

## Introduction

Within the last thirty years the study of consciousness has changed radically. Most researchers in the fields of psychology, physiology, and general systems studies used to believe that the mystery of consciousness would be revealed through better understanding of brain structure. Today this belief is no longer generally held (Myin, 2010). John Eccles (1979) was among the first physiologists to publicly take this position. After many years of research, he concluded that the human brain is connected with some hidden entity that determines whether neurons are on or off. Eccles suggested that this unobservable essence is consciousness.

Attitudes have changed within philosophy as well. David Chalmers (1996) introduced the metaphor of light to the problem of consciousness. Many suppose that consciousness is the result of a very complicated physical process in the brain. Why then, if we liken consciousness to light, should this process not occur in darkness? Where does the light come from? Why do we feel? Chalmers distinguished between easy problems and the “difficult problem.” Finding functional and structural links between elements in our mental experience is an easy problem. The difficult problem is this: How do we understand and explain mental experience itself?

In this book I attempt to outline an approach toward solving the *difficult* problem. To do so, I will use Plato’s ontology, which differs notably from today’s natural-science ontology. In Plato’s scheme, the phenomenon of consciousness is an essential component of everything that exists. A quantity of empirical evidence can be presented in favor of this ontology.

My first paper on this topic was published in 1965 (reprinted

in this book as Appendix II). I suggested there that the process of self-organization is connected with an element-designer providing the system with structure and playing the role of the reflexion within the system, i.e., acting as its consciousness (Lefebvre, 1965).

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