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Consciousness and Peripheral Self-Awareness

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ABSTRACT: It has been argued that consciousness is not possible without peripheral self-consciousness; i.e., without an implicit awareness of oneself as the subject of one's mental state. My purpose is to undermine this view. I contend that a subject's first-personal access to her conscious mental states and an awareness of them as *hers*, along with a particular approach to consciousness according to which a subject cannot be unconsciously conscious of things motivate the view that consciousness is not possible without self-consciousness. In order to undermine this view I argue that not all conscious states are accompanied by a sense of *mineness*. I also reject the reasons for endorsing an approach to consciousness according to which a subject cannot be unconsciously conscious of things. Then I critically examine Kriegel's arguments for the dependence of consciousness on self-consciousness based on the first-personal access a subject has to her conscious mental states and discuss the difficulties involved.

KEYWORDS: Consciousness – higher-order theories of consciousness – peripheral self-awareness – self-consciousness.

1. Introduction

Is self-consciousness required for consciousness? It seems that the answer is no. We do not think that for a person to have a conscious perception of a tree, she needs to be aware of herself perceiving the tree. In fact, when one is intensely engaged in some mental activity, we often say that he's lost himself in it suggesting that his center of attention is not on him-

self. However, Kriegel (2004) has argued that a failure to take note of the distinction between two forms of self-consciousness is what gives way to the idea that consciousness is possible without self-consciousness. He further contends that all forms of consciousness depend on one particular form of self-consciousness, viz. intransitive state self-consciousness which consists in the peripheral awareness of oneself as the subject of one's mental state.[1]

Henceforth I refer to the view that self-consciousness is required for consciousness, in the sense that the latter is not possible in the absence of the former, as the *requirement thesis* and my purpose is to undermine it.[2] I contend that the following considerations motivate the requirement thesis. The first is the special first-personal access one has to one's inner life. After Kriegel (2004, 197) I call this *the first-person knowable property* of conscious mental states. The second consists in the mistaken view that self-consciousness is ubiquitous. The third consists in the endorsement of a particular approach to consciousness according to which a subject cannot be unconsciously conscious of things. In what follows, in order to undermine the requirement thesis, I argue that self-consciousness is not as ubiquitous as is assumed; in other words, it does not have to accompany all conscious mental states. I also reject the reasons for endorsing an approach to consciousness according to which a subject cannot be unconsciously conscious of things. Then I critically examine Kriegel's (2004) arguments for the requirement thesis based on the first-person knowable property of mental states and discuss the difficulties involved.

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[1] Henceforth by self-consciousness I mean the peripheral awareness of oneself and not the reflective, focal, introspective self-consciousness unless noted otherwise. Also I'm using 'awareness' and 'consciousness' interchangeably with one stylistic difference. When I talk about subjects being conscious of things, whether they are mental states, objects or oneself, I use 'conscious' or 'aware', but when I talk about mental states being conscious, I only use 'conscious'. This reflects the distinction Rosenthal (2005, 4) draws between transitive and state consciousness discussed later. For the moment, it is sufficient to say that the former represents subjects being conscious *of* things and the latter represents mental states being conscious where it is understood that mental states are not conscious *of* things.

[2] There have been stronger attacks on the requirement thesis, denying even the possibility that outer focal consciousness is *sometimes* accompanied by such peripheral self-awareness. See Gennaro (2008) for a discussion of this and Kriegel (2009) for replies. Also see Schear's (2009) critique of Zahavi's (2006) arguments in favor of the requirement thesis.

2. Self-consciousness and the requirement thesis

It is possible to trace the idea of no consciousness without self-consciousness – although not in so many words – as far back as to Aristotle (*On the Soul* 3.2) and his view that it is impossible to perceive something and not be aware that one is perceiving it, to which Sorabji refers as Aristotle's 'most Cartesian remark'.[3] The idea can also be found in Locke (1694/1975, 115) when he says 'thinking consists in being conscious that one thinks'. Gallagher – Zahavi's (2008) survey of the phenomenological literature[4] reveal considerable consensus that consciousness calls for self-consciousness and this self-consciousness is described as 'an intrinsic feature of primary experience ... it is not thematic or attentive or voluntarily brought about; rather it is tacit, and very importantly, thoroughly non-observational (that is, it is not a kind of introspective observation of myself) and non-objectifying (that is, it does not turn my experience into a perceived or observed object)' (Gallagher – Zahavi 2008, 46). In addition, Zahavi (2006) himself argues that consciousness essentially involves self-consciousness.

There are similar remarks in the analytical tradition too. Goldman (1970, 96) says that the process of thinking about something carries with it a non-reflective self-awareness. Flanagan (1992, 194) speaks of a 'low-level self-consciousness involved in experiencing my experiences as *mine*'. And Kriegel (2004) argues that all forms of consciousness depend upon a peripheral awareness of oneself as the subject of one's mental state. So there has been some growing consensus with regards to the requirement thesis.

As can be seen from the claims above, the force of the idea that consciousness is not possible without self-consciousness seems to rely on the simple yet powerful contention that we are always aware of our conscious mental states and aware of them as *ours*. However, a subject's awareness of her conscious mental states as *hers* is not necessarily implied by the subject's mere awareness of those conscious mental states. There is no doubt that

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[3] See Caston (2002) for a discussion of this. Caston cites Sorabji's remark in (2002, 759).

[4] Gallagher – Zahavi (2008, 46) cite Husserl who says that consciousness always involves a self-appearance, Heidegger who says every consciousness is also self-consciousness, and Henry who claims that experience is always self-manifesting. They also cite Sartre who says "This self-consciousness we ought to consider not as a new consciousness, but as the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something" (Gallagher – Zahavi 2008, 47).

through introspection, I'd consider the conscious states that I am in as mine, but that is through introspection and awareness of one's conscious mental states is not the same as introspection as will be discussed later.[5] With regular conscious mental states that we do not introspect upon, self-consciousness does not come as naturally as it sounds. When I'm aware of a cup on my desk in front of me next to my laptop, I don't really think about the perception (of the cup) as mine. Awareness of myself as the owner of the perception seems to be lacking from the phenomenology of my experience, and that is usually the case with ordinary, non-reflective experiences.[6]

However the lack of self-consciousness in the phenomenology of one's experience may be due to the peripheral quality of self-consciousness. In other words one may argue that self-consciousness is ubiquitous but remains tacit and therefore is not noticed in ordinary, non-reflective experiences. Kriegel (2004) talks about the methodological difficulties of defending peripheral phenomena in general and using the example of peripheral vision, he says that such phenomena may be denied because 'whenever we want to direct our attention to the periphery of our visual field, the latter thereby becomes the focal center' (Kriegel 2004, 193). While this may be true of various peripheral phenomena, it must also be noted that Hume (1739-40/1978, 252) for instance found no self to be aware of even when he has painstakingly tried to direct his attention to himself. Hence the analogy Kriegel draws between peripheral awareness of oneself as the subject of one's mental states and other types of peripheral phenomena may be a little overreaching and the temptation to deny peripheral self-awareness may need to be taken more seriously than the temptation to deny other peripheral phenomena.

Nevertheless, self-consciousness is well and alive in other cases like when there is introspection. When I introspect on the perception I had of the cup, consciousness of the perception of the cup as mine in addition to the mere perception of the cup may simultaneously take part in my mental life. Hence one might argue that self-consciousness is present in all con-

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[5] For the moment I can say that introspection has to do with the awareness of the awareness of a mental state.

[6] Such experiences would make up what Gennaro (2008) calls outer focal consciousness and he argues that such consciousness is never accompanied by inner peripheral self-awareness.

scious states but indeed peripheral and becomes focal through introspection. Later I suggest that by endorsing a higher-order theory of consciousness, it is possible to attribute self-consciousness to the presence of a higher-order mental state, e.g. the introspective state and not to the conscious lower-order mental state, e.g. the perception of the cup, in which case one does not need to assert that self-consciousness is ubiquitous.

One way of undermining the requirement thesis then is to suggest that the self-consciousness is a property of only certain kinds of mental states and not all conscious states. To that end, I now turn to a discussion of two different approaches to consciousness.

3. Two approaches to consciousness

First and foremost it is important to take note of the two different ways the term "conscious" can be used. One refers to the individual, a person or an organism, becoming conscious of something, and the other refers to a mental state's being conscious. This distinction is noted and explained in detail by Rosenthal (2005, 4) and he calls the former transitive consciousness and the latter state consciousness. There is also creature consciousness that basically amounts to an organism's being awake and mentally responsive (cf. Rosenthal 2005, 41). Rosenthal also talks about the transitivity principle according to which a mental state is conscious when its subject is first-personally aware of it, i.e., in a non-inferential manner (cf. Rosenthal 2005, 4). In accordance with the transitivity principle Rosenthal also says 'A creature can be in mental states without being in conscious mental states, and can be conscious of external or bodily events without also being aware of its own mental states' (Rosenthal 2005, 41). He explicitly states that transitive consciousness can occur without intransitive state consciousness (1997, 737).

According to Kriegel (2004, 184) however, 'the concept of consciousness-of presupposes the concept of consciousness' and '... a person exhibits transitive creature consciousness only if she has a mental state that exhibits transitive state consciousness'. In other words, an individual is conscious of something by virtue of being in a *conscious* mental state. So while both Kriegel and Rosenthal seem to agree on the fact that a person is conscious *of* something in virtue of being in a mental state, Kriegel requires that the relevant mental state is conscious, where Rosenthal does not. To emphasize the difference I shall henceforth refer to Rosenthal's view as the *transi-*

tivity principle. I will refer to Kriegel's view, as the *state principle* since according to him no subject is conscious of anything unless the relevant mental *state* she is in is conscious.

If one endorses the transitivity principle, the question of state consciousness turns on a question of how an awake and a mentally responsive organism gets to be aware of something, or rather how it gets to be aware of its mental states to be precise and the answer is likely to call for a cognitive mechanism by which this process of awareness can be explained. In other words it would be possible to explain state consciousness in virtue of transitive consciousness. However, for the defender of the state principle, this explanation would be circular since the subject's awareness of things in general including mental states is not possible without an already existing state consciousness. Hence, given the allegedly ubiquitous nature of self-consciousness, the defender of the state principle uses self-consciousness to explain state consciousness. In other words, it seems that Kriegel's endorsement of the state principle gives way to his endorsement of the requirement thesis.

Another way of undermining the requirement thesis then is to undermine the state principle. But that is not enough since there is no immediate reason to think that an approach to consciousness that endorses the transitivity principle is not going to in turn depend upon self-consciousness. Hence my purpose is twofold; to argue that there are reasons to reject the state principle and to argue that transitivity principle can indeed accommodate an approach to consciousness that does not rely on self-consciousness. I start with the latter and in doing so I also show that self-consciousness does not have to be a property of all conscious states.

4. Transitivity principle

As mentioned before, according to the transitivity principle, it is in virtue of the creature's awareness of *its mental states* that a particular mental state in question is conscious. According to some theories of consciousness, a subject gets to be aware of its mental state *x* when there is another mental state *y* about it. Mental state *y* could be a thought or a perception[7] and is usually described as a higher-order state because it is about another men-

[7] See Rosenthal (2005) for the former and Lycan (1996) for the latter.

tal state, viz., the target state. Hence it is in virtue of there being a mental state about another mental state that the latter state, viz., the target state is conscious. The question then is whether this account of state consciousness involves self-consciousness.

According to one version of higher-order theories, viz. the higher-order thought (HOT) theory, the higher-order state is described as a thought to the effect that *I* am in this (target) state (Rosenthal 2005). Thus the content of the higher-order state involves self-consciousness. There are two remarks that can be made with regards to this.

Firstly, although the higher-order state involves self-consciousness, the higher-order state does not need to be conscious for the target state to be conscious.[8] However this does not immediately solve the problem. In favor of the requirement thesis, one might argue that when the target state is conscious, self-consciousness is nevertheless present in the accompanying higher-order state since it is contained in the content of the higher-order state, waiting as it were, to be phenomenologically activated when the higher-order state becomes conscious. Hence one might argue that consciousness is indeed not possible without self-consciousness since each conscious state is accompanied by self-consciousness – albeit possibly just potential – contained in the higher-order state. But it should be noted that with regards to arguments in favor of the requirement thesis there is a lot of appeal to a sense of *mineness* with regard to experiences and such *potential* self-consciousness in the higher-order state would be phenomenologically no different from there being no self-consciousness. Besides, whatever implications the consciousness of the higher-order state might have, since the higher-order state is numerically distinct from the target state, self-

[8] The suggestion that the higher-order state does not need to be conscious for the target state to be conscious comes from Rosenthal as a reply to an objection to his higher-order thought theory. The objection is that if the higher-order state in turn needs to be conscious so that the target state is conscious, that would mean there is yet another higher-order state, viz. a third-order state about the second-order state so that the second-order state is conscious. And this can go on infinitely. But if the higher-order state does not need to conscious for the target state to be conscious, then the infinite regress stops. That the higher-order state is not necessarily conscious would also explain why self-awareness is usually missing from the phenomenology of ordinary, non-reflective experiences but present in experiences of a reflective and introspective kind since it is likely that in the latter case relevant higher-order states are also conscious.

consciousness would be separated from the target conscious state, as a result of which the allegedly ubiquitous nature of self-consciousness would be undermined. In other words, self-consciousness would not be taken to accompany all conscious states.

Still, it is worth considering if the content of the higher-order thought can be described in another way. For instance, there is no reason to think that the higher-order state could not be an indexical kind of thought with the content "that state" rather than "*I* am in that state." As such it would be possible to re-describe the higher-order state in a more Humean or Parfit's reductionist way. The purpose of the indexical type of higher-order state may be to assign the target state to a group of other psychologically continuous states – or if one favors bodily continuity theories of identity, to a group of bodily states that fall on the same spatio-temporal path – including the higher-order state itself. Hence, self-conscious friendly content of the higher-order state which is "I'm in so and so state" may be replaced by the following self-consciousness free content of the higher-order state: "this target state goes with this body and this series of psychophysical states." And when the higher-order state is conscious, one may inferentially form the conception of oneself as the subject of a group of psychologically continuous states, but that is far from the kind of self-consciousness denoted by the requirement thesis.[9]

I now turn to Kriegel's arguments for the state principle and dependence of consciousness on self-consciousness. My purpose is to show the various difficulties involved with his arguments including his reasons for the state principle in order to deny what might have otherwise been positive and independent reasons to think that consciousness depends on self-consciousness.

5. State principle

Kriegel (2004) talks about four kinds of consciousness viz. transitive creature consciousness, intransitive creature consciousness, transitive state consciousness and intransitive state consciousness. In relation to the differ-

[9] This is also compatible with the fact that a conception of oneself comes much later in the development of mental lives, definitely after consciousness. See Damasio (1999) for a discussion of this.

ent forms of consciousness introduced earlier by Rosenthal viz., state and transitive consciousness, one can say that intransitive state consciousness is the same as state consciousness, which consists in the mental state's being conscious. Transitive creature consciousness is the same as transitive consciousness, which consists in the creature's being conscious *of* something. Intransitive creature consciousness is the same as creature consciousness that consists in the organism's being awake and mentally responsive. That leaves one with transitive state consciousness.

The difficulty with transitive state consciousness is that while it is relatively easy to grasp what it means for a creature, an individual, a person or an animal to be conscious *of* something it is not so when it comes to understanding what it means for a mental state to be conscious *of* something. Kriegel (2004) says that this is merely because of 'the way the phrase "conscious of" works that mental states cannot be conscious of anything' and he defines transitive state consciousness as the *property* a mental state M has when M's subject is conscious of something in virtue of being in M (cf. Kriegel 2004, 185). He says:

> the occurrence of transitive creature consciousness implies the occurrence of a mental state. When Smith is conscious of her new car, she is in a certain mental state, and it is in virtue of being in this mental state that she is conscious of the car (as opposed to being conscious of a table, or not being conscious of anything). We may label the property the mental state in question has transitive state consciousness. A mental state exhibits transitive state consciousness iff it is a mental state in virtue of which its subject exemplifies transitive creature consciousness. Thus, Smith's thought of her new car is transitively state-conscious, because in virtue of having it, Smith is conscious of her new car. (Kriegel 2004, 183-184)

Kriegel then argues for the dependence of transitive state consciousness on intransitive state consciousness. The relation between transitive and intransitive state consciousness is described by Kriegel as a question of whether a subject can be conscious of something in virtue of being in an unconscious mental state (cf. Kriegel 2004, 185). In other words, he drops the use of the phrase "transitive state consciousness" and refers to a property of the subject; hence it can be understood as the argument for the dependence of, in Rosenthal's terms, transitive consciousness on state con-

sciousness, in other words, the argument for the state principle. I will now consider whether these arguments are tenable.

First Kriegel (2004, 185) uses the example of a tacit belief that 17.3 is greater than 13.9 and says that we would not want to say that someone is conscious of the fact that 17.3 is greater than 13.9 just because he has a tacit belief to that effect. Hence the mental state involving this mathematical proposition should be conscious so that one can talk about the individual being aware of such a proposition. However, this example is a bit biased. It is much more likely that a person's mental states regarding *mathematical propositions* are conscious when he is doing calculations and is aware of how numbers relate to one another. But one cannot thereby make a generalization and assert that this is how it'll be for all mental states across the board. In other words one cannot infer that for everything that an individual is aware of, there will be an accompanying relevant conscious mental state. Consider Armstrong's (1968, 93) famous example of the long-distance truck driver who has absolutely no recollection of his driving whatsoever. As he is driving on the highway, not causing any accidents, he must be conscious of some things, but at the same time it is obvious that he is not in as many conscious mental states as his awareness of the road would call for if the state principle were true.

The second reason Kriegel in (2004, 185) gives for why transitive creature consciousness depends on intransitive state consciousness is that 'as far as the normal usage of the terms is concerned, it is all but incoherent to describe a person as unconsciously conscious of the fact that p'. In other words, one cannot be in a non-conscious mental state about x and at the same time be conscious of x. However, it is important to notice that the term "conscious" does not have the same referent here. In the supposedly incoherent description of a person being unconsciously conscious of something, the former qualifying term "unconsciously" refers to state consciousness and the latter "conscious" or rather "conscious of" refers to a person's being conscious of something, so transitive consciousness. Being unconsciously conscious of something amounts to a person's being aware of something but not being in the relevant conscious mental state and this is not immediately incoherent unless one endorses the state principle and thereby cannot be used to show the truth of the state principle.

One prime example of subjects being unconsciously conscious of things involves the case of blindsighted persons. People with blindsight have suffered damage to the visual center of the higher brain and when they are

presented with an object in their visual field that is related to the damaged region, they report that they don't see anything. But it's been shown that when they are asked to make guesses that involve the objects presented to them, their guesses are correct considerably above chance. This suggests that they perceive the object but is not aware of doing so. In other words, they are conscious of the object but the relevant mental state is not conscious, i.e., they are *unconsciously conscious of* it.[10]

The third reason Kriegel in (2004, 186) gives for the state principle is that persons are conscious of only a few things at a time and that if persons were conscious of things in virtue of being in non-conscious mental states too, they'd be conscious of innumerably many things. I contend that this argument reveals a misunderstanding of the transitivity principle. According to the transitivity principle, those mental states that an individual gets to be aware of are classified as conscious mental states. An individual's being conscious of things (other than mental states) does not imply the presence of conscious mental states. But it does not thereby claim that an individual gets to be aware of things in virtue of being in non-conscious mental states. It just endorses the possibility of transitive consciousness without state consciousness. That does not mean every non-conscious mental state one is in will make him conscious of something. Hence an overcrowded transitive consciousness is not an inevitable consequence of the transitivity principle.

After examining Kriegel's (2004) reasons for the state principle and discussing the difficulties involved, I'd like to turn now to his arguments for why consciousness depends on self-consciousness, or rather why intransitive state consciousness in turn depends on intransitive state self-consciousness, rendering all forms of consciousness to be dependent on intransitive state self-consciousness. To do that, I will first consider Kriegel's different forms of self-consciousness.

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[10] This phenomenon is thoroughly discussed by Weiskrantz (1986). The case of the long distance truck driver would also constitute an example for being unconsciously conscious of things. As mentioned above, even after a brief time of his driving, the driver does not recall when he made a turn, or stopped at the traffic lights etc. However since he is accident-free, he must be conscious of the turns, and the traffic lights etc. The driver can be said to be unconsciously conscious of the road, meaning he was conscious of the road but the relevant mental states were not conscious.

6. Forms of self-consciousness

Kriegel (2004) talks about four forms of self-consciousness but only two of them are relevant to the discussion here and those are transitive creature self-consciousness and intransitive state self-consciousness. Transitive creature self-consciousness is described by Kriegel (2004, 187) as 'the property a creature has when she is conscious of herself and her mental states' and is exemplified by a statement like, 'Smith is *consciously* thinking that her car is new.' The kind of self-consciousness present here is focal and is distinct from the thought about the car (cf. Kriegel 2004, 188).

In contrast to transitive creature self-consciousness, there is intransitive state self-consciousness exemplified by a sentence like 'Smith is *self-consciously* thinking that her car is new' (Kriegel 2004, 187). The contrast between Smith *self-consciously* thinking about the car and Smith *consciously* thinking about the car is articulated by Kriegel as the difference between two ways a person can be aware of being in mental state M; peripherally or focally (cf. Kriegel 2004, 189). In consciously thinking that her car is new, the thought about the car and the state of self-consciousness are two distinct states and Smith is focally aware of being in mental state M. In self-consciously thinking that her car is new, there is peripheral awareness of being in a mental state and the state of self-consciousness is an integral part of the thought about the car. Kriegel adds:

> When one has a mental state self-consciously, one is aware primarily of the (external) object of the mental state in question. But there is also a more subtle, peripheral awareness of oneself implicit in that state. One is aware of oneself precisely as that state's *owner*, or *subject*. To say that Smith is thinking that her car is new in a self-conscious sort of way, then, is to say that Smith is implicitly, or peripherally, aware of her *having* the thought, or of the thought being *her own.* (Kriegel 2004, 189)

Consider the famous example of the long-distance truck driver again. For anyone who endorses the state principle, the driver cannot be unconsciously conscious of the road. The driver's awareness of the road would be possible in virtue of a conscious mental state, viz. his conscious perception. But the driver's awareness of the road needs to be qualified in a certain way such that the long-distance driver's awareness of the road can be distinguished from the awareness of a more careful driver, one that can report back on his experience of driving. Given Kriegel's infrastructure of con-

sciousness, one would say that the difference consists in the long-distance truck driver's being less self-consciously aware of the road compared to the careful driver. This would be supported by Kriegel's (2004, 202, fn. 12) comment that peripheral awareness and focal awareness need not be two exclusive states and that there 'probably is a wide spectrum of awareness, ranging from the very focal to the very peripheral'. But it is not clear how one's awareness of oneself as the owner of a mental state varies in degree, and *when* a more self-conscious way of having an experience finally gives way to a distinct state of focal self-consciousness, thus a conscious way of having an experience. Such issues require explanation in order to make more sense of Kriegel's infrastructure of self-consciousness. More importantly though is Kriegel's argument for the requirement thesis and that's what I'd like to consider now.

7. Critique of the arguments for the requirement thesis

Kriegel's (2004, 198) main argument for the dependence of consciousness on self-consciousness is:

Premise 1: Conscious states are first-person knowable.
Premise 2: First-person knowable mental states must be intransitively self-conscious.
Conclusion: Conscious states are intransitively self-conscious.

This is a valid argument and I do agree with the first premise. In order to critically assess the truth of the second premise it is worth considering what first-person knowable property of conscious mental states amounts to. Kriegel describes the first-person knowable property in the following way:

> Suppose I now imagine a camel. The way I know that a camel is what I am right now imagining and the way you know this are very different. There are certain steps you have to go through to attain this knowledge that I can skip. The rule that guides us in applying the predicate "conscious" is that a phenomenon is conscious just in case our knowledge of it is the sort of knowledge I do, and you do not, have of the fact that a camel is what I am right now imagining. (Kriegel 2004, 198)

Basically the first person knowable property has to do with the immediate and non-inferential access one has to her own (conscious) mental

states. The kind of access one has to another's mental states is bound to be inferential. Also one's awareness of another's mental states does not make them conscious and one's inferential awareness of one's own mental states does not necessarily make them conscious either.[11] The argument Kriegel (2004, 198) gives for the second premise is that if one were to have a mental state un-self-consciously, that is without awareness of it whatsoever, he says, then one would need to infer its existence, rendering her knowledge of the mental state non-first-personal, in which case the mental state in question would not be conscious. But since first-person knowable mental states are conscious, he concludes that a subject could not have such states un-self-consciously.

In this argument for the second premise, Kriegel equates having a mental state un-self-consciously with having a mental state without any awareness of it, but equating them as such assumes the truth of the requirement thesis and cannot be used to support it. In having a mental state un-self-consciously, peripheral awareness of oneself as the owner of the mental state is missing. But having a mental state without *any* awareness of it – and thus having a non-conscious mental state – is different from having a mental state without peripheral awareness of oneself as the owner of a mental state. One could be aware of the content of a mental state, its intentional or qualitative character without being aware of oneself as the owner of that mental state. Hence awareness of a mental state and peripheral awareness of oneself as the subject of one's mental state cannot be equated. Equating them as such leads to a circular argument for the truth of the conclusion that conscious mental states must be intransitively self-conscious.

It is impossible for a mental state to be conscious and for there to be absolutely no awareness of it. Surely some awareness of the mental state is needed to classify it as a conscious mental state. But the question is whether that awareness necessarily involves self-consciousness. And my answer is no. With regards to perception, Gurwitsch (1941, 330) says that 'In ... dealing with the [perceived] object I am aware of this very dealing.' So some

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[11] To further illustrate the point, consider Rosenthal's (2005, 310) example of a person who might be aware *that* she is angry but not actually experience it. So, say Sarah is angry but she is not aware of it. Sarah's friend notices that Sarah is angry from the way she behaves and tells her. Sarah is surprised. She claims that she was not experiencing anger, but at the same time counting on her friend's observation, she infers and believes that she is angry. But that doesn't necessarily make her experience anger. In other words, insofar as Sarah's awareness of her anger is inferential, the experience is missing.

awareness of the perception is present but what that awareness holds is open to discussion. Strawson (2009) comments that Gurwitsch's earlier choice of words, viz. 'Being confronted with an object, I am at once conscious of the object and aware of my being conscious of it', is misleading since it leads one to think that awareness of mental goings-on involves awareness of oneself but according to Strawson (2009, 440) '... the phenomenon in question doesn't require any thought of oneself as such, i.e. as subject considered as such.' Strawson refers to the earlier pages of Gurwitsch's work to make things more clear, where Gurwitsch (1941, 327) says 'the subject in his dealing with the [perceived] object, aware as he is of this dealing, is nevertheless in no way aware of his ego, much less of his ego's involvement in his dealing.' In other words, it is possible to conceive the awareness of a mental state and the awareness of oneself as the subject of a mental state as two distinct mental phenomena. But Kriegel makes the mistake of equating the two phenomena, which results in a circular reasoning for the requirement thesis.

The second argument Kriegel (2004, 199) gives for the requirement thesis is due to Rosenthal. In his discussion of Rosenthal's argument, Kriegel raises the question of whether our awareness of conscious mental states is also self-awareness. He refers to Rosenthal who argues that it is not possible to think about a particular mental-state token, as opposed to thinking simply about a type of mental state, without thinking about the subject whose mental state it is. And since conscious mental states are states *we* are aware of, then *our* awareness of them should also include an awareness of the subject whose mental state it is, which is ourselves.

It is a conceptual truth that where there is an experience, there is a subject of experience. After Strawson (2003, 280) I call this the subject thesis. I agree that it is not possible to think about a mental state token in abstraction from its subject. However it is possible that this restriction applies only to the way we think about others' and not about our own mental states. Consequently I suggest that there is an asymmetry between the way I think about *my* mental states and the way I think about another person's mental states. I contend that given this asymmetry, Rosenthal's view cannot be used to support the requirement thesis.

Thinking about a particular mental state token implies thinking about what it would be like for someone to have it. In order to think about a particular mental state token of say the olfactory sensation of recently mowed grass, one needs to think of the olfactory sensation as somebody's

sensation with its subjective character and phenomenology since that's what makes it a particular mental state *token* and not a *type*. But when I think about a particular mental state of *mine*, its subjective character is immediately given to me. I don't need to further think about the subject whose mental state it is in order to understand that it has a unique phenomenology since in having the mental state, its unique phenomenology is already given. So perhaps the special access a subject has to *her* mental states consists precisely in the fact that she does not need to further think of them as belonging to her.

Given the asymmetry described above, I contend that the way we think about a particular mental state token does not necessarily provide the right insight into the way we think about *our* mental state tokens. This is most likely a consequence of the gap between the immediate and non-inferential knowledge one has concerning her own (conscious) mental states as opposed to the inferential knowledge another has concerning those conscious mental states.

One might be curious about the nature of the gap involved. For my friend to know about the olfactory sensation that I'm having, she either needs to be told by me or she needs to observe me take in deep breaths with a pleasant look on my face and also realize that the grass has been recently mowed etc. I, on the other hand know it immediately. As mentioned before by Kriegel (2004, 198) too, there are no intermediate steps between my having the olfactory sensation and my knowing that I'm having such a sensation. This constitutes essentially an epistemological gap between my knowledge of my conscious mental states and someone else's knowledge of them. There is yet another gap that seems to cut deeper than the mere epistemological one. Even if my friend knows, by whatever means, that I'm having an olfactory sensation, there is no way she will know what it is like for me to have that sensation. What-it-is-likeness of a conscious mental state is private to the subject who has it.[12] While the epistemological gap mentioned above is about how my friend knows that I'm having e.g. an olfactory sensation, this gap is about the knowledge of what it is like for me to have that olfactory sensation which is never fully acquired by my friend.[13]

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[12] And as mentioned before, it is what makes a mental state a particular mental state token and not a type.

[13] Since the gap concerns knowledge of something, viz. knowledge of what it is like to have a particular olfactory sensation, it can still be said to be of an epistemological kind,

8. Conclusion

To conclude, the requirement thesis fails for the following reasons. Firstly, granted that there is such a thing as peripheral awareness of oneself as the owner of one's mental state, even though I discussed its dubitability, such awareness does not have to be an integral part of all conscious states. I suggested that by endorsing a higher-order theory of consciousness, it is possible to separate self-consciousness from the content of the conscious target state and attribute it to the higher-order state. Secondly, I suggested that Kriegel does not have the option of explaining state consciousness in virtue of transitive consciousness since he denies the possibility of being unconsciously conscious of things and he explains state consciousness in virtue of self-consciousness instead. Then granted that the reasons I gave for rejecting the state principle are tenable, there may be no reason to think that consciousness depends on self-consciousness. Thirdly, the argument Kriegel gives for the requirement thesis is not sound since the argument he gives for the truth of the second premise that all first-person knowable states must be intransitively self-conscious assumes its truth rather than show it. And finally Kriegel's appeal to Rosenthal's argument with regards to the subject thesis does not succeed either because there is an asymmetry in the way a subject thinks about a particular mental state token when that mental state is hers as opposed to someone else's, which is expected given the first-person knowable property of conscious mental states.

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but since it is the kind of knowledge that can never be fully acquired by the third person, I think the gap cuts deeper than an epistemological kind but I don't think it qualifies as an ontological one.

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