

“Consciousness Last”

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**Pacific Division APA, March 2016
Symposium on Mind and Methodology**

Much recent work on the mind begins with the conscious cases of mental states, taking as primary what our first-person, subjective access seems to tell us about those states. I argue that this has significantly distorted our understanding of mind. I begin by arguing that consciousness is not an intrinsic aspect of qualitative mental properties, and that those properties occur altogether independently of being conscious. I then show that relying on consciousness distorts the nature of qualitative states, and then show the same for intentional states without qualitative character. We must reject a conception of consciousness on which it's the primary way we know about the mind. Consciousness is simply one mental property among others, a property we must explain, and not use as our primary Archimedean tool to get knowledge about or explain other mental properties. We do significant damage by treating consciousness as an unexplained explainer.