

Anthony Freeman

## *Editorial Preface*

Philosophers play a crucial role in consciousness research, but many non-philosophers have difficulty in appreciating their contribution. Part of the reason is a feeling of inadequacy when it comes to assessing the philosophical arguments that one reads. We know that philosophers hold different views and argue to different conclusions, but any one of them, read in isolation, can often appear unassailable to the outsider.

In this collection, the format of target article, commentary and reply, seeks to overcome this problem. It allows the non-specialist to eavesdrop on some first-rate philosophers engaging at the highest level, and this helps to open up the subject for us all. For instance, it is reassuring when one of these writers quotes another and then says quite simply, 'That is not right.' Or another confesses that, while he does not doubt a certain paper is a good one, 'I have found it hard to get a hold of all of it.' Such disagreements and admissions allow every reader to question assertions they find dubious, to admit they cannot follow a every argument, and in this way to become active participants in the discussion and debate.

As editor of the collection I am grateful to Professor Honderich, for supplying what proved to be a stimulating and provocative summary of his theory of consciousness as existence, and to his many commentators for their challenging critiques. Originally planned mainly as an educational exercise for non-philosophers, this project has resulted in a substantial and important philosophical discussion in its own right.

Anyone seriously involved in the study of consciousness, from whatever background or discipline, will benefit from a close reading of these contributions. Undergraduates are always urged to go direct to great thinkers' own writings and not to rely on text-book summaries. In a similar way I believe that everyone will benefit from studying these direct encounters between a group of today's leading philosophers of mind and of consciousness.