

Intrinsicalism and Its Discontents

David Rosenthal



CUNY Graduate Center
Philosophy and Cognitive
Science

<http://davidrosenthal1.googlepages.com/>

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OVERVIEW

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I. Higher-Order Content and the Transitivity Principle

- Any theory of consciousness must explain how conscious mental states differ from mental states that aren't conscious— or else it must argue that all mental states are conscious.
- I'll assume that the second option is out: Mental states of every type can occur both consciously and not (as in subliminal perceiving, nonconscious problem solving, and desires evident from one's behavior) .

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- An obvious, and widely accepted, proposal for explaining how conscious states differ from mental states that aren't conscious is this:

A mental state is conscious only if the subject is conscious (or, equivalently, aware) of that state.

- I'll call this the Transitivity Principle (TP).
- I'll say a bit about an argument against TP, and I'll briefly rehearse one compelling argument in support of TP.

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- An argument widely pressed against TP (and so against higher-order theories generally): TP holds that a mental state's being conscious consists in one's being aware of that state; but then why isn't a coffee cup conscious when I'm conscious of the cup? (First in Dretske, 1993.)
- Uriah Kriegel urges that we can meet this objection only if we add to TP the condition that our higher-order awareness is intrinsic to each conscious state.
- One's awareness of a coffee cup, by contrast, is not intrinsic to the cup.

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- But my head isn't conscious—though my being aware of it, when I am, is arguably intrinsic (though not essential) to my head.
- This challenge to TP fails, rather, because it conflates two kinds of consciousness.
- The consciousness that some mental states exhibit is a distinct property from the consciousness that some objects (such as people—but not cups) exhibit.
- A mental state's being conscious arguably consists in its being a state that one is conscious of oneself as being in, since a state's being conscious is a matter of how one's mental life appears to one.

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- *But this has no application whatever to coffee cups.*
- A coffee cup's being conscious would be, if anything, something like a *person's* being conscious, not like a *mental state's* being conscious.
- And for a person to be conscious (or a cartoon coffee cup) is for it to be *awake and responsive to sensory stimulation.*
- Meeting this objection to TP requires only noting that the two kinds of consciousness are distinct, not stipulating, with Kriegel, that the awareness of mental states is intrinsic.

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- Some see a related difficulty, that a non-conscious higher-order state couldn't be a *source of consciousness*—that it couldn't *confer consciousness* on another state.
- If one's awareness of states were intrinsic, moreover, that awareness would not need to be passed along to a second state.
- But there is *no problem about conferring,* since a state's being conscious is not a property passed from one state to another, but a matter of *how one's mental life appears to one:* a matter of *one's being conscious of oneself as being in that state.*

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- And even if the problem about conferring did hold up, making the awareness intrinsic could not by itself handle it.
- A state that included its own higher-order awareness need not be conscious *in respect of* that higher-order awareness (pace Kriegel; more on this in §III); it could be *in respect only of those other mental properties that the higher-order awareness makes one conscious of*.
- So the problem would remain about how an intrinsic, but *nonconscious*, higher-order awareness can confer consciousness *on the rest of the state*.

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- Two other apparent reasons to reject TP:
- One, due to John Searle (*Rediscovery* 95-6): We can't *observe* our conscious states.
- True; but observing is not the only way for one to be conscious of something.
- Another, due to Fred Dretske (1995): Since we're often not aware of *differences among* our conscious states, and so not of the parts of states that differ.
- But one needn't be aware of conscious states *in respect of* all their aspects: Each mental state is conscious *in respect of only those mental features one is conscious of*.

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- An argument in support of TP:
Conscious states are those we can report being in—in some intuitively immediate way (more about such intuitive immediacy in §§II-III).
- Moreover, reports express thoughts—
in this case, thoughts that one is in the state in question—
which make one aware of the target.
- So states are conscious when a report could occur—
i.e., when one has a thought that such a report could express.
- So mental states are conscious when, and only when, one has such a thought.

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- There are issues about the experimental testing of TP, which I won't address here.
(See, e.g., Merikle 1992; Merikle, Smilek, and Eastwood 1991; Jacoby 1991; Jacoby, Toth, Yonelinas, and Debnar 1994; Dienes 2004, forthcoming; Fu, Fu, and Dienes forthcoming; Lau and Passingham 2006; Lau forthcoming).
- My focus will be instead on the theoretical question of how TP is implemented—
and indeed on only one aspect of that implementation question.
- Differences about how TP is implemented have led to the variety of "higher-order" theories of consciousness advanced in the recent literature (see Rosenthal 2004).

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- Some theorists (e.g., Armstrong, 1968/1993, 1978/1980; Lycan 1996, 2004) have proposed that we are aware of our conscious states by perceiving them (or something like that).
- Others, myself included (e.g., 2005), have posited higher-order thoughts (HOTs) as the best way to implement TP.
- These are the thoughts that we express when we report our conscious states, and that we could express whenever a state is conscious.

- But the issue that matters today is which of these is true:
 - (1) The higher-order awareness of a conscious state that implements TP is distinct from that state.
 - (2) That higher-order awareness is intrinsic to the state that's conscious—it is a part or an aspect of the state.
- On (1), one is aware of a conscious state by being in a 2nd, distinct state, whose content makes one aware of the 1st state.
- We can call that content "higher-order," since it's about another mental state.

- (2), by contrast, holds that this higher-order content is actually a part or aspect of the state one is conscious of.
- On that view, every conscious state not only has the various mental properties one is conscious of it as having, but also has some higher-order content in virtue of which one is aware of that state.
- I'll call this second view intrinsicism.
- This family of theories echoes the views of the Austrian philosopher Franz Brentano (1873/1874) and through him Aristotle's de Anima, Γ2.
I'll say just a bit about those roots in §IV.

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- I'll argue for the first option—that the higher-order content that implements TP belongs to states that are distinct from the states one is aware of.
- In the next section (§II) I'll describe two versions of intrinsicism— and I'll then argue (§III) against various considerations advanced in support of it, most of which appeal, in an illicit way, to the phenomenological appearances.
- Finally (§IV and epilogue), I'll raise some independent difficulties for intrinsicism, which point toward distinct higher-order states as implementing TP.

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II. Two Kinds of Intrinsicism

- A conscious state is a state one is aware of by way of some higher-order content about that state.
- Why think that this higher-order content is intrinsic to the state one is conscious of?
- One reason is that it might underwrite, and explain, the close connection that higher-order awareness seems intuitively to have to the state that's conscious.

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- Thus Robert Van Gulick: A state becomes conscious by being "recruit[ed] ... into a globally integrated complex whose organization and intentional content embodies a heightened degree of reflexive self-awareness" ("Mirror," p. 24; his emphasis).
- In being thus recruited, the state becomes a part of a larger state that "embodies ... [such] reflexive self-awareness."
- And Kriegel holds that the awareness of one's conscious states must be immediate, and he explains this immediacy by positing that the awareness is a part or aspect of the state that one is aware of.

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- Kriegel's version of intrinsicism holds that each conscious state has, as a part or an aspect, a higher-order content that refers to that state.
- Van Gulick's version proposes that states are conscious in virtue of belonging to a global process that in some way embodies reflexive self-consciousness.
- More generally, intrinsicism holds that a state comes to be conscious only if the subject's awareness of that state bears some suitably intimate tie to that state—a tie such that the state and one's awareness of it are a single occurrence.

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- Thus Kriegel urges that, since consciousness seems to be a natural kind, it must exhibit "an underlying unity" ("Same Order ...," in Kriegel and Williford, 149).
- But the unified phenomenological appearance of consciousness may not be a reliable guide to its underlying reality. (More in §III on such appearances.)
- And even our pretheoretic sense that consciousness is a natural kind may not be reliable:
We tend pretheoretically to see many commonsense, macroscopic phenomena as natural kinds until theory tells us otherwise.

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- Van Gulick's intrinsicism is of a piece with his higher-order view, which he calls HOGS (for higher-order global states).
- But that theory, like Bernard Baars's related global-workspace theory (and Giulio Tononi's information-integration theory, and Stanislas Dehaene and Lionel Naccache's global-neuronal-workspace framework), does not conform to TP:
There is nothing in the global process into which a state is recruited in virtue of which one is aware of that state.
- Also, some states have global connections without being conscious—e.g., many nonconscious thoughts, feelings, and desires.

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- And there are converse counterexamples: Many conscious states presumably lack any significant and distinctively mental global connections—e.g., relatively peripheral perceptions that are nonetheless conscious.
- Van Gulick tells us that the global state “embodies ... reflexive self-awareness,” partly because the complex or many of its parts refer to oneself.
- But globally connected mental states can do that without being conscious.
- And TP requires that one be conscious of the state, not simply conscious of oneself.

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- For a state to be conscious, on Kriegel's view, it is not enough that a higher-order state occur along with it; the two must be *fused* into a single state, perhaps by occurring in *neural synchrony*.
- But an explanation of consciousness must be cast in the first instance *not in neural terms*, but in *mental* terms; only after we understand consciousness in mental terms can we find its neural correlate.
- Moreover, since the fusion of the two states is *unnecessary for implementing TP*, it's unclear that there is any *non-question-begging* reason to insist on it.

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- Brentano (1973/1874) posits intrinsic *object awareness*, not propositional awareness—as in seeing an object, not that something is the case (see Textor 2006, 2007, forthcoming).
- An object is itself presented, Brentano argues, in a presentation of perceiving it.
- This requires that the presentation is not propositional, but a presentation of a thing—as in seeing something, as against seeing that something is the case.
- So an object will be presented twice in consciously perceiving unless perceiving it and being aware of perceiving it are a single presentation.

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- This echoes Aristotle's views in de Anima Γ2 (about which a bit at the end of §IV).
- But it's arguable that all conceptualized awareness of objects is propositional, described in abstraction from the rest of the intentional content.
- Object awareness occurs in sensing—as in seeing a thing.
But it's doubtful that sensing figures in the presentation and awareness of conscious states—
even of qualitative conscious states—
since there are no higher-order mental qualities.

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III. The Phenomenological Appearances

- Arguments for intrinsicism often rely, directly or indirectly, on the phenomenological appearances.
- Such an appeal might argue either
 - ➔ (1) that the theory is needed to save the phenomenological appearances; or
 - ➔ (2) that the phenomenology, by itself, reveals something about the nature of the underlying mental reality.

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- But these two things are very different.
- Any theory must explain, and do justice to, the phenomenological appearances, and so must build on an accurate description of those appearances.
- But that explanation need not take those appearances to reflect or match the actual mental properties of the relevant states.
- The consciousness of mental states is simply how those states appear to one—i.e., the way one is conscious of oneself as being in various mental states.
- A state's being conscious is a matter of how one represents that state to oneself.

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- Since the consciousness of a state is the way the state appears to one, the actual mental properties a state has may diverge in various respects from the way one represents that state to oneself—i.e., from its phenomenological appearances.
- Phenomenology is (first-person) mental appearance, and it's crucial to get it right; but there is more to mental reality.
- That a state's phenomenological appearance may diverge from its actual mental properties is evident from cases of mental states that aren't conscious at all.

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- That's because mental states that aren't conscious have no phenomenological appearance.
- And, as with other cases of being conscious of things, when a state is conscious, there's no guarantee that the way one is conscious of the state will match all of its actual mental properties.
- When we explain the phenomenological appearances, moreover, we must do so by appeal to the actual mental properties of whatever mental states figure in those appearances.

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- Indeed, explaining the phenomenological appearances by appeal simply to those appearances themselves would at best be uninformatively circular.
- The phenomenological appearances are the explanandum—that which is to be explained—
not the explanans—the factors that do the explaining (the distinction is due to Hempel and Oppenheim 1948).
- Some theorists urge that this distinction between phenomenology and underlying mental reality is problematic.
I'll come back to that in §IV.

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- Intrinsicism is thus a conflicted theory:
- The invoking of higher-order awareness is theoretical in spirit, whereas the insistence that, since that awareness is an aspect of a state that's conscious, the awareness itself must be conscious is phenomenologically motivated.
- The resulting combination misconstrues how phenomenology actually figures in a theory of conscious states.
- Intrinsicism defends all this by the need to avoid regress; but regress arises only if the higher-order awareness must be conscious. And plainly it often isn't.

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- Because phenomenology and underlying mental properties can diverge, the phenomenological appearances are not a reliable guide to the mental reality underlying those appearances.
- One example is especially relevant to how TP is implemented: We are aware of our conscious states in a way that seems phenomenologically direct, unmediated.
- Still, it may be that there is much actual mediation between those states and our awareness of them; it's just that it seems phenomenologically that nothing mediates.

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- Compare perceiving:
Nothing seems phenomenologically to mediate between physical objects and our perceptions of them, though we know that much actually does.
- Similarly, it might be that a lot actually mediates between a conscious state and our higher-order awareness of it, even though it seems, subjectively, i.e., phenomenologically, as though nothing does.
- The phenomenological appearances alone tell us only that consciousness seems unmediated, not that it actually is.

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- Moreover, we can explain the apparent immediacy as due to distinct HOTs that rely on no conscious inference.
- Van Gulick and Kriegel have independently claimed that this condition is ad hoc in the context of a higher-order theory.
- But it's not.
- It's invoked specifically to show how TP is implemented: It's to capture the way our awareness of our conscious states seems to be subjectively direct—i.e., unmediated.
- A state is not conscious if one is aware of it just by consciously observing oneself or taking somebody's word about the state.

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- Kriegel rejects the appeal to nonconscious inference, arguing that conscious inferences always rest on conscious premises; but the state HOTs refer to isn't conscious until a HOT makes one conscious of it.
- But not all the premises in a conscious inference need be conscious.
- Also, the premises one uses in inferring that one is in some mental state would pertain only to one's behavior, the application of a theory to oneself, or what others tell one. No premise in one's inference would refer to state itself.

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- By itself, moreover, intrinsicalism does not explain the apparent, subjective immediacy of our higher-order awareness: That awareness might be intrinsic and yet be mediated—and even seem to be.
- Not only might there be factors internal to the state that mediate one's higher-order awareness; internal factors might actually make it seem to be mediated.
- (Intrinsicalism is irrelevant to referential immediacy, should that obtain, and causal immediacy is unlikely, since something must mediate states' switching between being conscious and not.)

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- It doesn't seem phenomenologically as though the higher-order awareness of conscious states consists in distinct states.
- But that doesn't support intrinsicism:
Distinct higher-order states (e.g., HOTs) would themselves seldom be conscious.
- A HOT would be conscious only when one has a third-order thought about it— as in introspective consciousness.
- And, when the higher-order state is not conscious, one is aware only of the first-order target.
So it will then seem subjectively as though there is only a single state.

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- Still, since we're seldom aware of higher-order awareness of conscious states (more about that in a moment), the phenomenological appearances don't actually tell us that higher-order awareness is intrinsic.
- We are aware of our higher-order awareness when we introspect, i.e., when we deliberately attend some mental state.
- But that leaves untouched the far more common nonintrospective conscious cases.
- Also, intrinsicism may have problems with the difference between introspective and nonintrospective cases, since it sees all higher-order awareness as conscious.

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- On the distinct HOT hypothesis, HOTs are not ordinarily conscious, though they are when we introspect.
- But intrinsicism holds that, since the higher-order content is intrinsic to the conscious state, it's always conscious. If so, introspecting can't be the special case in which that content is conscious.
- Some intrinsicists urge that introspecting differs because of a shift of attention to the higher-order awareness, making the higher-order content focally, and not merely peripherally, conscious (e.g., Kriegel and David Woodruff-Smith).

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- But there are problems with that.
- For one thing, that requires that the higher-order content is already conscious, albeit only peripherally, and it's unclear that it generally is (more on this in a moment).
- One inviting model for how such a shift in attention might occur, endorsed by Van Gulick ("HOGS," 76-7), is Christopher Hill's volume-control model of introspection (Sensations: A Defense of Type Materialism, ch. 5, pp. 117-138):
Attention to a state's mental properties makes it more intense and vivid, enhancing its character and existence.

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- But the changes that occur when we introspect may not be changes in the target state's mental properties, as against changes simply in the way we're conscious of those properties.
- We have no independent evidence—from priming or other experimental work—that changes in introspected states are real, rather than merely apparent.
- More crucial, it's not clear that the greater intensity results from a shift of attention, as intrinsicists say, as against the higher-order awareness's coming to be conscious, as on the distinct HOT hypothesis.

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- Doubtless if a higher-order awareness changes from not being conscious to being conscious, attention will shift to that higher-order awareness.
- Intrinsicism explains what's special about introspective consciousness as solely a shift of attention, since it insists that the higher-order awareness is conscious even in nonintrospectively conscious states.
- But we'll see that there is compelling reason to reject that insistence.

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- Kriegel's shift-of-attention model may seem more promising because, when we do attentively see or think something, that attention can easily lead one to be introspectively aware of the state—and hence to be aware of the relevant higher-order content.
- Still, even in that attentive case, there is often no awareness of the higher-order content.
- Moreover, the *inattentive cases*, in which we plainly aren't aware of any higher-order content, are decisive.

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- Phenomenology does tell us about our higher-order awareness when we introspect our mental states.
- But what it tells us is very likely only that our higher-order awareness doesn't seem *wholly independent* from the states we're thereby conscious of, not that our awareness seems actually to be *intrinsic to* that state.
- And these two are different: States can be distinct and yet *not be wholly independent*—e.g., by having various causal connections.

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- Kriegel urges that the higher-order content that implements TP is always phenomenologically manifest— i.e., always conscious.
- If so, introspective consciousness might, as he holds, result from a shift in attention to that higher-order content, since the content would then already be conscious.
- But it's unlikely that we are in general conscious of any higher-order content.
- This is clear from the case of conscious, but relatively peripheral perceptions; plainly we are conscious of no higher-order awareness in connection with them.

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- Kriegel argues that the higher-order content must be conscious because “unconscious representation does not qualify as awareness (in that it is not phenomenologically manifest)” (“Naturalizing Subjective Character,” 28).
- He continues: “[T]o be aware of a table, one must harbor a conscious representation of it” (28, n. 16; Kriegel’s emphasis).
- He concludes that the subjectivity of a “conscious experience cannot consist in an unconscious mental state” (n. 16).

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- But that runs together a state's being conscious with its making one conscious of something: *Being in a state can result in being aware of something even when that state is not itself a conscious state.*
- This is clear from *subliminal perceiving*, in which we're *aware of something by way of a state of seeing that is not itself conscious.*
- The subjectivity of a conscious experience consists in *one's being conscious of oneself as having that experience.*
- But that higher-order awareness need not itself be conscious.

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- Kriegel's claim that being conscious of something requires one's representation of it to be *conscious* conflates a state's being conscious with its making one conscious of that thing.
- In thus echoes Dretske's (1993, 1994, ch. 4) first-order theory, *on which a state's being conscious actually consists simply in its making one conscious of something.*
- Intrinsicalism seems thus torn between TP and first-order intuitions, here, and also in sidestepping nonconscious mental states and in resisting the idea that states can be conscious in some respects but not others.

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- So even though it seems subjectively that only one state is involved in a state's being conscious, there is no theoretical reason why there may not actually be two distinct states: The state one is conscious of and the distinct consciousness of that state.
- Again: Explaining the phenomenological appearances means explaining how those appearances arise.
The explaining does not itself require appeal to those appearances, much less taking them to be true to the actual mental properties of the relevant states.

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- The phenomenological appearances tell us only how conscious states seem to be in our stream of consciousness, not how those states really are, independent of the way they appear.
- Running those together is the Cartesian error of assuming that, for mental occurrences, there is no distinction between appearance and reality: that mental appearance is mental reality.
- But it's important to distinguish the mental from the consciously mental—i.e., from consciousness.

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- The appearances of consciousness are, of course, the reality of consciousness:
The consciousness of mental states just is the way those states appear to one.
- But not all mental states are conscious. And mental states that aren't conscious, though they lack any phenomenological appearance, do still have an underlying mental reality.
- So, even though the appearance of consciousness is its reality, the appearance of mental states may well diverge from the actual mental properties of those states.

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- One motivation for intrinsicism is the threat of regress that TP seems to pose.
- A state's being conscious is due to some higher-order awareness; so if that awareness must itself be conscious, regress ensues unless some awareness is conscious by being aware of itself.
- Phenomenology encourages that classical Hegelian move, since even though appearance and reality don't coincide for the mental, they do for consciousness.
- But as noted earlier, the higher-order awareness not only need not be conscious, but seldom is.

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- Intrinsicism sets out to build the phenomenological appearances into the theory, relying on the Cartesian thesis that mental appearance simply is mental reality.
 - But a higher-order awareness will result in the very same phenomenological appearances whether or not that higher-order awareness of conscious states is intrinsic to those states.
- So there can be no theoretical advantage stemming from phenomenology to insisting that that awareness is intrinsic.

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IV. Troubles with Intrinsicism

- The claimed advantages of intrinsic higher-order content are arguably illusory.
- But there are, in addition, serious difficulties that an intrinsicist theory must contend with.
- A principal difficulty has to do with the individuation of mental states.

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- Intrinsicism claims that the higher-order awareness that implements TP is *intrinsic* to the state one is aware of; the anti-intrinsicist insists that this awareness is due to a *distinct state*.
- Both claims are plainly *idle* without some way to *individuate* mental states—and, indeed, a way that's *independent* of the issue about intrinsicism.
- Kriegel has proposed various ways to individuate on which there would be only one state; but it's not clear that any of them works.
- Let's look at each.

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- If one is *glad* that *p*, one must *believe* that *p*. So perhaps believing that *p* is actually a *part* of being glad that *p*. So this might model the way higher-order awareness is a part of the conscious state.
- No. It's usually held that being glad requires a *distinct state of believing*. And we'll see there's good reason for that.
- *Binding*: Separate information about red and about circularity is *integrated* into a single state that represents a red circle. So perhaps that kind of integration also occurs *when one represents oneself as being in that first-order perceptual state*.

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- Kriegel is clear that such binding does not by itself yield consciousness.
- Even though the bound representations of red and circularity often has conscious subjective character, it needn't: *Nonconscious sensations of red circles* do occur subliminally.
- More important, it's not clear that *distinct* informational states about redness and circularity are *mental* states at all— as against being *subpersonal* states.
- So binding also can't provide a suitable model for the way higher-order awareness might be intrinsic to conscious states.

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- Kriegel's most promising suggestion is that a *conscious* sensation of a red circle might have this intentional content:
This particular is red and circular and represented (hereby) to be red and circular ("Naturalizing," 15).
- The 'hereby' is to ensure that a single state *represents itself* as representing something as being red and circular.
- But, by itself, the mere availability of such a content gives us *no reason to think that any states actually have such content*.
- And it's *subjectively implausible* that any states do have such content consciously.

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- If intrinsicism is true, perhaps conscious perceptual states have such content—
This particular is red and circular and represented (hereby) to be red and circular.
- But there seems no independent way to confirm the occurrence of that content, as against two states, one having the first-order content and the other the higher-order content.
- More important, that device won't work for the mental qualities of perceiving, which cannot be incorporated in any way into a unifying intentional content.

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- The failure of unifying intentional content to help with mental qualities is especially damaging, since the phenomenological appeal of intrinsicism is strongest for the case of conscious mental qualities.
- It's also unclear that Kriegel's proposal—
This particular is red and circular and represented (hereby) to be red and circular
by itself represents the state as a state of oneself, as against a free-floating state, though 'hereby' could doubtless be expanded to incorporate suitable reference to oneself.

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- Kriegel urges that a state will have that content whenever the relevant neural representations occur in synchrony.
- That's presumably why he insists, as noted earlier, that such neural synchrony is needed for consciousness.
- But as noted earlier, we need an account of consciousness in strictly mental terms before we can find a neural correlate.
- And how could neural synchrony transform the content of a representation of representations of red and circularity into a single representation that "hereby" represents all three representations?

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- Kriegel holds that the higher-order content, though referring only to a state's first-order content, can make one aware of the state's higher-order content as well.
- That, he argues, is because one can refer to a whole by referring one of its parts.
- But one would then refer to the whole only in respect of that part, and thereby make one conscious of the whole only in respect of the one part.
- The higher-order content would not then make one aware of every mental aspect of the state that has that content.

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- In particular, if the higher-order content referred to a state only as having first-order content, one would not thereby be conscious of the state as having that higher-order content.
- The state would then not be conscious in respect of its higher-order content.
- Similarly, a state could have higher-order content that referred to itself only in respect of that higher-order content.
- Again: Even if neural synchrony could fuse states with first- and higher-order contents into a single state, the two contents would themselves be unchanged.

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- All that aside, the individuating of mental states hinges not on their representational content, but on their mental attitude.
- A single state can have multiple pieces of representational content: qualitative character and intentional content, and indeed several of each.
- But no single state has two distinct mental attitudes.
- No single state can be a wondering and a doubting, or a believing and a wondering, or an expecting and a recalling,
- In that way, at least, mental attitudes individuate (intentional) mental states.

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- Moreover, the higher-order awareness that implements TP must always have an assertoric mental attitude:
- If I doubt that I'm in a particular state or wonder whether I am or expect myself to be, that by itself won't make me conscious of myself as being in that state.
So it won't implement TP.
- So when I consciously doubt, wonder, or expect something, there is the doubt, wonder, or expectation that I'm conscious of, and there is in addition my assertoric higher-order awareness of that state.

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- Since the state I'm aware of is not assertoric and the higher-order awareness is (whether it's a thought or a perception), they must be distinct states (Rosenthal, 2005, ch. 2).
- Kriegel urges that mental attitude can be "cashed out" (Synthese 2003, 487; cf. "Naturalizing," 40-1) in terms of Searle's (1983) notion of "direction of fit," and that a single state can have both world-to-mind and mind-to-world directions of fit.
- Kriegel appeals to theories that hold that grasping the good is in itself motivational, so that some assertoric states are in themselves also desires (e.g., Little 1997).

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- But whatever the case about that, *there is more to mental attitude than what is captured with direction of fit.*
- Direction of fit at best captures only assertoric and desiderative states, not the whole variety of mental attitudes.
- Even if some states are at once assertoric and desiderative, *no assertoric state can also be a state of doubting or wondering.*
- Individuation by mental attitude also helps with the connection one's *being glad* has to one's having various beliefs: Since being glad is a distinct mental attitude from belief, they distinct states.

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- Individuating by way of mental attitude, unlike by way of content, allows also for an *independent, empirical basis for such individuation,* at least in the case of language users.
- The illocutionary force of speech acts at least roughly matches the mental attitude of the intentional state that causes the speech act, and so provides an empirical handle for individuating mental attitudes.
- By contrast, saying that *p&q* might simply express a single thought that *p* and *q*, but it equally might express one thought that *p* together with a distinct thought that *q*.

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- Since *purely qualitative states have no mental attitude*, they too are distinct from states of higher-order awareness, which must have an assertoric mental attitude.
- Still, it may seem that the consciousness of *qualitative states* calls for special treatment.
- In particular, there are issues that have suggested to some that—*in the qualitative case*—one's higher-order awareness *cannot be distinct* from the state one is conscious of.
- I'll consider one popular argument to that effect.

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- Suppose, *arguendo*, that the higher-order awareness is *distinct* from the qualitative state that it's an awareness of.
- Then perhaps one could have, e.g., a *red* sensation (which in itself isn't conscious) and a higher-order awareness of that sensation *as a green sensation*.
- One might then even have a higher-order awareness *without any sensation at all*.
- *It may seem unclear what these situations would be like for one* (Levine 2000, Neander 1998); so maybe it's best to rule them out.
- And perhaps higher-order content can't be erroneous if, *unlike perceiving*, it's intrinsic.

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- But *being intrinsic does not prevent error*: Even if higher-order awareness is intrinsic, it might still *misrepresent* the state's mental properties (as Kriegel now acknowledges; "Naturalizing," nn. 10, 45); one would then be conscious of the state as having mental properties distinct from those it has.
- Indeed, even if each higher-order awareness is intrinsic to the state it's about, that state *might altogether lack any first-order mental properties*; there would, in effect, be *no first-order state* at all.
- So intrinsicism allows these cases no less than do distinct higher-order states.

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- Also, what it's like for one in these cases is *not problematic* (pace Neander and Levine).
- Since consciousness is simply how one's states *appear to one*, a state's being conscious *consists in one's being conscious of oneself as being in that state*.
- And that's independent of whether *the higher-order awareness is intrinsic or not*.
- What it's like for one hinges *solely on how one is aware of the state in question*, i.e., how one's higher-order awareness—*whether distinct or intrinsic*—represents it.
- The appeal to phenomenology again conflates mentality with consciousness.

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- Some regard these cases as impossible, since they think we can have access to mental qualities only through the way those qualities are conscious.
- That necessary tie to consciousness forces a contingent tie to perception, and hence the possibility of undetectable absent and inverted qualities— while ruling out the inversion or absence of states we're conscious of (Rosenthal 2005).
- But the occurrence of nonconscious qualitative states (as revealed, e.g., by priming) undermines any necessity of the tie mental qualities have to consciousness.

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- If access to mental qualities is solely by way of consciousness, consciousness can't get them wrong, as regards their identity or occurrence.
- So your qualities might then be inverted relative to mine, or even absent altogether.
- But mental qualities occur nonconsciously, as in subliminal perceiving, and we can identify them by their perceptual role.
- Since consciousness and perceptual role can diverge, mental qualities can be inverted or even absent relative to the way one is conscious of oneself as being in qualitative states.

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- One can be aware of a sensation of red as a sensation of green, thereby being conscious of oneself as having a sensation of green. The appearance of one's mental life can diverge from its reality.
- Still, the resulting *dissonance* can be costly: A red sensation will prompt to react as though one is seeing a red object, whereas being aware of oneself as having a green sensation will prompt to react as though one is seeing a green object.
- But intrinsicism would not in any case help suppress such occurrences.

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- Intrinsicism also runs afoul of well-known experimental work of *Benjamin Libet* (1985; Libet, Gleason, and Wright 1983), replicated and refined by *Patrick Haggard* (1999; Haggard and Eimer 1999; Haggard, Newman, and Magno 1999; see also Kornhuber and Deecke 1975, and Deecke, Grözinger, and Kornhuber 1976).
- Those results show that, when subjects consciously decide to perform a simple action, the neural event (readiness potential) that initiates the action occurs prior to any conscious volition.
- The best interpretation of these results requires distinguishing a volition itself from that volition's being conscious.

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- Subjects are conscious of volitions only after the relevant readiness potential.
- So we can identify that readiness potential with the volition in a nonconscious condition—
and see the Libet-Haggard results as indicating a lag between the initial onset of the volition itself and that volition's becoming conscious.
- It's likely that this holds for all intentional states—though others are harder to test.
- But if higher-order content were intrinsic to conscious states, how could we explain the delay in states' becoming conscious?

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- Perhaps if the higher-order awareness were not simply intrinsic but also quasi-perceptual, it would be unable to misrepresent the state it's intrinsic to.
- Inaccurate perceiving typically occurs because something goes wrong in the extrinsic causal chain leading from the thing perceived to the perceiving.
- And if awareness is intrinsic to what one is aware of, it seems that there is no causal step that could go wrong.
- This is the Aristotelian idea that, for things with no matter, the act of thinking and the object of thought coincide (Met. Λ9 1075a2-4).

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- But this Aristotelian picture is unfounded. There is just no reason why higher-order content that's intrinsic to a state with other mental properties must represent those other properties accurately.
- Higher-order content, even if intrinsic, need not result solely from those other mental properties. And even if it did, whatever internal process leads from one to the other could still go wrong.
- This Aristotelian picture may seem to guarantee accuracy only as long as one doesn't press on the mechanisms that generate the higher-order content.

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- That Aristotelian picture on which self-knowledge is automatically accurate relies on a literal identity of knowing and perceiving with what's known and perceived (DA Γ2, 425b12-20, B5 418a4, B11 423b31, B12, 424a18, Γ2 425b23; Met Λ9, 1074b35-6).
- And if they are identical, no mechanism is needed to generate higher-order content; so none could go wrong, resulting in error.
- Brentano's intrinsicalism also relies on that Aristotelian picture (1973/1874, 129).
- But it's hard to see how the identity of knowing with what's known can be cashed out in a way that's both literal and true.

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- Van Gulick thinks distinct HOTs result in “stranded qualia”—that neither the nonconscious first-order state nor a purely intentional higher-order state could capture conscious qualitative character.
- But the nonconscious first-order state does capture qualitative character—by way of its distinctive perceptual role.
- And the higher-order state makes one conscious of oneself as being in such a state.
- The perceptual role and subjectivity of so-called qualia are carried by distinct states, in a useful explanatory division of labor.

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- That division of labor is required, since masked priming studies (e.g., Marcel 1983) plainly demonstrate the occurrence of qualitative states that aren't conscious.
- An especially dramatic case of priming by nonconscious qualitative states occurs in change blindness (Fernandez-Duque and Thornton 2000, 2003; Laloyaux, Destrebecqz, and Cleeremans 2003, Silverman and Mack 2006), in which changes that aren't consciously registered nonetheless prime for subsequent mental functioning, showing that qualitative states register those changes nonconsciously.

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- It's in any case a good thing theoretically to hold open the possibility of inaccurate higher-order awareness.
- That possibility is testable—again, e.g., by priming experiments:
Some qualitative occurrence might prime a subject for red qualitative states, even though the subject reports, and is conscious of, that qualitative occurrence as green.
- Positing distinct higher-order states not only ensures theoretical flexibility; it reflects the difference between mental appearance and mental reality.

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Brief Epilogue

- Theories of consciousness, such as intrinsicalism, Dretske's first-order theory, inner sense, and the HOT hypothesis, all seek primarily to explain what it is for a state to be conscious.
- Intrinsicalism arguably fails in that, since it substitutes phenomenology for explanation, and it fails to individuate states in such a way that the higher-order awareness is intrinsic to the state one is conscious of.

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- But explaining what it is for a state to be conscious is not the only task a theory of consciousness must take on.
- It should also explain why some mental states are conscious—not just what it is in virtue of which conscious states differ from mental states that are not conscious, but in addition what it is that results in some of them actually being conscious.
- Intrinsicists tend to sidestep this second explanatory task by tacitly holding with Brentano that mental states are all conscious. So there's nothing to explain.

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- But as already noted, there is compelling evidence that all mental states—qualitative as well as purely intentional—occur without being conscious.
- And intrinsicism has no resources to explain what leads to some mental states' being conscious—given that others are not.
- The factors responsible for some mental states' being conscious are extrinsic to those states, since intrinsic factors would result in all mental states' being conscious.
- And intrinsicism itself has nothing to say about any factors extrinsic to the mental states that are conscious.

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- As noted in §III, intrinsicism in effect combines TP with a first-order theory.
- A first-order theory can readily explain why states are conscious; since being conscious on a first-order theory is being a state in virtue of being in which one is conscious of something, evolution will arguably select for conscious states.
- And if HOTs are distinct states, TP can figure in an explanation of why some, but not all, mental states are conscious (Rosenthal 2005, 218-9, 303-305; 2008; forthcoming).
- But positing an intrinsic implementation of TP precludes an informative explanation.

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- Here again intrinsicism trades away the ability to explain so as to appeal solely to the phenomenological appearances.
- Phenomenology seems to suggest that all mental states are conscious—even though it lacks access to any that might not be.
- Since many aren't conscious, our higher-order awareness of some states must be due to factors extrinsic to those states.
- And that suggests that the higher-order awareness is itself extrinsic to such states.
- It is the sole reliance on phenomenology, which itself seems intrinsic to conscious states, that encourages intrinsicism.

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Summary

- Intrinsicism rests on
 - (1) conflating what's mental with what's conscious and mental appearance with mental reality, which results in
 - (2) trading in explanation for an illicit reliance on phenomenology, and so
 - (3) not seeing that all the same issues arise whether or not higher-order awareness is intrinsic.

THE END