Quantum Perception and the Recognition of Plant Consciousness

A tree falls in the forest. If no one is there to hear it, does it still make a sound?

Many reductionist scientists, and most open-minded scientists, will say yes, due to the propagation of sound waves. Some quantum researchers may argue that it does not, as the tree and forest do not really exist as such, unless it is observed to exist by conscious beings, like us, that may directly influence the reality around us.

Perhaps both views are off, and when the tree falls it makes sound and produces resonances throughout the forest, and beyond. Not because a human is observing the event, or even due to the propagation of sound waves, but rather due to the cognizance and awareness of the abundant other lifeforms already in the forest that share that consensual reality. The trees themselves are there to observe and support the reality of the event, as well as the microbes in the ground that it shakes, the larger creatures that make their homes there, ad infinitum through to the cosmos as a whole down to the very vibrational “strings” that make up all reality.

I would argue that, even though we do not fully recognize it ourselves as of yet, that all things have an interconnectedness, and cognizance of their own existence, and thus a direct influence and interaction with the consensual reality of the cosmos at large. They know they are alive and participating in observing the universe.
So yes, the tree does make a sound and may even “sound” different to all the observers present. What may set humans apart is our level of awareness, or, perhaps, how we “use” that awareness. We have the ability to alter reality on subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle levels. Humans and other, yet undiscovered, higher intelligences are graced with the ability to use our perception of reality to change it in ways that animals cannot. A beaver can chew a tree down with his teeth, but does not possess the higher functional tools to take it down with a belief system, or to design an electrically powered chainsaw of artificial construction. The beaver accepts its perception of its current paradigm, of the surrounding reality, and his/her place in it.

An intriguing bit of science that was recently published concluded that cells in a plant leaf have rudimentary optical abilities. This would seem obvious, that trees would know when to turn on the factories of photosynthesis only when it makes sense to do so, like when the sun comes up in the morning. Likewise, to save energy by turning them off when the sun retreats for the night. But I would take this finding just a bit further, extrapolating that millions of cells, on thousands of leaves, are not unlike the compound eyes of insects, or the individual photo sites on the silicon sensor in your digital camera works. That the tree “sees” the world around it, visually.

The properties of this sight may not be in a manner that we think of as sight, and their optical perceptions of the immediate surroundings could be very different, I would suspect more akin to a holographic perception of globular, 3D proportions. Taking into account the environmental needs of a tree, the long life and possible differences in the perception of the passage of time that long life may affect, and the lack of a readily identifiable “brain”, it is a difficult theory to prove. But since we do know that plant life is aware of their environment, that they can react to that environment, can even send and receive messages to and from other plants, the possibility is not unreasonable.

Many animals have their nervous system, and often, small parts of “brain”, distributed throughout their bodies (even humans have a brain-like set of neurons in our hearts that communicates with the brain and body as a whole, and perhaps beyond), so plants may have a distributed neural/nervous system throughout their bodies and be capable of much more cognizance than we have been prepared to grant them. Plants are most likely have consciousness as well, though, in our current state of materialistic, reductionist science we would be hard pressed to identify it, let alone understand it.

A recent personal experience with psilocybin mushrooms has actually reinforced these conclusions for me. Having ingested mushrooms as a sacrament in a shamanic plant teacher ceremony, and having requested the wisdom of the mushroom/plant teacher, I experienced a unique and very enlightening “conversation” with the surrounding vegetation, two very distinct living mountains, the spirit of the mushroom, and with Gaia Herself. The gist of the conversation was the true verification of this theory.

I realized that one of the reasons it is difficult to affect change within this reality on a conscious level is that much of the glue that holds it all in place (including the anthropomorphic state of
human life) is the collective perception of all life within the confines of our perceived reality, not just within the human experience. This also reinforced my belief that life can come in many forms, many of which are not necessarily accepted by the reductionist systems of belief such as our current sciences, religions, and societies adhere to. Nor would these life forms be readily apparent to humans using our "usual" means of sensory perceptions.

To claim that a mountain has life and is perceptually aware is not accepted in our world view, even though such beliefs have been the norm in ancient, spiritually based societies.

I believe that when we ingest entheogenic substances, we are entering the world of plant perceptions. That these plants are sharing their abilities with us, that is what the plant teachers/spirits are there for. They want us to see the world the way they do by helping us to open our available sources of perception and gain a better understanding of the reality that binds us to the cosmos. All this information comes rushing in and many find it difficult to assimilate the flood, but I have found that if you accept the spirit's intention, it will help you, and guide you through the process of mediating the overwhelming power of new senses and perceptions. All of sudden you feel your 3D space with your whole body, the way a tree senses it's surroundings. You feel the vibrational frequencies of all the beings in your surroundings and can selectively tune in to each, once again limiting the overload. And, if you let your self, your “ego” if you will, accept it, the plant spirit itself will come to you, as in my experience, as a quasi-human entity – for it knows anything else maybe a bit too much for you to handle – the plant teacher wants you to understand. The plant teacher may even show you the path to higher levels of reality, the kind of places that DMT will reveal to you (especially in light of the many plant species that possess forms of DMT in their biological chemistry, which I do not think is an accident by any means, and may very well be the spark of their own ability to perceive their world).

When you explore the non-reductionist, fluid world of alternative experiences and thought, the world of the shaman and of nature, if you will, you do not need numbers and academic degrees to help you understand the underlying processes of our cosmos and pervasive realities.