11 Crossing the edge: Summary

The components of EXON, such as MOD, MTD, IPD, BONP, BOP, BOP/DM and RD were operationalized and studied in psychological experiments. The results showed that the components appear at different times in the course of individual development and at different stages of the historical development of consciousness. The studies suggest that knowledge about psychological structure of EXON can be used not only for clarifying the work of our mind but also for practical purposes of mind control. Psychotherapists and psychiatrists can employ components of EXON, such as the MOD and the ERD, in order to explain and treat psychiatric conditions, such as OCD and thought-action fusion. Politicians, magicians and commercial advertisers use the EXON properties to artificially manipulate people's beliefs, with the aim of extracting social and financial benefits, whereas ordinary people can use this knowledge in order to resist such manipulations. Educationalists can use knowledge of EXON in order to improve children's creative thinking and cognitive functioning.

11.1 Facing the void

We are confidently walking the solid path of knowledge, but this path suddenly ends. Having approached the edge, we cautiously and fearfully peep down into the precipice that opened beneath our feet. But something is pushing us from behind. Gradually, we realize that leaving the path and stepping into the void ahead is unavoidable. The only option for us is to grow wings and fly. Faith is our wings.

We began this book by asking the questions: What does it mean to exist? If we are in the state of general anaesthetics, do we exist or don’t we? Does the world exist or it vanishes? Usually we say yes, because, after recovering a conscious state of mind we can usually remember being ourselves before losing consciousness and see the world as it had been before. But what happens when we die? Certainly, logically speaking, our mind ceases to exist, taking all the memories with it. Still, we can think about the universe before our mind emerged and after it disappeared. But how can we do this, without us being there? Obviously we can’t, which means we are still there, at least in our imagination. This brings us to a rather controversial conclusion that our mind can never cease to exist as long as the universe exists, and the other way round. In other words, talking about before and after our own existence is a game of sorts. The only thing we can sensibly talk about is existence within the scope of our working mind. Paradoxically, when in the primordial earth the first form of life emerged, we must already be there, with our full consciousness. The trick is that we have to be in two points of time simultaneously: Now, at the moment when we are talking of the Earth before life, and (in our imagination) in the time we are talking about, billions of years ago. But the situation looks paradoxical only if we forget that it is impossible to talk about existence without the opposition between object and subject. In philosophy, this opposition is called ‘thought and being identity’.
“But what about things that have no consciousness? – a reader might ask. – Sure, most things in the world are inanimate yet they do exist, don’t they?” Yes, they do, but their existential status is different from that of the person who is aware of his or her existence. As argued in Chapter 2, there are two ways the thing X could exist: Authentic and derivative. Authentic existence is when an entity is aware of itself (in this case we say the X exists for itself), and derivative is when somebody else is aware of X (in this case X exists for other conscious creatures). The authentic existence of my Self has the highest existential status, and derivative is spread along the scale between strong, incomplete and weak existential statuses (see Table 2.2). Bearing this in mind, we can talk about history before our conscious existence and even before the emergence of life without mentioning that we are tacitly present there. Whenever I talk about the history of my family, nation, humankind and life, or about people and the world after my death, I extend my mind back and forth beyond my personal existence, thus inflating existence into the past and the future.

11.2 Existence, faith and psychology

To summarize, from the perspective of EXON theory, existence is a fundamentally psychological concept. This concept cannot be logically defined, since any logical definition will have to link existence with other and more general concepts, thus plunging the definition into a logical circle. For example, asking the question whether existence is a property of an individual and “are there individuals that lack it?” [1] relates existence to such concepts as ‘individuals’ and ‘property’, which, in order to be spoken about, have to already exist. Since it is impossible to avoid the circle, we have to accept that existence is a primary intuition of being my own Self and having a conscious experience: Perceiving something or thinking about something. As Rene Descartes famously maintained, this primary conscious experience is impossible to define; all that existence needs is a name. This means that existence is something that my own Self puts into things-in-themselves. Existence can only be opposed to Nothing, which is a false opposition, since Nothing as an opposition to existence also exists [2]. As a consequence of this, psychologically we can sensibly talk only about degrees of existence, with Nothing having the smallest possible degree on EXON’s cognitive dimension.

A special form of inflating things with existence is faith. Unlike objects of perception and knowledge, which in order to be experienced require things-in-themselves, faith comes from within our Self. Although faith too needs an object to be pumped with existence, this object doesn’t have to have a link to things-in-themselves and can be produced by the imagination. The aim of this book was to summarize studies that examined psychological structure of this fundamental process - investing things with existence through faith. Throughout this book, we called this process Existentialization (EXON).

While being fundamental, EXON nevertheless can be psychologically described. Chapter by chapter, we distinguished and analyzed levels (basic versus high), dimensions (cognitive versus emotional) and components of EXON, such as MOD, MTD, IPD, BOP, BONP, BOP/DM and RD (Figure 8.1). We argued that although these components to some extent overlap with each other, they nevertheless are different facets of EXON, which can be operationalized and studied empirically. The results of these studies showed that the components appear at different times in the course of individual development. The studies also gave the ground to assume, that these components emerged at different stages of the historical development of consciousness. The reviewed experiments revealed how EXON invests with existence perceived and imagined entities, entities that are or are not personally significant, possible and impossible entities. We described and analysed entities with the highest (Self, God) and the lowest (impossible entities) existential statuses, and
how EXON, through faith, can upgrade and downgrade the entities’ existential statuses. Finally, the studies suggest that knowledge about psychological structure of EXON can be used not only for the explanation of how our mind works but also for the purposes of control over perception, thinking and memory.

11.3 Who might benefit from this knowledge

Philosophers and psychologists are the first who come to mind. Philosophers, because their most abstract notions, when traced to their sources, bump into a simple psychological question – do I exist? [3]. And psychologists, because they might help to answer this question [4]. Natural scientists need this knowledge as well, because, from time to time, they stumble upon phenomena whose existence is questionable, such as alternative universes, quantum entanglement and dark matter [5]. And of course, knowledge about EXON is needed by educationalists as they have to explain to students the basic differences between true and false, natural and the supernatural, and these differences are rooted in the notion of existence [6]. It would also be unfair to exclude artists from the list: After all, what is more fragile and culturally relative than our sense of beauty, and the judgement of whether this particular piece of art is or isn’t beautiful hangs on the mechanisms of EXON. Art is a major source of generating impossible images, which can be employed as EXON tools for amplification of creative thinking, perception and memory [7]. Psychotherapists can employ components of EXON, such as the IPD and the RD, in order to explain and treat psychological problems. Psychiatrists, when making a judgement of whether a patient is healthy or displays symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder, thought action fusion or hallucinatory behaviour, might need knowledge of how the MOD and the RD work. Specialists in law enforcement and juridical system might use knowledge about the RD mechanism in order to better understand phenomena such as suicidal terrorism and spontaneous killing spree.

Of particular interest knowledge about EXON can be to those who professionally deal with the domain of faith: priests, theologians and specialists on the history of religions. Professionals in that domain are looking into the heart of the most delicate, deeply personal and rationally unexplainable process: The birth of the idea of the invisible entity – god – in the person’s mind, which the person, using nothing more than the recourses of his or her own mind, upgrades to the status of a really existing entity.

Last, but not least, the knowledge of EXON might benefit professionals who specialize in manipulation with human minds, as well as those whose aim is to prevent such manipulations. Magicians make their living by entertaining people through faking existence. Coaches and psychotherapists aim at helping people to change and upgrade their images and beliefs about themselves. Political leaders, commercial advertisers, practicing witches and founders of controversial religious cults pursue more practical objectives: To make people embrace goals that are suggested to them as goals of their own. Whereas some of such manipulations may benefit both sides, others may force people to accept goals that go against their best interests. People use EXON in order to establish and correct interpersonal and international relations through love rituals, politeness and diplomacy.

Finally, every person might be interested in learning more about psychological mechanisms of how his or her mind and beliefs work.

References


