

Self-Feeling: Conclusion



This part presented the core claims of the account of self-feeling defended in this book. This was achieved by synthesizing the findings from Parts I and II of this book. Self-feeling is understood as pre-reflective, pre-propositional, bodily feeling that shapes our space of possibilities. It is the affective disclosure of individual existence. In this way, several problems in current debates can be addressed. Self-feeling escapes the problems of infinite regress and vicious circularity that reflective theories struggle with. It overcomes the “ex negativo” challenge that current pre-reflective accounts face. Moreover, it complements our understanding of fundamental human affectivity by clarifying its tight relation to self-consciousness. In addition, self-feeling can be understood as affective disclosure and manifestation of the formal background structure of our being in this world, that is the “care-structure”, and thus avoids the problem of unity. This makes self-feeling egological in a new, unorthodox sense. The last chapter of this part discussed several potential criteria to evaluate the appropriateness of existential and self-feelings. We learned that all examined criteria are fallible so there is no rock-bottom truth available in this question. However, taken together as a portfolio of criteria, they can provide some guidance. Particularly, the following criteria for existential and self-feelings were found: Openness to alternatives, openness to other people as people, stability over time, biological function, social fitness, and consistency. Building on all this, we are now in the position to explore the relationship of self-feeling to higher levels of more elaborate thoughts about ourselves. This is going to happen in Part IV of this book.