

Phenomenality and Self-Consciousness

Charles Siewert

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1. Introduction

Does consciousness essentially include *self*-consciousness? How you answer may determine your basic view of consciousness and its relation to intentionality. For example, if you say yes, you may think this paves the way to accounting for consciousness in terms of a self-directed, inward-pointing intentionality: consciousness not only includes but is *exhausted* by a kind of self-consciousness—that is, a way in which a mind refers to or represents itself. On the other hand, you may object that consciousness—at least in the *phenomenal* sense—either does not necessarily involve self-consciousness at all, or else not in a way that licenses us to absorb consciousness into self-representation; if anything, self-consciousness is to be understood as a form of phenomenal consciousness. These matters need more spelling out. But it’s fairly clear that how we deal with them will significantly shape our approach to the subject of this volume. Other broad issues are at stake as well, such as: how to conceive of the basis of self-knowledge; and in what sense, if any, one is conscious of or experiences one’s “self.”

However simple its wording, my opening question cannot be so simply approached; the variety and obscurity of the notions it invokes breed numerous complications. Those shouldn’t put us off though—especially if (as I think) their investigation provides much of the topic’s fascination. Here I will concentrate on a portion of the issues I think we should deal with first, given the current state of discussion. To get started, I need to make explicit a few basic points about how the word ‘conscious’ will be used.

Some *states of mind*¹ are said to be conscious in the aforementioned *phenomenal* sense: they are “phenomenal”; they have “phenomenality.” (I will explain how I interpret this notion momentarily.) We may also say a *person* is conscious of something. For instance, you are sometimes *conscious of* a noise or a glance. And you are at least sometimes conscious of *your own states of mind*. So, for example, you may be conscious of *thinking about* something, or of *seeing* something, or of *feeling* somehow.

¹ It can be doubted (and is doubted, by Benj Hellie) that “conscious state” is the appropriate notion here—we shouldn’t think that “states” (as opposed to activities), are what’s properly regarded as phenomenally conscious. But I would like to use the notion of “state” as broadly as possible here to include any particular instance of a repeatable feature—not so as to contrast it with the category “activity.”

This last remark we might take to imply that you may be somehow “representing your own state of mind” in the sense in which, for example, thinking about something is said to involve representing it. And we may count this sort of self-representation as a form of self-consciousness. *But must one be*—in some self-representational sense—*conscious of one’s every phenomenal state of mind?* This question provides our primary theme. However, we should recognize straight off that this isn’t the only way to wonder whether consciousness is bound to self-consciousness. For it’s not clear that *all* self-consciousness involves the *representation of one’s own mind*. I may be conscious of *my hands*, and of how they are situated, and this may be a kind of self-consciousness—a “consciousness of self.” And maybe some marginal or implicit consciousness of my own body or of my location is essential to my perceptual consciousness of the environment. But it’s hardly obvious that this involves a representation of my own mental state. In my final section I will say a little about perceptual self-consciousness. In most of what follows, however, I will be asking specifically about how phenomenality relates to having a mind that represents itself.

According to “higher-order” theories of consciousness, the relationship is very tight indeed: phenomenality is to be explained as a species of the mind’s self-representation. Prominent defenders of such views include Carruthers (2000, 2004, 2007), Lycan (2004), and Rosenthal (2002). As I use the terminology, it is enough for a particular state of mind of kind R to be a “higher-order representation,” if this instance of R represents one to have some representation of a *distinct kind* R*. On this understanding, represented and representing states could be identical; conscious states of mind could be “higher-order” just by representing *themselves*. (This puts my use of ‘higher-order’ at odds with that of some, such as Kriegel (2009), but I don’t think this affects the substance of the discussion.)

At least some higher-order accounts of consciousness seem to lead to a vicious *infinite regress* of self-consciousness. To give the gist of the concern: such theories appear to say all consciousness must be self-conscious. But if that’s so, then doesn’t that include any such self-consciousness—mustn’t one be conscious of it as well? And are we then to say one is also conscious of the consciousness of self-consciousness, and so on, without end? This looks like an unhappy result. Some philosophers think such regress-based objections to higher-order theories are quickly dispatched. When Lycan, for example, argues for his “higher-order perception” theory, he very briefly replies to the regress concern as one of a pair of “bad and ignorant” objections before going on to those he regards as more serious (Lycan (2004: 95)). But I share with Kriegel the belief that regress problems *are* serious, and not so easily batted away. Unlike Kriegel, however, I think (and will argue here) that a proper response to them significantly undercuts support for the general idea—integral to many contemporary theories of consciousness—that phenomenality essentially involves the mind’s self-representation. I take my criticism then to bolster the

view that no intentionality distinctive of self-consciousness explains phenomenal consciousness, and that we should instead understand certain forms of self-consciousness as forms of phenomenality.

2. Phenomenal Consciousness

What is meant by 'phenomenal consciousness'? The notion is sometimes introduced along these lines: states conscious in the phenomenal sense are those there is "something it's like for one" to be in. Also: phenomenality (or a certain form of it) is said to be what's conspicuously and revealingly missing in the condition known as blindsight. I myself endorse both points of entry into the topic. But we must proceed with caution. For we may construe these introductory remarks in ways that keep us from getting the initial neutrality we need in order to critically examine the idea that a mind's self-representation is essential to (or even constitutive of) its phenomenality. In other words, we may from the start conceive of the topic in ways that make the truth of this thesis seem a foregone conclusion. However, we can and should clarify what may legitimately be meant by 'phenomenally conscious' without building in such bias. In this section I will first explain how to do this in connection with 'something it's like' talk, and then come back to the notion of blindsight.

Ned Block puts the relevant idea like this: "what makes a state phenomenally conscious is that there is something it's like to be in it" (Block (2002: 206). I would add: "something it's like *for the one who is in it.*" But I think we should not stop with this sort of formulation; by itself it's too unclear and prone to divergent interpretations to give us an adequate starting place. Considering a difficulty to which Block's principle gives rise will, I think, help us to explain the notion of phenomenality a bit more clearly, in a relatively unbiased way, via talk of "what something is like for someone."

Recall what Nagel (1974) says in his influential invocation of "something it's like" talk to train our attention on the relevant understanding of consciousness. He suggests that coming to know what it's like to be a bat would require "adopting a bat's point of view"—if only in imagination. We can endorse this link between *knowing what it's like* and *adopting a point of view*, while taking the focus away from wondering what it's like *to be an alien sort of creature*. Suppose, for example, that I tell you that I ate durian fruit for dessert. You may intelligibly respond, "I've never eaten durian—I *wonder what it's like.*" The curiosity you would express is not out of place. There was indeed something it was like for me to eat a durian—and seemingly in a sense relevant here. For there seems to be "something that it's like" to be in a type of state, provided that it is one about which it is suitable to express a *subjective curiosity*, or claim a *subjective knowledge*—one that can be satisfied or possessed only by occupying (or being able imaginatively to occupy) the position of a subject of that state. Since there is something that answers to such curiosity about durian eating,

there is something that it's like to eat a durian. However—and this is the difficulty—we may reasonably think that eating durian is not itself a phenomenally conscious state in the sense in which tasting and smelling durian are. And yet, according to Block's dictum, the fact that there's something it's like to eat durian should make it a phenomenally conscious state. Similar remarks would apply if we consider *weighing three hundred pounds* or *having a conjoined twin*. These can be fit targets of subjective curiosity—we can sensibly wonder what it's like to have these features. But are instances of these features themselves phenomenally conscious states? It would not be good to start out assuming so. For one thing it might seem counterintuitive to count *eating a durian* (and *weighing three hundred pounds*, etc.) among conscious states.

To this one might respond that the assumption is problematic only if it tells us that *all* such states are conscious. Maybe it's just fine to say, for instance, that in *some* cases eating is a *conscious activity* (and weighing 300 lbs. a conscious state)—those cases where there *is* something it's like for the eater (for the heavy person, etc). Block's principle should be taken to concern only what makes something a *token* or *instance* of phenomenal consciousness. It does *not* imply that every type of state that it says has conscious instances (since there's something it's like to be in some instance of that type), has *only* conscious instances. It does not assume that instances of these kinds are *invariably* conscious states, and thus suitable targets of subjective curiosity, *regardless of what other features accompany them*. Maybe, for instance, when *ants* are eating durian *their* eating is not conscious, for there is just nothing there that would answer to a subjective curiosity about what that eating is like for them. And (panpsychism aside) it seems out of place to wonder what it's like to weigh three hundred pounds *for a bag of rocks*.

Maybe it's fine in the end to count eating (and so on) as (sometimes, contingently) conscious states in some sense. But even so, I don't think this would give us a good start on explaining what it means to be in a conscious state. For it's not clear whether this is the same or different sense as that in which tasting, smelling and feeling are conscious—and if they are different senses, what the relationship is. And it leaves the question: since types such as eating *x* or weighing *n* pounds don't make their instances conscious on the occasions when they are, what distinguishes the types that *do*? What sort of features do make it the case that there is something it's like for one to be in some state? It seems we still need a better grasp of these—what I'll call "*phenomenal features*"—if we're to understand what makes a state a phenomenally conscious one.

What we have to work with so far is the idea that, where some features are concerned, there is something it's like for one to have them only *non-essentially*, due to the accidental presence of *other*, detachable features. In the durian eating case, those other features—distinct from eating durian—are plausibly some already mentioned: its *tasting* and *smelling* somehow to the

durian eaters, and its *feeling* somehow in their mouths. Durian eating could occur without these, and if it *did* there would be nothing it was like for the eater. Moreover, even if it could *not* occur unexperienced, we may still want to say there is only *derivatively* something it's like to eat durian. That will be the case if there is some feature or features which could be had without eating durian—e.g., the aforementioned taste, smell and touch appearances—such that you could know what it's like for someone to eat durian, just in case you knew what it was like to have these other features (and some further conditions held which didn't consist in having “what it's like” knowledge). Suppose, for example, you ate *fake* durian that tasted, smelled, felt, etc., just the way real durian does in the eating of it. Then you could know what it's like to eat durian by knowing what it was like to have the taste and other experience you could get from eating the fake stuff, and knowing (because you've been reliably informed) that real durian also would taste (etc.) the same way to you. And only by having (or by being able to imagine having) the sorts of experiences that could be had even with fake durian could one know what it's like to eat real durian. If that is the case, there is only *derivatively* something it's like for one to eat durian. And this would still be so, even if there were *essentially* something it was like.

But now this leads us to ask: what about *these* features—features of something's tasting, smelling, and feeling somehow to you? Is there also only non-essentially or derivatively something it's like for one to have *them*? We can interpret talk of such features so that the answer is no. We might reasonably think: something's tasting somehow to you does not *need* to have *added* to it some further feature which—were it taken away—would leave such tasting no longer suitable for one to claim or desire knowledge of what it's like for the taster. Nor is there some feature you could have in the *absence* of such tasting, such that you know what it's like for durian to taste to you as it does, just in case you know what it is like to have that feature to which tasting was unnecessary. Thus we can interpret 'taste' (and other appearance-talk—'looks,' 'feels,' etc.) in such a way that there is essentially and non-derivatively something it's like for one to be “appeared to” in a certain manner. But the crucial point (and the key to the initial conception of consciousness we require) is this: *to have a feature satisfying this description is to have a “phenomenal feature,” and any instance of such a feature is a phenomenally conscious state.*

Can we say anything further about this “what it's like” locution I've been relying on? We can. Briefly put: there is *something it's like for one* to have a given feature just when that feature is suited for one to claim or desire a knowledge of *what feature it is*, which requires one either *have it oneself*, or *be able to imagine having it* (hence this is a “subjective” knowledge), but which does *not* require one be able to give a theoretically satisfying account of what constitutes the possession of this feature (hence this is a “non-theoretical” knowledge). Thus on the conception of phenomenality I advocate, phenomenally conscious states are instances of phenomenal features, that is to say: *features essentially and non-derivatively suited for one to claim or want a subjective, non-*

theoretical knowledge of what features they are. And I would add: whenever such features *differ phenomenally* (that is, whenever their instances differ in *phenomenal character*, whenever *what it's like for one to have them* differs), then *what the difference is* also is thus suitable for subjective non-theoretical knowledge. Elsewhere (Siewert 2011) I discuss in more detail this conception of phenomenality. Here I hope to have said enough to offer an interpretation of “what it's like” as a way into phenomenal consciousness that does not immediately impose the notion that phenomenally conscious states must always somehow involve the mind's self-representation.

It is worth making this explicit because there are ways of construing “what it's like” talk that do commit us in this regard. For example, you may think, with Peter Carruthers (2000, 2004), that this locution is to be seen in the light of a distinction between “what *the world* is like” for you (determined by how it appears to you) and “what *your experience* is like for you” (which constitutes its phenomenal character)—where you then go on to take the latter to be determined by *how your experience is “presented” to you*, in some sense like that in which the world *appears* to you. In this way higher-order representation may be built into the construal “what it's like” talk.

But there is an alternative. My understanding of “what it's like” allows us to say there is essentially and non-derivatively something it's like for you whenever a color looks to you as it does. And meeting that condition would be enough to make its looking to you just as it does a phenomenal feature. On my view, “what the experience is like for you” (its phenomenal character) is none other than the color's looking to you just the way that it does. For: “what the experience is like” is simply the manner of appearance that constitutes the experience. And to say this is an appearance “*for you*” is to say that something appears in this very way *to you*. In other words, what the experience is like for you is what manner of appearance this is to you. This does not tell us that the phenomenal character is determined by something higher-order, distinct from and parallel to first-order appearances. We may want to add that what it's like for you to have an experience consists in “how you *experience* it.” But again, it's not obvious that needs to be interpreted in higher-order terms, any more than does speaking of *how a feeling of pain feels*—where the feeling does not thereby *appear as an object distinct from a manner of appearance*. The feeling felt and the manner of feeling it simply coincide. Just so: how you experience the appearance of a color, and precisely how the color appears to you, may simply be identical.

I'm not claiming my interpretation of “what it's like” talk shows that the mind's self-representation is *not* built into phenomenality. For all I've said, that's still possible: nothing thus far rules out the idea that buried within all phenomenal vision is a representation of a visual representation. The point is just to offer a legitimate interpretation of “what it's like” talk that does not *assume that this is the case*. You may want to say that *durian's tasting as it does to someone* is essentially and non-derivatively an apt target of subjective curiosity only if it

entails that the taster internally represents the experience by being aware of it. All I'm saying is that we can grasp an interpretation of 'tastes' that makes it phenomenal by the "something it's like" standard, while leaving *that* issue undecided.

Now let's turn to what I mentioned as the *second* way to initially clarify the very idea of phenomenality—by reference to blindsight. This is a condition in which subjects suffering damage to the visual cortex deny seeing types of visual stimuli in circumstances where—pre-trauma—they would have affirmed it, even though (when "forced" to select from a list of set options) they show the ability to successfully identify which type of stimulus has been exposed. Here is one way to interpret what is going on. To say that such subjects have "blindsight" is to say that in *one* sense they *do* see the relevant stimulus, and in *another* they *do not*. Thus, in a sense they see something, and in a sense they are blind to it. How could this be so? Well, first, consider a specifically visual sense of 'look' in which no object in a pitch dark room *looks* any way at all to a person. Second, interpret 'see' in such a way that a person cannot be rightly said to see something that *looks* to her no way at all. Then, regarding blindsight, we say: in this sense, the blindsighter correctly denies *seeing* the stimulus, even though she correctly discriminates it (in verbal judgments, in movement) because retinal stimulation from it triggers activity in what's left of her visual system. So in a sense she's blind to the stimulus—it doesn't look anyhow to her—and in another she sees it. For the kind of discrimination she does have could also be regarded as a kind of "seeing."

Further refinements on this conception are possible. But for present purposes what I've said is enough to convey the basic strategy of using blindsight to clarify the meaning of 'phenomenality.' Phenomenality is that feature exemplified in cases of something's *looking* somehow to you, as it would not be in blindsight as just conceived. Necessarily, any instance of its *looking* somehow to you is a *phenomenally conscious visual state*. The interpretation of 'look' that figures in these reflections on blindsight is none other than that on which we earlier found something's looking somehow to you to be a feature essentially and non-derivatively suited for one to claim or desire a subjective, non-theoretical knowledge about what that feature is. There—in connection with "what it's like" talk—I contrasted my interpretation with one that would commit us to linking phenomenality essentially to the mind's self-representation. Similarly here—in connection with blindsight—I would also distinguish my interpretation from one that at least strongly suggests this linkage. One might construe blindsight in my fashion, as a deficit in consciousness where, in one sense you *do* see a stimulus, and in another you *don't*. But you might construe it differently. You might say that in blindsight you see the stimulus *in the very same sense* as you do in the normal case, though *you are just not conscious or aware of your seeing it* (and so you are "blind" only to your own seeing). If we accept only the second construal, and we assume, as many do, that to be conscious of your seeing must be to *represent* it somehow, it will seem inevitable that the

phenomenality missing in blindsight necessarily has somehow to do with the mind's self-representation. Thus, for example, Smith (2005: 94) introduces his notion of the inner awareness (the reflexive self-representation he holds is built into every conscious experience) by contrasting this "with blindsight, where I saw but had no awareness of seeing." And Carruthers (2004: 127) characterizes "blindsight percepts" as "ones to which the subjects of the states are *blind*, and of which they *cannot* be aware." Thus the difference between the phenomenal vision blindsighters *lack* and the kind we *have* is immediately construed in terms of the lack or presence of an awareness of—hence a representation of—one's own seeing. But we have seen that we do not *have* to interpret blindsight *only* in this way. We can leave open the question of whether something's looking somehow to you (missing in blindsight) necessarily brings with it a representation of your own visual state. And we can interpret "looking somehow to someone" so that it is sufficient for phenomenality. So again, we can identify the notion we want without simply taking it for granted that phenomenality is a matter of having a self-representing mind.

2. The Regress Challenge

Now we have an understanding of the notion of phenomenal consciousness that does not depend on precipitously endorsing the claim I want to examine. That claim is:

The SRM ("Self-Representing Mind") Thesis. Necessarily, a state *c* of a subject *S* is phenomenally conscious, only if *S* has the appropriate sort of mental representation of *c*.

Among accounts committed to SRM I would include the self-styled "higher-order" theories of consciousness cited earlier—such as we find in Rosenthal, Lycan, and Carruthers—as well as Kriegel's (2009) "self-representational" theory. These views differ among themselves in many significant ways. But what I now want to emphasize is something they share, the appeal to a principle routinely invoked in introducing and supporting their approach (and which crops up repeatedly in discussions of consciousness generally). This is put forward as something commonsensical or intuitive, or at any rate not merely stipulative—a basic pretheoretical commitment our theories should respect.

The CO ("Conscious-Of") Principle. One is in a conscious state *c*, only if one is conscious (or aware) of *c*.

One can see this principle explicitly at work in the writings of higher-order theorists. After classifying various forms of higher-order theories (including his own), Carruthers (2007: 278) says they all "have as one of their main motivations the intuition that conscious mental states are representational states of which the subject is aware." Rosenthal (2002: 407) speaks approvingly of what he

describes as Descartes' conformity to the "commonsense observation" that "the states we call conscious" are "states we are immediately conscious of"—which observation he says "provides a useful start toward a theory of consciousness." In this context, I will (like Rosenthal) treat 'conscious' and 'aware' as interchangeable, and the two versions of the principle they would provide as mere terminological variants. (Later I will comment on the idea that we should endorse only the 'aware' version of the principle.)

We can readily see how CO is thought to support SRM. Suppose your visual perception of a given stimulus is conscious. Then (according to CO) you are conscious of seeing the stimulus. And (so the story goes) to be conscious of seeing is to form *some sort of representation* of your visual state. For the 'of' in 'conscious of seeing' is the 'of' that indicates what follows is an object of mental *representation*. Thus, if we treat CO as a *necessary* truth regarding *phenomenal* consciousness, we recognize that phenomenally conscious states must be represented by the very mind in which they occur; that is, we recognize the truth of SRM.

Now here is *another* principle that we might also find commonsensical or intuitive.

The IC ("Is-Conscious") Principle. Every state of being conscious of something is a conscious state.

In support of this, consider the sort of cases that are used to argue for unconscious perception. Blindsight subjects, for example, are said to have *unconscious visual perception* of the stimulus they correctly report. Now apparently it's easy to assume that subjects who have only *unconscious visual perception* of a stimulus are *not visually conscious* of it. For example, Merikle, Smilek and Eastwood (2001) canvass evidence that subjects are sometimes "[visually] unaware of critical stimuli" that they do, nonetheless, *perceive*. And these psychologists call this "perception without awareness," a kind in which they say there is "in other words, unconsciously perceived information" (117). So for them, an unconsciously perceived x is simply an x perceived without an awareness of x. But then it seems, a *consciously* perceived x will just be an x perceived *with* an awareness of x. No difference is recognized between the conscious perception of x, and being perceptually aware/conscious of x. And I believe it would be hard to find *any* instances of putative unconscious thought about or perception of something that people generally would find it "intuitively" or "commonsensically" correct to describe as cases in which subjects are *conscious of* something by *unconsciously thinking* of it or *unconsciously perceiving* it. To be conscious of x by perceiving it is to consciously perceive it. If this is right, then (assuming that to consciously perceive something is to have a conscious

perception of it) the IC principle also expresses some ordinary assumption about consciousness.²

But now, once we've got both CO and IC on board, there is at least apparently a regress problem. For we will say (according to CO): if you have a conscious state *c*, then you are conscious of *c*. But (according to IC), your state of being conscious of *c* will also be conscious. And thus (applying CO again) one will be conscious of being conscious of *c*—and so on, ad infinitum. This is a problem, at least if we construe being conscious of *c* as forming a mental representation of it, and we assume that we do *not* in fact instantaneously generate some infinite hierarchy of representations of representations for every measly conscious state we are in. Now I only say that there is *apparently* a regress problem, because there are various ways to block the regress. The question is: which of various ways of doing this is most defensible?

Contemporary higher-order theorists often respond to this concern by simply rejecting the IC principle. There is no regress, they say, because the higher-order mental states that make their representational targets conscious are themselves typically *not* conscious states. They may allow that, most of the time I'm awake, I have conscious visual perception of what is before me without forming *conscious* thoughts about my visual states, or *consciously* internally sensing them. Nevertheless, they will say, I am during those times *conscious of* my seeing by thinking *unconscious* thoughts (or *unconsciously* sensing) my own visual states.

This, however, leaves me wondering: why is CO such a rock solid first principle, while IC is so utterly dismissible? We are told it is counterintuitive or uncommonsensical to think one can be in a conscious state of which one is in no way conscious. But it seems to me at least as strange to suggest that one can be *conscious* of something by having a *totally unconscious* perception or thought of it. On the face of it, IC has at least as much initial claim on our allegiance as CO. Why not instead sacrifice CO to IC? Or why not seek and defend interpretations that would allow us to retain a right to claim both consistently? Since "Is-Conscious" is at least as intuitive as "Conscious-Of," *if* we are to give weight to intuitions in these matters, we should give at least as much to the former as to the latter. So if there are accounts that avoid the regress while preserving both principles on some reasonable interpretation, these are to be preferred.

Now some higher-order theorists may respond that they simply do not and never have found IC at all intuitive, and owe it no respect. Or they may say that even if it *is* intuitive for them that you can't be visually *conscious* of something by having an *unconscious* visual perception of it, they have all along sharply distinguished *consciousness* from *awareness*, and find nothing odd in the idea that one might be visually *aware* of something by unconsciously seeing it. Thus it

² Kriegel (2004) makes a similar point in criticism of Rosenthal.

would seem intuitively right to them say that, while of course blindsighters are not visually *conscious* of the stimulus, they *are* visually *aware* of it. And it is specifically *just* the principle that one is (perhaps blindly) *aware* of one's every conscious state that they find intuitive or commonsensical.

But I don't think one should be complacent about such responses. For those (like myself) whose intuitions do not sufficiently match up with these, the theorists' invocation of CO to motivate their accounts will be unsatisfying, until the apparent conflict with IC has been dealt with in a non-dismissive manner. And if intuitions diverge on crucial points, this casts doubt on the claim that either the "awareness only" interpretation of CO or the denial of IC should really count as commonsensical, or as some datum to be honored. Moreover, to borrow an important point from Kriegel (2009)—if IC is false, or CO often true only in virtue of some *unconscious awareness* of our mental states, then it becomes mysterious how CO could have ever seemed to us like a plausible principle. That is, it wouldn't seem intuitively or commonsensically plausible to us that we are always conscious (or aware) of our own conscious vision, if we usually were *introspectively oblivious* to this very fact about ourselves. But we *would* be introspectively oblivious to being conscious/aware of seeing if this were unconscious.

Given this, we should explore the possibility that we can reasonably preserve *both* CO and IC in a way that avoids the regress, *without* the "aware, not conscious" move, while still maintaining CO supports SRM—the claim that a self-representing mind is essential to phenomenality. Here is a way to try to do this. Start again with the thought that, necessarily, every phenomenally conscious state is a state one is conscious of (in a sense that entails one mentally represents it somehow). But now—don't let go of IC: one's being conscious of this state is also itself a conscious state. However, now let's argue: contrary to appearances, this doesn't entail that one is conscious of being conscious of it—and so no regress gets started. For what is required for your representation of your mental state to be conscious is *not* that you are also conscious of such self-representation. No, all that is required is that there is *some* type M of which the state of representing your own mind is also an instance, and that state of self-representation can be correctly reported by saying: you are conscious of M. So, consider for example: you hear a tone. That hearing is conscious. By CO this implies that you are conscious of hearing a tone. And (by IC) your being conscious of hearing a tone is conscious too. But that does not require you are conscious of being conscious of hearing a tone. No—it only requires that there is some type M such that your being conscious of hearing a tone is also an instance of M, and you are conscious of M. And lo and behold, there *is* such an M, namely: *hearing a tone*. In other words: when your hearing a tone is conscious, your being conscious of hearing a tone is also conscious, not because you are also conscious of being conscious of hearing a tone, but because your being conscious of hearing a tone is somehow *one with* the very state of which you are thus conscious—your hearing a tone.

This general way of cutting off the regress—by saying that the conscious state in some way refers to or represents *itself*—is not new. It is, I believe, more or less the position advocated in Brentano (1972), who was influenced partly by his interpretation of Aristotle. More recently Williford (2006) and Kriegel (2009)—acknowledging the historical affinities—have articulated and defended in detail views in the neighborhood. However, to assess this general strategy, I think we need to ask: just what species of conscious self-representation is allegedly built into every conscious state? There seem to be three basic options.

(a) This self-representation is some form of conscious *thought*, expressible in an assertion, capable of playing a direct role in voluntary inference. (My hearing a tone is not just a hearing but—at least in part—a *thought* about itself.)

(b) The self-representation is, by contrast with this, somehow broadly speaking *perceptual* or *sensory* in nature—and constitutes a kind of conscious “inner” perception or sense. (My hearing the tone is also a sensing or perception (but of course not a *hearing*) of itself.)

(c) It is neither of these, but a *sui generis* form of conscious representation, specific to consciousness of one’s own mind. (My hearing the tone is also a representation of itself that is neither a thinking nor a sensing.)

But each of these options is problematic. A problem with (a) is that I find that *consciously thinking* about my conscious experience is only a “sometime thing”—hardly ubiquitous. So I would say, on the basis of first-person reflection, that while I can and do begin to consciously think about how something looks to me (and in so doing am thinking about its looking to me as it does), when I do this I am only reflecting on an experience of a type that had already been happening. It’s not as if things in my surroundings just start looking somehow to me the moment I consciously reflect on their looking somehow to me (as if previously I had been operating with blindsight). I can recall that they already were visually apparent to me. But I don’t recall *consciously thinking* about them at the just-previous time—the *reflection* seems to be something new. Such reflection needn’t be very elaborate or articulated: I may just suddenly be “struck by” or “just notice” how something looks to me (the way moving shadows on the window jamb look to me just now, in the sunset)—and I may articulate this (if at all) only by saying something like, “I just noticed how *that* looks to me.” And it seems plausible to suppose that such noticing is not a wholly distinct state, detachable from the “looking” noticed. For how could I even think the specific thought I would express with the phrase, “how *that* looks to me,” unless it just then did look to me the way I was at that moment thinking of—even if only in illusory or hallucinatory fashion? So we have here a relatively inarticulate sort of conscious thought, intimately joined with the experience it is about in some

fashion. But this thought arises as something *new*, something which hadn't been happening just before—though visual consciousness was already there.

So anyone who would defend option (a) needs to say that even prior to this conscious noticing, there was already some *other* sort of conscious thought *a/so* intimately joined with the experience I was only a moment later consciously struck by. But just how am I to distinguish this from the conscious noticing, the “being struck by”? Both thoughts would be conscious, both relatively inarticulate, both dependent on the experience they're about. Are we to say that we can recall in some sense having been already “marginally” or “peripherally” consciously thinking some thought we are “focally” thinking when “noticing” happens?³ I am not sure how to make sense of the idea that I first “marginally” or “peripherally” consciously think that *p*, and then “focally” do so, unless this means: the thought first occurs to me inarticulately (and thus as yet only in some “dim” way), and then I verbally articulate it (achieving a fuller grasp of what I am thinking). But clearly this isn't the contrast we're looking for, since I may be (newly, consciously) struck by how something looks to me without yet articulating it (if we admit the occurrence of wordless thoughts at all).

It's true I would say I am at least sometimes (non-sensorily) *marginally conscious* of something or someone. For example, while I am thinking (“focally”) about what to say in an email I am writing, I am “marginally conscious of” the need to finish soon to get ready to go to the airport. But when this thought does “come to the fore,” breaking my concentration on the message, am I to say I recall that *even before this* I had been continually having the conscious thought that I needed to finish to get to the airport on time? Perhaps all there was to my having been marginally conscious of the need to finish (and all there was to having the need to go to the airport “dimly before my mind”) is that *the very character of my experience of thinking* while focused on composing the message was also such as to make me more *readily inclined* to consciously think that I needed to finish soon than to think many other thoughts of which I was capable, so that thought keeps coming back to me even after I turn my attention elsewhere. (A vivid case: when in love you keep *intermittently* slipping back to thoughts of the one you love—but that you are so inclined is somehow *continually* part of what it's like for you to be thinking as you are—for your thoughts to be always being “pulled towards” your beloved.) Thus, what it's like for me to think doesn't just constrain *what thought I am currently thinking*, but also what *else* I am especially *liable* to think. This is partly analogous to how what my peripheral vision is like for me readies and inclines me to look at things I am not yet looking at (even “marginally”—as if there were such a thing as

³ Kriegel (2009) appeals to the idea that one is always at least marginally/peripherally conscious of one's conscious states in defense of a self-representational view, and he defends the notion that we peripherally think certain thoughts, but he doesn't commit to saying that the marginal self-consciousness typically involved in consciousness is a form of thought.

peripherally looking *at* something). Even if this account of what it is to be marginally conscious of something/someone in thought is not endorsed, we can recognize the reality of “marginal thought” without saying we are always at least marginally consciously thinking about our own *visual experience* as long as it’s conscious. And I have *no* inclination to say that whenever I am struck by how something looks to me, I can recall that I had already been consciously—but only marginally—*thinking* something about how it looked to me.

What about option (b) then—every conscious state includes a sort of representational “sensing” of itself? The problem is this. What’s wanted here is some sort of conscious sensing of one’s own sensing of color and shape (say) where this (higher-order) *sensing of sensing* is discernible as a feature distinct from the (first-order) *sensing of color and shape*. To find any second-order sensory representation, we need to find, at the second-order level, either something corresponding to the experience of shape and color constancy we find at the first, which allows us to distinguish an object sensed from its manner of being sensed (“*objectual* sensing”), or else something like a sensing distinct from the condition sensed—a feeling of pain is distinct from the tissue damage it “registers.” But sensory object constancy is phenomenologically indiscernible, once the objects in question are not, e.g., the shaped-and-colored things, but *their looking to us as they do*. We may speak of our *experience* of these things looking to us as they do—but here changes in the *manner of experience* are not distinguishable from changes in the *manner of the visual appearance*. And there is to be found no separate feeling that registers the feeling of pain, as that feeling may register a cut or a tear in one’s flesh. The points I’m making here need further explanation and defense—which I offer elsewhere (Siewert 2012). But hopefully what I’ve just said is enough to convey my basic objection to option (b): the sort of representational inner “sensing of sensing” hypothesized, being *conscious*, should be *phenomenologically discernible*—but once we are clear about what this would require (*viz.*, higher-order sensory constancy or a distinguishable sensory registration of sensing), we can see that it just isn’t.

That leaves option (c): endorsing the special “*sui generis*” self-representation—one that’s neither thinking nor sensing. A problem here is that it’s hard even to understand just what this allegedly ubiquitous form of representation positively distinctively is—I mean, what it *is*, other than being *not this*, and *not that*. But further: we seem to have no warrant from first-person reflection for thinking that this sort of conscious self-representation occurs, except indirectly—e.g., through consideration of the regress problem. Reflection allegedly tells us that we are in some sense conscious of our every conscious state. From this we then argue: we can maintain this, while solving the regress problem, only by positing a unique form of representation to *constitute* this constant consciousness of our own conscious states.

This suggests a potential vulnerability for SRM theorists who would appeal to the “Conscious-Of” Principle even if they take route (c). For suppose we can

find reasonable alternative ways to interpret CO that *don't* support SRM, while still allowing us to affirm "Is-Conscious" as well—and which (unlike option (c)) *don't* require we posit any conscious experiences of a type otherwise reflectively indiscernible to us. Then, other things being equal, *those* interpretations are to be preferred as both more parsimonious and less mysterious. In the next section, I will propose such alternatives.

4. Solving the Regress Problem.

We may allow there is *some* initial appeal to the idea that if you have a conscious state, you are somehow conscious of it. (Or, in the negative formulation that higher-order theorists like to invoke: if you are "in no way" conscious of it, it is not a conscious mental state.) But there are several ways to account for this appeal, while dealing with the regress problem, none of which provide support to SRM.

First, there is what I'll call "the ambiguity proposal": CO and IC concern distinct but closely related senses of 'conscious.' It's true that there's *some* sense in which, if you have a *conscious* mental state, then you are conscious *of* that mental state. We may even recognize that there's a sense for which this is *necessarily* true. We may even say that being conscious of one's mental state involves having some sort of *thought* about it. However, when we explicitly interpret the principle this way, and reflect on the regress problem, what we discover is that CO, unlike IC, is really not a principle about state consciousness in the basic phenomenal sense, but some distinct—let's call it "reflective"—sense *derived* from the phenomenal one. CO says in effect: if one is in a *reflectively conscious* state *c*, then one must be consciously thinking of *c*. And IC says if one is conscious of something, then one's being conscious of it is itself a *phenomenally conscious* state. That is not to deny there is an intimate relationship between being a reflectively conscious state and being a phenomenally conscious state. For we may say that one has a reflectively conscious mental state only if one is conscious of it in a phenomenal sense—by having phenomenally conscious thought about it. But since there is no necessity that one be similarly reflectively conscious *of* one's every phenomenally conscious thought, no regress ensues.

Now one may object: "Part of what makes CO seem attractive is the idea that our *phenomenally* conscious states are quite generally ones we are, in some sense, conscious of. And you have not done justice to that."

There is a way of accommodating this reaction as well, which I'll call "relaxed availability." When you say, yes, if you have a conscious experience, then you are *conscious of* having it—it is hardly clear that you have to claim that no conscious state could possibly occur, anywhere, anytime, except in some being that is then and there thinking about or otherwise representing that state to

him, her, or itself. No—what makes this CO principle “sound right” to us on hearing it (if it does) may be something considerably less stringent. That is, we may have in mind nothing more than the idea that phenomenally conscious states are *usually available to reflect upon* consciously, *when they occur in beings, like ourselves, who are capable* of reflective thought. That is, *if* you have a general ability to form “higher-order thoughts,” then, *usually* you will be *able* and *disposed* to think phenomenal thoughts of some kind about your own *actual* phenomenal thoughts and experiences, if only retrospectively, should the issue of what you’re thinking or experiencing arise.

Now it’s true that even this relaxed CO principle commits us to saying that usually one is capable of forming *conscious* thoughts about one’s own actual conscious states. But that is not unrealistic, and does not lead to an infinite regress. For the principle is compatible with recognizing that actual human beings cannot perform many iterations of conscious reflection. Maybe typically, after as few as, say, four “conscious of’s,” we become bored, forgetful, distracted, or unable to distinguish levels. This doesn’t conflict with the claim of relaxed availability, because usually we only actually get up to second level (we consciously think about how we feel) or less often, the third (we consciously think about our consciously thinking about how we feel). So it’s true that we’re *usually* capable of *at least one more* (perhaps retrospective) reflection, about *whatever level we’re actually at*. And that’s all the principle says.

Maybe someone will insist there is still something unaccounted for that makes the “Conscious-Of” Principle seem attractive. They might say: “Some animals—dogs for example—can’t think about their own minds. Still, they feel some way, and things look some way to them. And these are phenomenally conscious sense experiences they have: there is something it’s like for them to see shape, movement, colors, and to feel pain. Furthermore, in these cases it sounds right to say that in some sense they are *conscious of their feelings* or *conscious of seeing* things. So the problem is: the CO principle applies to dogs too. It’s also true that they are conscious of their every conscious state. But your account of the principle offers to explain only what makes it true of *reflective* creatures that they are conscious of their every conscious state. And dogs aren’t reflective. So your interpretation of CO is still inadequate.”

I am perfectly happy to say that dogs enjoy phenomenally conscious vision, even if they are unreflecting beasts. I think one can sensibly (perhaps futilely) wonder just what it’s like for something to look as it does to a dog. And it sounds right to say that in some sense they are conscious of feeling pain, when they do. However, I have to say it does *not* sound to me clearly right to say they are “conscious of seeing things.” For this reason I am reluctant to grant that the CO principle really does hold of unreflecting creatures’ every conscious state. Still, one might wonder how to make sense of their being “conscious of feeling” without imputing reflection to them. And I think once we see how to do this, we

will see how we could also, if someone insisted, give CO broader scope, without assuming all who have conscious states possess self-representing minds.

Suppose Pickles the unreflecting dog has, unfortunately, a *feeling of pain*. We need not take this to mean that pain is some *object* of her feeling, or that her feeling constitutes a representation of her pain. To say she has a feeling of *pain* may be taken to mean: she has a feeling of a *certain sort*—namely, a *painful* sort. Now do we also wish to say that Pickles is conscious of feeling pain? We could say this, but if we do, nothing compels us to take the ‘of’ in this ‘conscious of’ to introduce an intentional object, or object of representation. We may treat it more or less as I just proposed we treat the ‘of’ in ‘feeling of pain.’ To say she is conscious of feeling is only to say that she has a consciousness of a *certain sort*: a “feeling” sort. And to say she has a certain sort of consciousness may be taken to mean she has a certain sort of conscious state. Now: likewise, if we insist (strangely, to my mind) that it’s right to say when Pickles sees a ball, and is conscious of a ball, she is, in some sense *conscious of seeing*,⁴ then we may take this just to mean she has consciousness of a *certain sort*—a *visual* sort.

The point is that if you think there is some sense in which the principle “if a state is phenomenally conscious, then one is conscious of it” should be taken to apply universally, even to all the states of creatures that are incapable of thinking about their own minds, there is a way one can understand this, while again avoiding the regress worries. And that is to suppose that here the ‘of’ in the phrases ‘conscious of feeling,’ ‘conscious of seeing’ and so on, does not introduce an intentional object. Rather it indicates what sort of conscious state the creature is in. Since ‘conscious of,’ understood in this way does not mean: conscious of *an object*, I would label this interpretation the “non-objectual” proposal.

I have offered three ways of understanding what might make the CO principle sound right, without running afoul of the regress problem. Either we discern an ambiguity in ‘conscious state’ as it is found in CO and IC; or we understand CO to indicate nothing more than a relaxed availability principle; or we adopt a non-objectual interpretation of ‘conscious of.’ We do not need to say that only one of them is correct. It could be that they all help to explain how the idea that “conscious states are states one is conscious of” could sound plausible or intuitive to us in various contexts. My claim is that once we recognize all three construals of that slogan, there is nothing more we need take it to express that we should accept.

If instead one is determined to treat CO as a necessary or constitutive truth that makes having a self-representing mind essential to phenomenality, one

⁴ This relative strangeness indicates, I think, that this proposed “non-objectual” “feeling of pain” interpretation of ‘conscious of...’ is more natural in the ‘conscious of feeling...’ case than in the ‘conscious of seeing...’ case.

encounters a dilemma. To escape the regress problem, either one denies that states of being conscious/aware of something are conscious, or else one posits an unbroken activity of conscious representation fused with the ground-floor experience it represents. Going the first route would be to forsake the sort of pretheoretical understanding of consciousness supposedly captured in CO—which would deprive one of the right to appeal to this principle in motivating one’s theory. And notice now—and this is a new point—the problem persists even if you stoutly refuse to grant that IC is “commonsensical” or “intuitive,” or confine this status to an “awareness only” version of CO. Let’s set aside the concern that you would be introspectively oblivious to your alleged unconscious awareness of your experience. Just consider which of the following yields a more commonsensical or intuitive claim. Whenever we are not consciously thinking about our own conscious thoughts and sensory states, we are (a) necessarily somehow *unconsciously* thinking about them, or (b) usually as a matter of fact *capable* of thinking consciously of them. Would anyone maintain (a) rather than (b) is the voice of “commonsense” or “intuition”? But then CO does nothing to support the higher-order theory that would urge us to endorse (a) over (b). Similar remarks would apply to other “unconscious self-representation” views. When we compare the interpretations they would have us give of CO to the non-SRM-supporting alternatives just suggested, their claim to speak for commonsense or intuition evaporates.

Suppose we take the second horn of the dilemma I raised, and affirm that conscious experience is constantly *consciously representing itself*. This is also undesirable. For if this constant self-representing is either thought or sense-like, it is—though purportedly conscious—strangely indiscernible to introspective reflection. And if the sort of self-representation alleged is neither of these, but something special and sui generis, then its postulation is still vulnerable to a response to the regress problem like that I’ve suggested, which also retains both CO and IC, but without having to posit some new, otherwise unheard-of form of conscious mental representation.

I conclude that, despite its popular use as the launching pad for SRM theorizing about consciousness, the “Conscious-Of” principle really provides it with no justification. And, reasonably interpreted, it is no “datum” that “first-order theorists” must embarrass themselves by denying. Of course, other considerations are adduced in favor of higher-order representation theories of consciousness that I have not addressed here (though I have discussed some elsewhere, in Siewert 1998: 201, and 2012). However, the interpretation of CO I have criticized here plays, it seems to me, a fundamental role in making such accounts seem intuitively plausible, and it shows up repeatedly in some form in discussions of consciousness generally. If we should (as I have argued) give the principle so interpreted no weight at all in our theorizing, that will significantly affect its course.

5. Non-Representational Self-Consciousness, “Self-Presence” and “For-Me-ness”

I have focused here on theories that make a self-representing mind essential to phenomenality. But there are other, rather different accounts of consciousness that apparently overlap partly with these in maintaining that, necessarily, one is conscious of one’s every conscious state, in some sense that constitutes a sort of self-consciousness. However, these accounts should *not* be seen as maintaining that this “consciousness of consciousness” consists in a kind of *representation* of one’s own state of mind. So consider first, Husserl’s (1991) view that the proper understanding of the “consciousness of internal time” demands we recognize, as a part of all experience, a form of intentionality (exemplified in our on-going “retention” of what we just experienced) that continually points to one’s own consciousness without “making it into an object.” And more recently, Dan Zahavi (2005, 2006) defends a Sartre-influenced, neo-Husserlian view that all consciousness includes a “non-reflective,” “non-objectifying” consciousness of one’s own experience.

Such views deserve separate detailed treatment. But they also draw on the “Conscious-Of” Principle, interpreted in ways to which my proposal presents an alternative. So I think that reasons similar to those I’ve given for preferring my interpretation to option (c) also apply to them. That is, I would say we can interpret the CO principle in ways that don’t involve positing some form of mental activity that we are otherwise unwarranted in judging to occur. And, other things being equal, we should so interpret it. (Of course, this counts against the views in question, only if they are understood as proposing something distinct from my “non-objectual” interpretation of CO. But I believe that they are supposed to be so understood.)

I want to acknowledge that these views are also backed by claims that are supposed to have force independently of appeal to the “Conscious-Of” intuition. And while I will not be able here to discuss them in as much detail as is desirable, I do wish to say a little about my response to them. I have in mind claims (such as are found in Zahavi) that our own phenomenal states are essentially “present to us” (or “given” to us) in a special first-person way, and that it’s distinctive of my phenomenally conscious experience that it is “for me” or “experienced as mine”—in a manner that nothing *unconscious* is. (It should be noted, this talk of “for-me-ness” also figures importantly in Kriegel’s arguments.)

I certainly do not want to dismiss these claims. But I also do not think we are entitled, without further examination, to treat them as phenomenological data that reveal that, in some sense, all consciousness is essentially conscious of itself. For we may be able to do justice to much or all of what is rightly invoked by the talk of “presence,” “for-me-ness” and so on, without this. I will explain provisionally how this might be so, again with reference to visual appearance.

Regarding the peculiar “presence” of my own experience to myself the suggestion is this. There is a form of thought, encountered above in my remarks on “noticing” or being struck by how something looks, whereby I can attend to how something appears to me, which enables me to identify for myself this manner of appearance, so as to go on to recognize possible ways of articulating this as correct or incorrect. Such thoughts are expressible by the use of phrases like: ‘the way this looks to me now’ (where ‘look’ is interpreted phenomenally, as earlier explained). It seems this form of thought cannot even arise in the absence of the manner of appearance it identifies. If there just is in fact no way anything now appears to me that I successfully identify in a thought expressible in some such way, then I fail altogether to express and form a thought about a specific manner of appearance. In that sense, this sort of thought depends on my having the very sort of appearance it is about. We might then say: part of what constitutes reflective thoughts of this type is *already there* when I merely have the phenomenally conscious states they’re about—as I may, *prior* to the reflection. My own experience then is peculiarly “present” to me to think about, and its relation to my thought is peculiarly “intimate” we might say, because it is and must be “actually there” (hence “present”) for me, if I am to think such thoughts, and because, when I do, it forms part of the thoughts in question (hence the “intimacy”). So, once the phenomenal experience is there, there is *already something happening* that can go on to make up an essential part of this primitive kind of conscious first-person reflection once it occurs. This type of first-person reflection cannot occur, we may say, without a *phenomenal* target. (If I try to think about my *unconscious* visual processing via some thought I might express by saying ‘the way this is visually represented by me,’ I find I don’t thereby understand myself to have identified a specific manner of visual representation, whose classification I can then recognize as correct or incorrect.) But none of this is yet to say that whenever something does look to me somehow, some (perhaps diminished) form of self-consciousness must already be part of the visual appearance.

This is how I propose to understand the first-person “presence” or “givenness” of experience. I do not claim here to have fully explained and justified my account of this (though I do discuss these matters in more detail in Siewert 2012). Here I claim only to have presented an intelligible and plausible way to flesh out the notion of the peculiar “presence” of one’s experience to oneself, without building some sort of self-consciousness into every moment of phenomenality.

Now, as for the idea that my conscious experience is always “for me” in some distinctively phenomenal way, I would say this. I would first distinguish between saying that, just in virtue of being conscious, all my experience involves a *consciousness of itself*—thus a *self-consciousness*—and saying that, in virtue of being conscious, it is *possessed by a self*. And I propose that it is in light of the *latter* notion that we may often plausibly regard as true the claim that my phenomenally conscious state is “for me” or “experienced as mine.” One way to

see how this could work: think about the way *the viewpoint of the looker is implicit in the how things look*. One might say that when I look at things, the perspective from which I am looking is implied by how things that do look somehow to me appear to be situated—even though *this* is not itself something that looks some way to me. To put it differently: it belongs to the manner in which I experience the visual appearance of things to me that they appear *from here*—which is not to say that they appear to me *to be appearing to me from here*. Where one is viewing from can be entailed by the appearance of what is seen, even if this viewing is not itself seen, nor apparent, nor the accusative of *any* form of self-consciousness. So, in a sense the viewpoint of the viewer—the one to whom things appear—is implicit in the manner of their appearance. And if a phenomenal point of view (unlike a pictorial perspective) implies an actual viewer, the fact that an appearance is an appearance *to* someone is included in its phenomenal character, no less than the fact that it is an appearance *of* (e.g.) color or shape. And, I suggest, the fact that the appearance is an appearance *to* someone is all there is to its being an appearance “for” someone.

Maybe still, in *some* sense, a special form of self-consciousness *is* built into the character of experience. I do not mean to rule this out. Suppose, for example, we accept that your activity of *looking at* things belongs to how you experience things looking to you as they do. An activity of looking at them is implied by what it’s like for them to look to you as they do, as your attention darts around, alighting and lingering here and there. Putting this together with the earlier point, we may say: our experience has the phenomenal character of being a perspectively constrained *looking at* things. Then we might say, “looking at” involves a “looker” and so some (perhaps “marginal” or “peripheral”) awareness of oneself as a *looker* looking *from* somewhere is involved in ordinary visual experience. Hence some sort of peripheral consciousness of oneself as a situated, active perceiver—a special form of self-consciousness—is involved in the experience of looking. But we shouldn’t want to say this looker or this looking are, for this reason, themselves among what is “visually represented.” We needn’t even say that one’s awareness of oneself as a looker involves in some other way “representing oneself as a looker.” For to be aware of oneself as a *looker* may be simply to be aware of oneself (specifically, of one’s own body) *in the manner in which a looker is self-aware*. This doesn’t entail that one thereby somehow *attributes* to oneself, truly or falsely, the property of looking at things from a certain place. Consider, we can distinguish: “He is conscious of himself as an adult” (i.e., he takes himself to be an adult), and “He is conscious of himself as an adult is” (i.e., conscious of himself in an adult manner). Similarly, we can recognize a sense in which we are nearly always conscious of ourselves as active situated perceivers are. This isn’t to say we are nearly constantly *representing* ourselves to be active situated perceivers.

So some necessary links may well be found between consciousness and self-consciousness. What I doubt here (partly on the basis of regress worries) is that we can establish these by intuitive appeal to principles alleged to apply

univocally to all forms of phenomenal consciousness—such as the idea that all consciousness is essentially conscious of itself, or that all experience has the feature of for-me-ness or self-presence. We will, in my view, better understand phenomenal consciousness and better explore its connection with self-consciousness by asking how various *specific* forms of phenomenality may either partly constitute or implicitly include various kinds of self-consciousness—as in the ways just suggested. If I am right about this, then examining the relationship of consciousness and self-consciousness ultimately speaks against explaining consciousness in terms of self-directed intentionality—seeing it as nothing but a certain way the mind’s represents itself to itself. What we should say, rather, is that we may be conscious of ourselves in various ways, in *some* of which we sometimes represent our own conscious states to ourselves. And, when this happens, the phenomenality of what is represented helps constitute—it is not explained by—the special reflective form of self-consciousness in which it’s involved. A better candidate for (near?) ubiquitous self-consciousness, I suggest, is our being conscious of ourselves in the mode of active occupants of a perspective, a mode whose most basic form is likely found in ordinary perceptual experience.⁵

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