees, hears, and touches). The perceiver then tries to experience (or match) the same thoughts and emotions that exist in the target. The results of this simulation are then attributed to the target.[24]

As expounded, this simulation refers to the overall process of perceiving things in the perspective of the person in target. Recognizing the similarities and differences between the experiences of the perceiver and the perceived target, the insights or realizations attained are projected to the person who is the subject of the process, presumed to what is called by Reeder as perspective taking:

> The perceiver tries to conceptualize the target's situation as it would appear to the target, seeking to appreciate the target's current state of mind. This process may require that the perceiver

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[24] Glenn D. Reeder, et.al., "Attributing Motives to Other People," in *Other Minds: How Human Bridge the Divide between Self and Others.* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2005), 106-123.

make some adjustment or accommodation to his or her own mental state before it is projected onto the target.[25]

To intentionally adopt the perspective of the other person requires a calibration of one's own perspective to embrace other's perspective and typically this is done in an empathic interaction with others. Empathic interactions with others are at times manifested in such instances where a person seeks for a friend's advice and comfort, or a psychotherapist adopts the mental world of a patient. If a friend or a patient mourns, you empathize with them through embracing the feeling of their lamentations, or if they are celebrating an accomplishment or a hard-earned success, you rejoice with them, or if they are experiencing angst, you feel their deep anguish. To empathize with them, you surrender your own feelings, your own thoughts, your own beliefs and you situate yourself in their very position, to apprehend their very experience, thus, you put yourself exactly as who they are. Empathy is not a simple resonance of affect between the self and the other, as Decety remarked, but this perspective taking creates an explicit representation of the other. This makes empathy as described here a representational capacity.[26]

Simulation, representation, and empathic interaction are significant to experience others, so is attribution of motives. This idea is deliberated by Glenn Reeder and David Trafimow and asserted that:

> Perceivers think of motives as mental states that describe the goals and aims of a person's intentional actions. By attributing such motives, perceivers gain some understanding of what a person means in conversation, how the person's actions fit together, and why the behavior occurred in the first place.[27]

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[25] Reeder, et.al., "Attributing Motives to Other People," 114.
[26] Decety, "Perspective Taking as the Royal Avenue to Empathy," 156.
[27] Reeder, et.al., "Attributing Motives to Other People," 106.

Inferences on the motives of others requires keen observation and logical sense to appropriately associate the behavior of a person, which is overt, with the thought processes and reasons that the person has for doing a certain action or for responding in a certain way, which is most likely covert. This might be a spontaneous grasp of impressions to make sense of behavior but this also focuses on the mental states of a person acting not in a random manner. Succession of actions is operated to attain a specific goal, fueled with motive, and relying on these actions are good predictors of trait attributions, and since mental states are also manifested through this, therefore, motive extrapolations is a mechanism to access others' phenomenological experiences.

Another way of attributing one's self to fathom the consciousness of others is through imitation, which coined by Marco Iacoboni as human mirror system, which in a sense is a bit technical in its approach:

> The human mirror neuron system and more generally neural mirroring mechanisms seem essential for imitative behavior, a cornerstone of social cognition. They also seem to play an important role in empathy, by making it possible to simulate what other people are feeling. This is probably why mirror neurons were selected by the evolutionary process. They allow us to connect deeply with other individuals. Mirror neurons solve gracefully the problem of other minds, which is fundamentally a problem of having access to the mind of other people. Mirror neurons seem to let us have that access in an effortless, automatic way.[28]

Iacoboni focuses mainly on the systematic mechanisms of the brain, pertaining to 'human mirror neuron system' that gives us the capability to

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[28] Marco Iacoboni, "The Human Mirror Neuron System and Its Role in Imitation and Empathy," in *The Primate Mind: Built to Connect with Other Minds*, ed. Frans De Waal and Pier Francesco Ferrari (USA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 32-47.

get involved with others' minds, to experience what they are experiencing, through mirror neurons. This 'process' of imitation is built-in in our cognitive system, since our brain is implanted with this mirror neurons, making our act of connecting with others and to the external world involuntary. Iacoboni then asserted that since this act of mirroring one's self to others is automatic, our sense of empathy towards others situating ourselves in others' disposition comes natural. Our mental states somewhat compels us to be interactive with others and puts us socially relevant through understanding others.

Empathic interaction, motive, imitation, simulation, and representation are simply few but most relevant in attributing one's own trait, states, and characteristics onto others. The means to access the subjective experience of others through self-projection requires knowledge of the self and the awareness that one's self is distinct from others. The essence of understanding the mind, particularly the consciousness of others—their thought processes and their manifestation through behavior and articulations—lies on the fact that we are relevant and interconnected with each other. Each individual, having their own attributions and awareness, operates as a whole, therefore, must be involved with the other individuals. Moreover, since the aforementioned attributions, such as shared representations between the self and the other, is inculcated in our bodily mechanism, it is therefore inevitable for any of us to operate separate from the others. As Fussell stated:

> We also explore the role of this mutual understanding in the collaborative process... The performance of collaborative physical tasks requires substantial coordination among participants' actions and talk.[29]

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[29] Fussell, et.al., "Visual Cues as Evidence of Other's Minds in Collaborative Physical Tasks," 92.

One's subjective experience and its relevance to others' subjective experience exhibits this collaborative process attaining one goal—to act holistically with the self and the others.

## THE PHENOMENON OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY

It is significant to give emphasis on the attainment of a collaborative process in the phenomenon of experiencing others' consciousness through self-projection. As the nature of one's consciousness to others' consciousness is substantially relational, the mechanism of experiencing others would primarily constitute intersubjective engagement which is demonstrated through joint attention, manifesting co-construction of meaning, thus, achieving a common knowledge between the two subjects. Arriving on a common knowledge would require joint field of reference which enables linguistic communication,[30] thus, there is lexical and rhetoric exchange to acquire objectivity of thought.

Deploying objective truth between two subjects considerably takes account of articulation in which the act of utterance and interpretation is catalyzed. In a dialogical endeavor, in which you assume the role of a listener striving to comprehend the state of mind of the interlocutor, you do not remain passive in your goal of interpreting the speaker's reports or narrative through affirming your own experiences, but you utter elucidations or response so as to confirm if the interlocutor's statements are correctly grasped. If otherwise, the interlocutor can suggest a response to your initial projection and understanding, aiming a better depiction of the narrated idea. This occurrence posits the intersubjective engagement of the interlocutor and the listener, where both of the subjects are interacting towards a common understanding, thus, co-constructing meaning and representations:

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[30] Naomi Eilan, *Joint Attention: Communication and Other Minds: Issues in Philosophy and Psychology* (Oxford: New York, 2005), 7.

> … distinct individuals (subjectivities or subjects) can negotiate between them a reality that suits them. In this reality, a person's own idiosyncratic experiences are reconciled with those of others through communication and negotiation—at least reconciled sufficiently enough to enable joint action. Thus, this process serves to create a common and shared reality that incorporates the distinct meanings present for each individual.[31]

Common and shared reality between the two subjects is devised through the articulation of thoughts, and interpretation of its sense by means of imagination. Both subjects are able to view each other's thoughts by its mere representations and sense, and the objective perception of it. The mechanism of interpreting reports and narratives, and constructing the meaning of the objects of focus, are a collaborative process, a joint endeavor, which catalyze meaning constructed mutually, that is, between the cognizing subjects. The arrival to a common knowledge between the cognizing subjects is certain as both meditate in their own thoughts while negotiate interpretations with each other, thus, both assuming the functional role of co-attenders in the periphery of each other's experience. This co-operative, mutual understanding on particular reference, asserts joint attention and mutual interpretation that is attained through reciprocal interaction—thus, should not be solitary but fluid and dynamic.

The fluid and dynamic state of interaction is made sense from the fact that the behavior of one person towards another is a function of how the first person experiences the other,[32] that is, one's mere understanding of the other is on the basis of how one self experiences the other through one's own interpretative lens.[33] As human beings basically are self-

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[31] Gordon Sammut, et al. *Understanding the Self and Others: Explorations in Intersubjectivity and Interobjectivity* (Routledge: New York, 2013), 4.

[32] Laing, Phillipson, and Lee, *Interpersonal Perception*, 9-10.

[33] *Ibid.*, 131.

interpreting animals,[34] making them profoundly interpretation-dependent, the act of perceiving others through interaction is the act of self-projection—in which the existence of that other person enters into the individuation of one's experience.[35] The relational standpoint of both subjects confirms their experience of each other, jointly constructing shared reality, both engaging, thus establishing intersubjectivity:

> In the essence, then, the idea of intersubjectivity postulates that, through social interaction, distinct individuals (subjectivities or subjects) can negotiate between them a reality that suits them. In this reality, a person's own idiosyncratic experiences are reconciled with those of others through communication and negotiation—at least reconciled sufficiently enough to enable joint action. Thus, this process serves to create a common and shared reality that incorporates the distinct meanings present for each individual.[36]

This experience of collaborative endeavor holds the two subjects, both being the interlocutors, to communicate and converge their two diverging perspectives,[37] which will eventually come to a distributed thinking, as both takes the shared thought and reality in an objective manner. Indeed, intersubjectivity is a social, cognitive, and affective phenomenon that of which exhibits sharing of experiential content among a plurality of subjects.[38]

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[34] Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1985), 45.

[35] Eilan, *Joint Attention*, 288.

[36] Sammut, et al. *Understanding the Self and Others*, 4.

[37] Barbara Fultner, "Intersubjectivity in the lifeworld: Meaning, cognition, and affect," in *Moving Ourselves, Moving Others: Motion and Emotion in Intersubjectivity, Consciousness and Language*, ed. Ad Foolen et. al. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2012), 201.

[38] Jordan Zlatev, et al., "Metaphor and subjective experience: A study of motion-emotion metaphors in English. Swedish, Bulgarian, and Thai," in *Moving Ourselves,*

## SUMMARY

As the account of consciousness is primarily defined in its Intentionality and non-Intentionality, we have arrived in an idea that there must be a significant distinction on its usage relevant to the context—the former implying consciousness' association to a certain thing either tangible or intangible, making one in full awareness directed towards something, and the latter implies a distinction between conscious and unconscious, a separation from awareness to non-awareness of the surroundings. This distinction substantiates contextualization of the term thus securing its appropriated meaning and sense. This is essential as consciousness, being aware of something, is basically in the direction of external and internal, which is, the environment and the introspection of a person. These involvements of consciousness have been extrapolated in this paper as both are interconnected with one another, particularly in the sense that a person operates within the environment and to suitably function, s/he has to relate to others who also operates in the same environment, through introspection.

Aside from the deliberation on the awareness to maneuver one's self in the environment, we have also explicated the notion of introspection in twofold approach: introspection to accumulate knowledge of one's self and introspection to access others' consciousness. The first approach provides the essence of us knowing our own thought processes, beliefs, state, behavioral responses—the overall subjective experience, giving us the capability to maneuver ourselves in accordance with the occurrences in our environment, as it is important to act on the basis of not just our ability, but on what is necessary. Moreover, self-knowledge establishes the fact that we are distinct from others who also have their own subjective experience. As remarked by Patricia and Paul Churchland mentioning the notion of qualia, there are profound differences in each person's sensations, creating

_Moving Others: Motion and Emotion in Intersubjectivity, Consciousness and Language_, ed. Ad Foolen et. al. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2012), 1.

a whole distinct phenomenological experience for each of us.[39] What one senses is distinctive from what others can sense, attesting to the fact that we perceive and comprehend things differently, subjectively. One's state, behavior, thought, belief, response, mechanism and character or temperament is certain to be divergent to others, thus, establishing the uniqueness of his/her constitution from others.

This clear distinction between the self and the others is important as this signifies the possibility of the notions of representation, simulation, imitation, empathic interaction, and all the opportunities of self-attribution to others. All these modes, aside from articulation of mental states, pave way to access other's consciousness. As what has been mentioned, these modes rely on our own impression of others, and grasp and comprehend what we perceive from them through assessing our own selves, and attribute our nature and character to them. Shared representation of the self and the other is almost significantly parallel to that of simulation, as both modes require self-knowledge and self-assessment and use these to extrapolate others' behavior and states. We recollect our own experience and relate to others' experience and deduce information and insights through these. We add and subtract things from our recollection and experience, thus calibration, to better situate ourselves in the disposition of others. Imitation, in this instance, could begin as we mirror ourselves exactly to others. Since experience is subjective, therefore impossible to be perfectly same, and the manner of acquisition and internalization of experiences are different from one person to another, what we can do is adjust ourselves embrace others. This could also pave way for empathic interaction in which the emotions and feelings of others are comprised in accessing the consciousness of others, not simply overt behavior and direct articulation of thoughts. We recollect our past feelings or emotions, if we happen to be in the same instance as the others before

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[39] Blackmore, *Conversations on Consciousness*, 52.

or if we happen to have an almost similar sensation or sentiment, to position ourselves where others are in.

All the modes of accessing others' consciousness discussed are propositions limited to subjectivity of experience, which is posed as the hard problem in understanding the human mind. It is more than the explanation of firing of neurons in the brain, how certain regions of the brain operates in processing sense-data and inputs of information, both of which are considered as the easy problem. Both differs from their approaches but one thing is certain—that consciousness is a fundamental feature of the world, and that even though we have a very limited manner of characterizing consciousness, that is, physical processes of the brain and the phenomenological experience of a person, this is what will leave us distinct from machines with inscribed behavior and computational procedures.[40] But then, insights relevant to the machine consciousness and its parallelism and distinction to the consciousness of humans is a complete different discussion.

This paper settles on the actuality that the default way of accessing other's consciousness is accessing our own consciousness. Our own knowledge of ourselves gives us a way of looking out at the world from where we are, and our very own characteristics and individuality is what we reflect towards others, these are what we think they are. Probably that is the limit of our understanding of others, aside from being trusting on the articulation of mental states, we rely on the impression we perceive and subject it to our own interpretation. We cannot simply say that our interpretation and verification of the impression we are perceiving is invalid or incorrect for we weigh in things using of human reason, unless one is physiologically incapable of doing so. So far that we are able to reason and substantiate it using the impressions and observations, our understanding is considerable. Therefore, projecting ourselves, attributing

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[40] Blackmore, *Conversations on* Consciousness, 42.

our very essentiality, onto others thus far provide us experience of others' consciousness.

The utmost point we can further with the claim of this paper is the intersubjective engagement of two cognizing subjects—the one who self-projects and the one whose consciousness is the object of self-projection. This engagement displays reciprocal interactions which postulates joint construction of meaning, interpretation and representation. This collaborative endeavor between the two interactive subjects might as well display integrated thinking, thus, both subjects are co-constructor of co-ordinated processes of each other's thinking and experiences.

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