Anthony Freeman

Editorial Preface

I am indebted to Uziel Awret for suggesting that Diego Velasquez’s *Las Meninas* would make an agreeable focus for a special issue of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* and for providing the lead paper as a stimulus to other authors to join this small symposium.

I am also pleased to acknowledge his editorial assistance in various ways including help with the list of invited contributors. For instance he was the one to see the relevance to this project of Rodolfo Llinás’s years of research isolating the neurological mechanisms that differentiate those brain responses that are non-specific, contextual and ecological, from those that are highly specific and (according to Llinás) associated with the conscious mental state.

Llinás distinguishes between a recruitory (from recruitment) non-specific state and an augmentory (from augmentation) highly specific state that he associates with sculpting where inhibitory mechanisms fine tune and ‘bring into focus’ the firing pattern that typifies the thalamo-cortical system. This work is crucial to future attempts to understand concepts like fringe consciousness, pre-reflective mental states, allegory, and other mental states that are important for understanding the way in which interacting with an object of art affects us.

This collection of essays explores the phenomenological, neurological and theoretical nature of these mental states as we interact with art in general and *Las Meninas* in particular.

Contributors came up with a startling variety of spellings of both the painting and the artist. For consistency and simplicity I have standardized the spellings as in the previous paragraph, except where directly quoting other books or articles, where their original spellings have been retained.