



Does Inner Awareness Always Accompany Outer Awareness During Perception?

Madhu Mangal Chaturvedi

School of Philosophy & Culture
Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University
E-mail: vijai.madhu@srmvdu.ac.in
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3884-4244>

A. V. Ravishankar Sarma

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur
E-mail: avrs@iitk.ac.in

Abstract. In the present paper, we defend the thesis that outer-world-directed perceptual consciousness is always accompanied by an inner awareness (IAOA). This is contrary to the view that outer-world-directed conscious mental states are not accompanied by an inner awareness, which is held by Gennaro (2008) against Kriegel's (2009a and 2009b) self-representationalism. We attempt to show why philosophers like Gennaro get it wrong when they deny the IAOA thesis by critically examining his arguments against it and by giving arguments in its favour.

Keywords: Inner Awareness; Perceptual Consciousness; Self-representationalism; Higher-Order-Thought

Ar vidinis žinojimas percepcijos metu visada lydi išorinį žinojimą?

Santrauka. Straipsnyje ginama tezė, kad į išorinį-pasaulį-nukreiptą perceptyvinę sąmonę arba *išorinį* žinojimą visada lydi *vidinis* žinojimas (VŽIŽ). Tai prieštarauja nuomonei, jog į išorinį-pasaulį-nukreiptos sąmoningos psichinės būsenos nėra lydimos vidinio žinojimo. Būtent tokia vadovaujasi Gennaro (2008) kritikuodamas Kriegelio (2009a; 2009b) savi-reprezentacionalizmą. Straipsnyje siekiama parodyti kodėl filosofai, mąstantys kaip Gennaro, klysta neigdami VŽIŽ tezę; tuo tikslu straipsnyje kritiškai tiriami filosofo argumentai prieš šią tezę ir pateikiami ją palaikantys argumentai.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: vidinis žinojimas, perceptyvinė sąmonė, savi-reprezentacionalizmas, aukštesnės eilės mintis.

Received: 25/11/2018. Accepted: 03/09/2019

Copyright © Madhu Mangal Chaturvedi, A. V. Ravishankar Sarma, 2019. Published by Vilnius University Press.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC BY), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

1. Introduction

Perceptual mental states are representational states. To be perceptually conscious of any object is to have a mental representation of it. Certainly not all mental representations are conscious. There has to be a mechanism that separates conscious from unconscious mental representations. Higher-Order Representational (HOR) theory offers one such account (Armstrong 1968, 1997; Carruthers 2000, 2005; Gennaro 1996, 2011; Kriegel 2005, 2009b, 2009a; Lycan 1996, 2004; Rosenthal 1986, 1993, 2005). HOR theorists argue that a mental state is conscious if and only if the subject of that mental state is aware of being (present) in that state (Gennaro 2005a; Kriegel 2009b: 357). There is a wide disagreement among the proponents of HOR theory as to what the nature of the representational relation between the higher-order state and its target state is. Those philosophers who argue that this representational relation is quasi-perceptual are considered to be higher-order perception theorists (Armstrong 1968; Lycan 1996, 2004). According to this formulation of HOR theory, each higher-order mental state represents its target state, just as we represent objects via perception. However, another group of philosophers propose that the representational relation between a first-order mental state and a higher-order mental state is cognitive, like thought, and so they are Higher-Order Thought (HOT) theorists (Gennaro 1996, 2011; Rosenthal 1986, 1997, 2004).

Peter Carruthers (2000) differentiates his *dispositionalist* HOT theory from Rosenthal and Gennaro's position, which he calls *actualist* HOT theories. The difference between the actualist and dispositionalist HOT theories is that, according to the former, an HOT *must* occur in order to render the target state conscious, whereas, Carruthers' theory does not make any commitment conveying that an HOT need actually occur. It may simply be dispositional.¹ In this paper we are concerned with Gennaro's Actualist HOT theory.

Now, according to Higher-Order Thought theory, the representational relation between higher-order and lower-order mental states is thought-like, i.e. cognitive in nature. A mental state is conscious, according to HOT, if it is suitably represented by another distinct higher-order mental state, a thought.² According to HOT, I am perceptually conscious of the desktop monitor in front of me by virtue of representing this perceptual mental state by another distinct higher-order mental state, a meta-psychological state, a thought. My being perceptually conscious of the desktop monitor is an example of an outer-world-directed mental state. Now, as far as outer-world-directed mental states are concerned, according to HOT theory, defended by philosophers such as Rosenthal (2002) and Gennaro (1996, 2011), we are not always conscious of being in those mental states. For example, I am conscious of the desktop monitor but not of the fact that I am seeing the monitor. This observation is explained by the fact that the higher-order thought is unconscious. It is only during introspection that we are conscious of being in a mental state.

¹ Cf. Schlicht (2011: 495)

² See Kriegel (2009b: 357-358) for more on the distinction between higher-order and lower-order states in the discussion between *one-level* and *two-level* theories of consciousness.

So, according to HOT, the first-order, perceptual mental state M is conscious when it is represented by an unconscious HOT M_1 , where $M_1 \neq M$. In other words, the mental state M and HOT representing it are numerically distinct. This HOR theory, however, leaves a gap between experience and its awareness, which, Kriegel (2005, 2009a) argues, is not supported by our feelings of immediacy and the closeness between our awareness and the conscious experience. We are necessarily aware of all our conscious experiences, and not aware of any unconscious experience. This is what Kriegel calls the “awareness thesis”. According to Self-Representationalism (SR), a perceptual outer-world-directed mental state is conscious if there is inner awareness accompanying it in such a way that the mental state and the inner awareness of it are not two numerically distinct states. A mental state is conscious if it is a self-directed mental state. In other words, if it has inner awareness directed upon itself.

Kriegel’s SR requires that, not just outer-world-directed ones, but all mental states representing phenomenal experience be accompanied by inner awareness. Since Kriegel relies on the so far rather uncontroversial distinction between focal and peripheral awareness in the case of outer world-directed-perceptual states, Gennaro (2006, 2008, 2012) has argued against the thesis that outer focal consciousness is accompanied by inner peripheral (self-) awareness. This is an attempt to refute Kriegel’s SR regarding consciousness.

Let us call the thesis that outer-world-directed perceptual states are accompanied by an inner awareness as IAOA for short. The present paper argues for the IAOA thesis. In order to do this, we attempt to show why philosophers like Gennaro get it wrong when they deny this thesis by critically examining his arguments against it.³ In section 2, we elaborate on the IAOA thesis by showing that the crux of the matter does not depend on the distinction between focal and peripheral awareness, which is central to the debate between Gennaro’s HOT (1996, 2012) and Kriegel’s SR (2009). Instead, the direct question is whether there is inner awareness accompanying all our perceptual consciousness. In Section 3, we critically examine Gennaro’s arguments against the IAOA thesis and present three arguments in its support. It will be clear during the discussion of these arguments that they address the issues related to the debate in a certain logical order. We end the paper with concluding remarks in Section 4.

2. The Distinction between Focal and Peripheral Awareness, and the IAOA Thesis

Following William James, philosophers tend to distinguish between focal and peripheral perceptual awareness. When I am typing these words, my consciousness is focussed on the desktop screen. However, there are other objects in the periphery of my visual field.

³ In this paper, we assume that the inner awareness of first-order mental states (outer world directed) does not necessarily imply self-awareness of any kind, whether focal or peripheral, as argued by Uriah Kriegel (2009a), who supports the self-representational account of state consciousness. We argue that inner awareness is a ubiquitous feature of outer-world-directed mental states, but inner self-awareness is present only in cases of introspection.

The idea is that one is always aware of some object focally and others peripherally. Applying the focal-peripheral perceptual awareness distinction to outer-world-directed and inner-mind-directed mental states, Gennaro (2008) mentions four combinations:

- 1) Outer focal and outer peripheral awareness (OFOP)
- 2) Inner focal and inner peripheral (self-) awareness (IFIP)
- 3) Inner focal and outer peripheral awareness (IFOP) and
- 4) Outer focal and inner peripheral (self-) awareness (OFIP).

Out of these four, Gennaro rejects OFIP, the thesis that “We (at least sometimes) have outer focal consciousness accompanied by inner peripheral conscious (self-) awareness” (Gennaro 2008: 42). However, according to Kriegel, this inner peripheral conscious (self-) awareness, is what makes a mental state conscious. Kriegel starts with the observation that to be conscious of one’s mental state is to have an inner awareness (a “for-me-ness”) of that mental state. This inner awareness of one’s own mental state makes it subjective. The inner awareness which Kriegel identifies as the subjective element is, rather, the familiar notion of the peripheral awareness of external objects in the objective world extended to internal objects of the subjective world like various phenomenal experiences and intentional mental states. Kriegel observes that we have *focal* and *peripheral* awareness of the objects of our sensory experience. We are not only aware of what is directly presented to us in our sensory field, but also of what is at the periphery. For instance, I am aware of the desktop screen in front of me, but I am also aware of the coffee mug at the corner of the table to my left. I am focally aware of the desktop screen and peripherally aware of the coffee mug. Similarly, we can also say that we are focally or peripherally aware of our other experiences of the world. This awareness of the very experience one is going through is a form of inner awareness. Therefore, just as there is a peripheral vision and a focal vision, or peripheral awareness and focal awareness, in the same way, there is a peripheral inner awareness of one’s experience as well as a focal inner awareness of the same. Kriegel argues that we have only peripheral awareness of our occurring experiences. However, Kriegel also points out that we can introspectively turn our attention on some experience making us focally inner aware of it. For Kriegel, peripheral inner awareness is the subjective character of experience.⁴

Kriegel prefers to identify subjectivity with peripheral inner awareness mainly because he finds it ubiquitous as compared to focal inner awareness. While focal inner awareness is *rare*, in that our stream of consciousness takes explicit notice of itself relatively infrequently, peripheral inner awareness is virtually *ubiquitous*, in that it “hums” in the background of our stream of consciousness with nearly absolute constancy and is absent only when replaced by focal inner awareness.⁵ Moreover, peripheral inner awareness is involuntary and effortless, whereas focal inner awareness is voluntary and requires effort. Obviously, ubiquity implies that we do not have voluntary control over our

⁴ See Kriegel, Uriah. *Subjective Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009a).

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 41.

peripheral inner awareness, and this means that we do not require to make any efforts towards its functioning.

However, admitting inner peripheral awareness as a ubiquitous feature of all conscious mental states creates a difficulty for Gennaro's HOT because this renders the role of unconscious meta-psychological thought redundant.⁶ This is the reason why Gennaro (2008) rejects the thesis that our Outer Focal consciousness is often or always accompanied by Inner Peripheral (self-) awareness.

The first question is: Do we really need to make a distinction between focal and peripheral awareness in the case of perception? At most we can say that there are objects which are in focus or in the periphery, depending on the direction of our attention guided by inner awareness. Although Gennaro accepts OFOP as a noncontroversial case, in stark contrast to OFIP, it can very well be argued that OF and OP do not occur simultaneously. In fact, either of them can occur only in combination with IP. Moreover, it is difficult to maintain OF simultaneously with OP. How do we arrive at the distinction between outer focal and outer peripheral awareness? That there is outer awareness means that there is a single visual field, wherein some objects are at the centre and others are at the periphery. We realize this only when we shift our attention from the object at the centre of the visual field to those on the periphery. However, this awareness of objects, whether at the centre or the periphery, requires inner awareness.

Although Gennaro (2008: 48) directly objects to the thesis that inner peripheral (self-) awareness accompanies outer focal awareness against Kriegel's self-representationalism.⁷ Kriegel's self-representationalism requires a much stronger thesis about inner awareness compared to the IAOA thesis defended in this paper.⁸ We are simply saying that some form of inner awareness always accompanies perceptual outer awareness. However, even though much weaker than Kriegel's version, if IAOA is true then it does go against the HOT theory of consciousness, which allows for only unconscious HOTs to accompany first-order perceptual states.

3. Arguments in Favour of IAOA

The following three arguments aim to show why we must accept the thesis that inner awareness accompanies outer-world-directed consciousness. The first argument uses the

⁶ Meta-psychological thought plays the same role in Gennaro's HOT as is played by unconscious higher-order thought in Rosenthal's version of HOT theory. Whereas, in Rosenthal's HOT, the unconscious higher-order thought is numerically distinct from the lower-order mental state that it represents, the meta-psychological thought is unconscious as well but it is not numerically distinct from the lower-order mental state that it represents.

⁷ "First, recall that although it is true that there are degrees of conscious attention, we have seen that the clearest examples of inattentive (or peripheral) consciousness are outer-directed; for example, perhaps some of the awareness in one's peripheral visual field while watching a concert or working on one's computer. Indeed, these are frequently the kinds of examples used, by analogy, to support OFIP. But cases of OFOP obviously do not show that any such peripheral consciousness is self-directed at the same time as when there is outer-directed attentional consciousness. This is again just to say that OFIP does not follow from OFOP".

⁸ The kind of thesis is defended by Michelle Montague (2017) which she terms 'Awareness of Awareness' (AOA). However, we do not argue that every conscious mental state is self-intimating. It is inner-awareness, which has the potential to be self-intimating during introspection.

diaphanous nature of consciousness to argue why the presence of inner awareness goes unnoticed while it accompanies outer awareness. The second argument uses the subjective character of conscious experience to show that denying IAOA means that conscious mental states lack subjectivity. The third argument is based on the functional role of inner awareness as a link between information received through outer awareness and higher-level cognitive processes, such as decision-making.

3.1. Phenomenological argument from the transparency of inner awareness

The major argument for the representational theory of consciousness comes from the transparent nature of conscious experience.⁹ When we try to look for the qualitative character of phenomenal states while perceiving any object, we find the corresponding object of experience (Harman 1990). Tye (1995) argues that it does not matter how hard we try to see via introspection the qualitative character of experience. We always end up visualizing or seeing the object which we have experience of. If we attempt to find the distinguishing qualitative character of two different experiences, we end up analyzing the respective objects of experience located externally. Phenomenal character is the property of external and spatially extended objects. According to Tye, when we turn our gaze inwards and try to focus our attention on the intrinsic features of an experience, we always seem to end up attending to what the experiences are *of* (1995: 135). My visual experience of the black and white letters I am typing on the word processor is not itself black and white. I only see black and white alphabets on the screen. By introspection we may not attend to any intrinsic quality of experience. We are only aware of qualities and properties of external objects. Only if we accept a form of strong representationalism can we explain this; i.e., we are aware of phenomenal properties just because phenomenal properties are reducible to their representational content (Siewert 2004: 18). Moreover, according to Tye, the transparency thesis covers not only perceptual states and sensations but also felt emotions, moods and elations.

The transparency argument explains why we do not find any qualitative character in the brain. According to Tye, it hardly matters how hard we peer into our brain and neural processes; we are anyway not going to find any qualitative character of our mental states. This is simply because it is just not there. Our brain is a representational system which represents the world, including our bodies. A representation does not require any resemblance between what is represented and that which it represents. All the neural processes involved in representing the “technicolor phenomenology” of the world do not themselves possess technicolor itself. In other words, any representational vehicle does not share the properties of the contents which it represents. Similarly, neural processes are vehicles for representing objects and their properties, but they do not themselves possess the properties of the objects which they are supposed to represent.

⁹ The argument from the transparency of conscious experience is advanced against the sense-datum theorists.

Now, Gennaro argues, based on his own phenomenological experience, that whenever he is attentively attending to any object during perceptual experience he is not aware of any inner-directed peripheral awareness. Our outer-world-directed first-order mental states are totally directed at the outside world and there is no awareness of any marginal or peripheral inner awareness (Gennaro 2008: 48). From his own first-person experience he arrives at the general conclusion that inner awareness does not accompany perceptual consciousness.

However, the very argument from the transparency of conscious experience, which is used, by representationalists against qualia realists, in favour of the representational nature of conscious experience, can also be used to prove IAOA. While our awareness is directed at some object out there in the world, we do not realize the presence of inner awareness due to its very transparent nature, which enables us to look through it to the object of our experience. However, we can become aware of it when we introspect.

Moreover, any perceptual experience does not only have an object but a subject too. From the phenomenological point of view, any conscious experience is not just of something but also of someone. The intentional relation between consciousness and the world does not make sense if we reject the notion that some kind of inner awareness is present while we direct our attention to the objects out there in the world. In fact, it might be the case that awareness is ontologically not divided into outer and inner awareness. All this distinction between outer and inner awareness seems more of a terminological than a real one, and more so to make it convenient for us to describe our conscious experiences. Nonetheless, it unnecessarily causes confusion too. One can simply agree that it is the same awareness directed outwards as well as inwards. The distinction is in the kind of objects to which we attend by directing our attention some inner objects, like phenomenal experiences, beliefs and thought and other outer objects, like laptops and tables. From an evolutionary point of view as well, it is more economical to have a single mechanism which generates and maintains an awareness that can change direction from inner to outer or from outer to inner, and which is controlled by the cognitive processes of attention, rather than keeping two separate mechanisms dedicated to each kind of awareness. It might be the case that it is the single awareness which primarily extends from inner towards outer and is not normally fractured into two distinct kinds: inner and outer. We posit the existence of an inner awareness and an outer awareness because we do not notice that our awareness shifts from outer to inner frequently. This shift might go unnoticed due to the very small temporal gap. Our awareness might shift swiftly from attending to internal mental objects to external non-mental objects, providing us no real cognizable temporal gap in between. This also means that we lack memory of these shifts in our attention from inner to outer and outer to inner because they happen in very quick succession. This gives us the impression that our outer awareness is temporally continuous for a considerable duration of time. Although we can, in principle, keep our awareness directed at some external object, yet sustaining this would require conscious effort and concentration. However, we normally lack such control over our minds, as cases of mind wandering suggest (Smallwood 2013,

2011b; Smallwood, Beach et al. 2008a; Smallwood, Mespadden and Schooler 2008b; Smallwood and Schooler, 2006; Smallwood, Davies et al. 2004a). To further buttress the argument from the transparency of inner awareness, we argue that it has a functional role in the perceptual experience (see Section 3.3 below).

3.2. Argument from the subjectivity of consciousness

The IAOA thesis must hold as all conscious mental states are subjective. Since subjectivity is an intrinsic feature of any conscious mental state, inner awareness seems to be the most suitable candidate for the subjective character of conscious mental states (Kriegel 2009a). This definition of subjectivity as inner awareness is wide enough to include not just phenomenal mental states but intentional mental states as well. Any conscious mental state is subjective in the sense that it belongs to a conscious subject, or the subject is aware of being in that state. For example, Mary, the protagonist of Frank Jackson's famous thought experiment (Jackson 1982), lacks colour qualia, like redness and blueness, all the while that she is in her black-and-white room. Yet she is conscious, and has subjective experiences of her monochromatic environment. She does have intentional states, such as beliefs and thoughts that she is aware of being in such an environment. What we suggest is that the definition of subjectivity as inner awareness must cover all mental states which are conscious, whether phenomenal or intentional. In other words, we should understand subjectivity as a form of inner awareness that the subject of experience has about mental states. Inner awareness is something which is common to all kinds of conscious experiences. Thus, we can say that all conscious experiences are subjective by virtue of being the content of their agent's inner awareness. We may express this in a more formal way:

- There are different kinds of conscious mental states which have something in common, viz. subjective character.
- If all conscious mental states are subjective, then there has to be one criterion which explains their subjective nature.
- All conscious mental states are subjective in the sense that they are the contents of the inner awareness of the subject.

If a mental state is subjective by virtue of being an object of the inner awareness, which the subject of the mental state in question has about it, then an outer world-directed, conscious perceptual mental state must be accompanied by inner awareness, and this is precisely what the IAOA thesis claims.

However, Gennaro's (2006, 2008, 2011) claim that the outer focal awareness of first-order (world-directed) mental states is not accompanied by inner-peripheral awareness is tantamount to rejecting that such states have subjectivity. Since Kriegel (2005, 2009a) defines subjectivity, at least in some cases, as the inner peripheral awareness which accompanies our phenomenal experiences, it becomes crucial to show that we do not realize the compresence of inner awareness and visual experience unless we introspect. As Gennaro rightly points out:

... in an attempt to diagnose the phenomenological error committed by supporters of OFIP, I suggest that they are really “reflecting” on the experiences themselves in such cases. If so, then they are consciously attending to their experiences, which is really introspective consciousness. Thus, we no longer have a phenomenological analysis of first-order conscious states; that is, there is no longer any OF at all but instead a shift to IF. And, of course, a shift to either IF thesis cannot show that OFIP is true. (Gennaro 2008: 48-49)

However, there is a similar problem with Gennaro’s HOT theory. Gennaro’s HOT theory does not successfully account for subjective character as an intrinsic feature of conscious mental states. Whereas Rosenthal’s HOT faces the problem of shifting subjectivity in explaining outer-world-directed conscious mental states, Gennaro’s (intrinsic) HOT encounters it in explaining introspective consciousness. The argument is that HOT fails to explain subjective character as a feature of lower order states in their relational model of consciousness. It is the problem of shifting subjectivity which is an argument against the relational account of subjective character. In other words, subjectivity is an intrinsic feature of a conscious mental state, and if we try to explain it in relational terms, like the HOT theories do, we face the problem of shifting subjectivity. The location of subjectivity seems to shift from a lower-order mental state to an HOT, and so on (Chaturvedi and Sarma 2019: 177).

It is true that the presence of inner awareness is not clear when it accompanies first-order, outer-world-directed mental states, such as perceptual experiences. However, as pointed out in the last section, this is due to the transparent nature of inner awareness. Now, in order to actually experience inner awareness, one does have to be in a kind of self-reflective or self-conscious mental state. Nonetheless, it does not mean that there is no inner awareness accompanying first-order mental states in the first place. One has to rely on inference and a kind of transcendental argument, which we shall now present in the next section.

3.3. Argument from the Functional Role of Inner Awareness

It can be argued that inner awareness must accompany outer-world-directed perceptual awareness because, at least in some such cases of outer perceptual awareness, perception is not a passive act but an active judgment. For instance, when I look at a picture, my awareness, while directed at the picture, is certainly accompanied by a certain emotional response or value judgment. I am not just perceptually (visually) aware of the picture but also aware that “I like the picture,” or “the picture is good.” These cases cannot be explained without reference to inner awareness, which must therefore accompany perceptual awareness.

Kriegel (2004b) too has argued for peripheral inner (self-) awareness based on functional considerations. The distinction between focal and peripheral awareness in the case of outer perceptual (visual) awareness with respect to its functional role is extended to peripheral inner (self-) awareness. The idea is that having peripheral (self-) inner awareness of the mental state enables the subject to have just enough information about it so

as to be able to access full information only when it is needed (Kriegel 2004b: 181). That is to say, this functional role of peripheral inner (self-) awareness is supported by nature's mechanisms to tackle the "cognitive overload"¹⁰ problem. When the subject has peripheral inner awareness of a conscious mental state M, according to Kriegel, "the subject possesses just enough information about M to make it possible for her to easily (i.e., quickly and effortlessly) obtain fuller information about M" (Kriegel 2004b: 181). However, in comparison, when the subject has no such peripheral inner (self-) awareness of the mental state M, in other words, is completely unaware of it, she would need to initiate certain energy-consuming and time-consuming activities to retrieve full information about M. This would certainly put pressure on the cognitive resources of the subject (Kriegel 2004b: 181-182).

However, we believe that inner awareness performs the same function that Kriegel's peripheral inner (self-) awareness does to avoid cognitive and information overload. What we suggest is that, when the subject needs fuller information about the mental state M, only then would she be self-aware of the mental state. This transition from inner awareness to self-awareness is easy, and does not require any cognitive mechanism to maintain self-awareness all the time, which certainly would require more cognitive resources.

Now, Gennaro raises the following objections to Kriegel's claim that inner peripheral (self-) awareness accompanies outer awareness, in particular, and against IAOA, in general. First, if inner peripheral (self-) awareness "is such a good thing to have from an evolutionary standpoint, then it would seem that many other animals should also have it" (Gennaro 2008: 48-49).

Against this, we can respond by pointing out that, compared to other animals, humans may have an evolutionary advantage in having inner awareness accompanied by outer awareness. In fact, it is the very presence of inner awareness and the functional role it plays in cognition that gives human beings an evolutionary advantage over members of the other species. In other words, it is possible that inner awareness happened to be part of evolutionary process that lead to the emergence of a cognitively advanced species, viz. *Homo sapiens*. Inner awareness does seem to be the link between perceptual awareness, information processing about the environment through sensory channels, and higher cognitive functions, such as introspection, problem solving and decision making.

Second, Gennaro agrees that:

The ability of an organism to shift quickly between outer- and inner-directed conscious states is surely a crucial practical and adaptive factor in the evolution of the species. For example, an animal that is able to shift back and forth between perceiving other animals (say, for potential food or danger) and introspecting its own mental states (say, a desire to eat or a fear of one's life) would be capable of a kind of practical intelligence that would be lacking otherwise. (Gennaro 2008: 51)

¹⁰ See Caruthers (2005)

Further, he also admits that in a sense he agrees with Kriegel that “having some kind of self-awareness of conscious states is very useful for evolutionary reasons” (Ibid.). However, he argues that “it is unclear to me why having unconscious self-awareness isn’t sufficient to do the job, or why having conscious peripheral self-awareness will be so much quicker or effortless when it comes to making the shift in question” (Ibid.).

It can be argued that the transition from unconscious HOT to conscious HOT occurs only in introspective awareness, which is a higher-order mental state. However, as far as information received from first-order mental states, viz. Outer-world-directed perceptual states, are concerned, it makes more sense that the information is fed to an inner awareness rather than to an unconscious HOT. The immediacy with which we are able to access information about our environment by shifting our attention from one object to the other requires that this information be directly fed to our inner awareness, the reason being, if unconscious HOT accompanies outer awareness, then, according to Gennaro, information received from outer awareness is not immediately conscious but requires further processing to become conscious only via introspection. However, as far as effective and economic use of cognitive resources is concerned, it is reasonable to assume that making unconscious information conscious each time would be more demanding on the available cognitive resources. It is easier to maintain an inner awareness accompanying the outer awareness. It seems a better mechanism despite Gennaro’s contention that “unconscious HOTs can presumably become conscious HOTs more quickly, resulting in introspective conscious mental states.” In addition, “having unconscious HOTs can thus be understood, from an evolutionary perspective, as a key stepping stone to the capacity for introspection” (Gennaro 2008, p. 51). It can be argued further that it is easier to move from inner awareness of the object of a first-order mental state to introspective awareness of the mental state itself than to introspection understood as relation between a lower-order unconscious HOT and a higher-order unconscious HOT.

Third, Gennaro argues that to admit inner awareness accompanying outer awareness is to conflate “introspective consciousness with conscious first-order states” (Ibid.). Apparently, according to Gennaro, inner awareness is not phenomenologically experienced unless introspected. However, as we have argued earlier, the transparency of conscious experience applies to inner awareness. We do not experience inner awareness because it becomes self-conscious only when we introspect.

Fourth, Gennaro argues that information received from outer awareness need not always become conscious in order to cause behaviour. “After all, it is widely held that unconscious mental states can cause behaviour and fill a functional role within an organism” (Ibid.). However, human beings have the ability to make fully conscious choices, back their actions by conscious reasoning, and be aware of hitherto unconscious mental states causing their behaviour.

Even if, for the sake of argument, we admit the distinction between focal and peripheral awareness, the occurrence of outer awareness, either focal or peripheral, totally independent of inner awareness might not be a great mechanism for those creatures which constantly review the information received from their sensory channels regarding

their external environment for threat assessments. The purpose of perception is to make the information available to the agent (which must be used constantly for reasoning and decision making by associating and comparing with other inner mental states, such as desires and beliefs) through introspection. For instance, perception by the animal of a predator in the vicinity must be immediately associated with the instinctual “desire” for self-preservation and the “belief” that the predator is a serious threat to life, and so demands a fight or flight response.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to defend the thesis that inner awareness accompanies outer perceptual awareness (IAOA). This goes against the claim that perceptual experience is conscious by virtue of being represented by an unconscious HOT, which is supported by Rosenthal and Gennaro in their respective versions of the HOT theory of consciousness. The inner-outer distinction does not make sense without consciousness, and consciousness is interiority. The idea that consciousness could be exterior is absurd. In that sense, as far as consciousness is concerned, it is inner, and this innerness or interiority is logically and ontologically prior to any outer awareness. In other words, inner awareness accompanying outer-world-directed mental states is a logical necessity. Hence, the answer to the question posed in the title of this paper is “Yes.”

References:

- Armstrong, D. M., 1968. *A Materialist Theory of Mind*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Armstrong, D. M., 1997. What is Consciousness? In *The Nature of Consciousness*, ed. N. Block, O. Flanagan, and G. Güzeldere, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 722–728.
- Carruthers, P., 2000. *Phenomenal Consciousness: A Naturalistic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carruthers, P., 2005. *Consciousness: Essays from Higher-order Perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Chaturvedi, M.M., and Sarma, A.V.R. 2019. Higher-Order Thought and the Problem of Shifting Subjectivity. *Obnovljeni život: Journal of Philosophy and Religious Studies*, 74(2): 161–179. <https://doi.org/10.31337/oz.74.2.2>
- Dretske, F., 1995. *Naturalizing the Minds*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.
- Gennaro, R., 1996. *Consciousness and Self-consciousness: A Defense of HOT Theory of Consciousness*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Gennaro, R., 2003. Papineau on the Actualist HOT Theory of Consciousness. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 81: 581–586. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aicr.6>
- Gennaro, R., 2004a. Higher-order thoughts, animal consciousness and misrepresentation: A reply to Carruthers and Levine. In *Higher-Order Theories of Consciousness: An Anthology*, ed. R. Gennaro, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 45–66. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aicr.56.05gen>
- Gennaro, R., ed. 2004b. *Higher-Order Theories of Consciousness: An Anthology*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Gennaro, R., 2005b. The HOT theory of consciousness: Between a rock and a hard place? *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 12(2): 3–21.
- Gennaro, R., 2006a. Between pure self-referentialism and the (extrinsic) HOT theory of consciousness. In *Self-Representational Approaches to Consciousness*, ed. U. Kriegel and K. Williford, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 221–248. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/6155.003.0012>

- Gennaro, R., 2008. Representationalism, peripheral awareness, and the transparency of experience. *Philosophical Studies* 139: 39–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-007-9101-4>
- Gennaro, R., 2011. *The Consciousness Paradox: Consciousness, Concepts, and HOTs*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: A Bradford Book/The MIT Press.
- Jackson, F., 1982. Epiphenomenal Qualia. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 32: 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2960077>
- Kriegel, U., and K. Williford, eds. 2006. *Self-Representational Approaches to Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kriegel, U., 2004a. Consciousness and Self-Consciousness. *The Monist*, 87: 182–205.
- Kriegel, U., 2004b. The Functional Role of Consciousness: A phenomenological approach. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 4: 171–193. <https://doi.org/10.1023/b:phen.0000040833.23356.6a>
- Kriegel, U., 2005. Naturalizing the Subjective Character. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 71: 23–56.
- Kriegel, U., 2009a. *Subjective Consciousness*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kriegel, U., 2009b. Self-representationalism and Phenomenology. *Philosophical Studies*, 143: 357–381. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-008-9204-6>
- Lycan, W. G., 1996. *Consciousness and Experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lycan, W. G., 2004. The superiority of HOP to HOT, In *Higher- Order Theories of Consciousness: An Anthology*. R. Gennaro (ed.) Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 93–113. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aicr.56.07lyc>
- McClelland, T., 2015. Affording Introspection: an alternative model of inner awareness. *Philosophical Studies*, 172(9): 2469–2492. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-014-0421-x>
- Mehta, N., 2013. Is there a phenomenological argument for higher-order representationalism? *Philosophical Studies*, 64: 357–370. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-012-9859-x>
- Montague, M., 2017. What Kind of Awareness is Awareness of Awareness? *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 94: 359–380. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18756735-09403004>
- Rosenthal, D. M., 1986. Two Concepts of Consciousness. *Philosophical Studies*, 49(3): 329–359.
- Rosenthal, D. M., 1991. The Independence of Consciousness and Sensory Quality. *Philosophical Issues*, 1: 15–36.
- Rosenthal, D. M., 1993a. State Consciousness and Transitive Consciousness. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 2: 355–363. <https://doi.org/10.1006/ccog.1993.1029>
- Rosenthal, D. M., 1997. A theory of consciousness. In *The Nature of Consciousness*, ed. N. Block, O. Flanagan, and G. Güzeldere, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 729–753.
- Rosenthal, D. M., 2004a. Varieties of higher-order theory. In *Higher- Order Theories of Consciousness: An Anthology*, ed. R. Gennaro, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 17–44. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aicr.56.04ros>
- Rosenthal, D. M., 2004b. Being Conscious of Ourselves. *The Monist*, 87: 159–181.
- Rosenthal, D. M., 2005. *Consciousness and Mind*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Smallwood, J., 2013. Distinguishing How From Why the Mind Wanders: A Process-Occurrence Framework for Self-Generated Mental Activity. *Psychological Bulletin*, 139(3): 519–535. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030010>
- Smallwood, J. (2011b). Mind-wandering while reading: Attentional decoupling, mindless reading and the cascade model of inattention. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 5: 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-818x.2010.00263.x>
- Smallwood, J., E. Beach, J. W. Schooler, and T. C. Handy. 2008a. Going AWOL in the brain: mind wandering reduces cortical analysis of external events. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 20(3): 458–69. <https://doi.org/10.1162/jocn.2008.20.3.458>
- Smallwood, J., M. Mcspadden and J. W. Schooler. 2008b. When Attention Matters: The curious incident of the wandering mind. *Memory and Cognition*, 36(6): 1144–1150. <https://doi.org/10.3758/mc.36.6.1144>

- Smallwood, J. and J. W. Schooler. 2006. The restless mind. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(6): 946–58. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.6.946>
- Smallwood, J., J. B. Davies, D. Heim, F. Finnigan, M. Sudberry, R. O'Connor, and M. Obonsawin. 2004a. Subjective experience and the attentional lapse: task engagement and disengagement during sustained attention. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 13(4): 657–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2004.06.003>
- Schlicht, T., 2011. Non-Conceptual Content and the Subjectivity of Consciousness. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 19(3): 491–520. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2011.595197>
- Siewart, C., 2004. Is Experience Transparent. *Philosophical Studies*, 117: 15–41.
- Tye, M., 1995. *Ten Problems of Consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.
- Tye, M., 2002. Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience. *Noûs*, 36 (1): 137–51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0068.00365>
- Tye, M., 2009. *Consciousness Revisited: Materialism Without Phenomenal Concepts*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262012737.001.0001>