

# Theory of Subjectivity and Higher-Order Representation

(Kevin Reuter, 22. Juni 2005)

## 1. Introduction and Terminology

Some scholars agree that there are two main features that characterize the notion of consciousness. On the one hand there is something “it is like” to be in a mental state – a phenomenal aspect like redness, feeling pain, listening to the sound of a violin, etc. We will call this phenomenal consciousness. On the other hand consciousness seems intimately connected with a first-person point of view. By being aware I gain access to a private world, which is subjectively “for me”. This subjective character of experiences is exactly what higher-order theorists are concerned with. They do not necessarily want to give an account of how mental states possess qualitative phenomenal character. Rather, they want to explain how an unconscious mental state can become a conscious one, how a person who is absent-minded can suddenly focus the mind on a certain object.

In this paper I want to look at the theory of higher-order representation. In chapter two I present an example and draw on Lycan’s simple argument to show how this leads to a formulation of the theory and a definition of consciousness. In chapter three I ask the question: Can the theory withstand scrutinized analysis? I then attempt to answer this question by discussing the three most important HOR-theories. In so doing I discuss objections raised by HOR-theorists and other philosophers. In chapter four I summarize the ideas and explain why I think the whole conception of Higher-Order Representation has its drawbacks.

Throughout this essay I refer to the Higher-Order Theory as HOR (Higher-Order Representation) and to a higher-order thought as HOT.

## 2. Consciousness as Higher-Order Representation

**The truck driver on automatic pilot** – First of all I start with the famous example of ‘the long-distance truck-driver’. I use this to illustrate what the HOR-theory is about, and to highlight some of the complications that cloud HOR-theory. As we will see in the following paragraphs, this example is not only a good example used by HOR-theorists, but also one that has been interpreted in competing ways. The example goes like this:

“If you have driven for a very long distance without a break, you may have had experience of a curious state of automatism, which can occur in these conditions. One can suddenly “*come to*” and realize that one has driven for long distances *without being aware of what one was doing*, or, indeed, without being aware of anything. One has kept the car on the road, used the brake and the clutch perhaps, yet all without any awareness of what one was doing. (Armstrong [1])

**The truck-driver and a concept for HOR** – Armstrong [1] rightly says, the driver (on automatic pilot – meaning in a certain state of unawareness) definitely perceives something – otherwise the lorry would have been driven into the ditch. What seems to be missing is consciousness of what he was doing. That is to say, some mental processes were still going on in his brain, but did these processes lead to an awareness of any kind (as they could have done)? No! Before “coming to”, he had driven 50 miles; upon “coming to”, he realised that he had done this in a state of *unawareness*. His first thought upon “coming to” was: ‘Oh, I must have driven fifty miles without realizing it’; his awareness of this state of his mind contrasts starkly with the driver on autopilot. Armstrong’s argument is that the driver’s inner eye had been shut, and that he had therefore been unconscious. The solution Armstrong is thus offering is that consciousness is awareness of the state of one’s own mind. We do not have any means to observe the minds of others, but we have the faculty to observe our own minds in a very specific way. This has led to the development of a group of theories, which propose that another state representing the original state (higher-order representation) is necessary for being in a conscious state.

**The truck-driver and a competing concept for HOR** - Taking up the same example, Lycan and Ryder [8] agree with Armstrong that a higher-order representation was lacking when the driver was on autopilot. However, they consider the decisive difference between the two modes of the driver is that he missed a 'normal' degree of awareness of the road. This means that when the driver 'came to', he did not gain awareness of his perceptual states, rather he realized that it was the road he had not been attending to. That is to say, 'normal' drivers are somewhat aware of driving, the road and the environment they pass by; but such drivers also do not 'normally' or necessarily entertain any sort of higher-order state. With this definition of consciousness, they concede that "we do not have many conscious mental states at any time" and that "there is no reason to think that the drivers awareness of his mental states differs at all from when he was on autopilot".

**Subjectivity and defining consciousness from the HOR perspective** – The competing concepts (above) share one thing in common, they both aim to capture the subjective element(s) connected with the concept of consciousness. Indeed, this is the very aim of HO-theories. Therefore, higher-order theorists have defined consciousness as the awareness of being in one's *own* mental states. However, as we have just seen in the example, the debate rages on where this concept of consciousness is realized in our daily lives. It seems that with the definition of consciousness given above the HOR-theory is restricted to a specific use. Trickily, however, these theorists tend to contradict themselves by attempting to broaden the applicability of their theories; for example, one may ask: does the concept of consciousness include the awareness of objects, or not (a point that will be discussed in section four)?

**Subjectivity consciousness, and conscious and unconscious mental states** - Many philosophers, and most notably David Rosenthal, are eager to point out that we should not be speaking of creatures like humans that are conscious but rather of conscious and unconscious mental states. This has the advantage of using consciousness as a notion which does not interfere with our daily use of the term. Nonetheless, the phenomena we are talking about stay the same. Cast in terms of conscious states, the definition now reads: A conscious state is a state that I am aware of being in.

**Conscious states, and Lycan's "simple argument"** - Even if we grant HOR-philosophers that consciousness is rightly defined by the awareness of one's own mental state, why should we accept that this is manifested by a higher-order representation of the original state? Lycan [9] has given, as he called it himself, a "simple argument" for the higher-order representation theory of consciousness. Now HOR-theorists suppose that what makes a state conscious is it itself being represented by another state. Let's have a look how the argument works.

As a starting point Lycan uses the definition from above:

(D) A conscious state is a mental state whose subject is aware of being in it

He furthermore uses two additional premises:

(P1) The „of“ is the „of“ of intentionality; what one is aware „of“ is an intentional object of the awareness

(P2) Intentionality is Representation; a state has a thing as its intentional object, only if it represents that thing.

From (P1) and (P2) it follows that:

(C1) Awareness of a mental state is a representation of that state.

With the definition (D) and Conclusion 1 (C1) we can infer:

(C2) A conscious state is a state that is itself represented by another of the subject's mental states.

I will show in Appendix B that from a strictly logical point of view conclusion 1 is not valid. Moreover, we would need to neglect the 'fine' distinction between "awareness of a mental state" and "awareness of being in a mental state", in order to grant his conclusion.

Lycan is asking us which of the two premises we are willing to abandon in order to deny the conclusion that, at least for their definition of consciousness, what makes a mental state conscious is its being represented by another one. Both premises are rather widely accepted, so for our current purposes we will accept the line of argument as a plausible deduction of consciousness to representation.

What have we learned so far? The higher-order theory is basically a theory of subjectivity. It splits off the phenomenal character from the process that makes a mental state conscious. Although HOR-theorists do not agree with each other in which cases we can speak of conscious states, they agree that a conscious state is a state we are aware of being in. Because awareness is intentional, and intentionality representational, what makes a state conscious is its being represented by another state. But what does this representation look like, and can it really occur? Over this “detail” HOR-theorists are in stark disagreement with each other. We will now turn to chapter three, in which I lay out the three main sub-theories on HOR.

### 3. Three theories of Higher-Order Representation

There are basically three different approaches within the doctrine of Higher-Order Theory. I would like to exemplify each sub-theory by its main proponent. First of all I discuss William Lycan’s Inner Sense Doctrine (ISD) [7] which assumes that what consciousness is about is to sense or perceive the mental state with a kind of internal scanner. This theory has its relation to Armstrong who proposed a similar idea. Next I want to look at David Rosenthal’s higher-order thought theory [12], whereby we are conscious of being in a mental state only if we entertain another (higher-order) thought about it. And thirdly, Peter Carruthers [3] has brought up a related theory to Rosenthal’s “Thought”-theory. The main difference though is that there is no actual thought about the first-order state, but only a disposition to trigger a higher-order thought.

Before I look closer at each of the candidates’ suggestions how Higher-Order Theory could work, if it is correct, it should be noted that these theories are of course not mutually exclusive and share big parts of their ideas. Thus, repetition is unavoidable especially because many objections apply not only to one of the three philosophers, but sometimes to all of them. The way in which they respond to the objections is however often different.

### 3.1. Lycan's Inner Sense Doctrine

One way in how mental states could become conscious/represented is their being scanned by another state or by an internal monitor. This intuitive idea is actually quite reasonable when we compare this idea with the functioning of our senses. Our environment is scanned by our senses so that the outside world is represented to me. This representing is characterized by the immediacy or the so called transparency of experience. Let me explain: If you look at a red surface you do not conceive of a medium which transfers the property of the outside red (surface reflectance of electro-magnetic waves) to your experience of red. "You experience them as being qualities of the surfaces." [14] The process of being conscious of a mental state resembles the sensual process insofar as we do not notice a medium which transfers an unconscious mental state into a conscious one. In order to sense the inner world we need an analogon of a sense organ. Thus it seems reasonable to presume an internal scanner which takes the place of a sense organ and points at unconscious mental states, thereby making them conscious.

Armstrong has put forward a plausible argument to stress the biological importance of such an internal scanner. Awareness of current states of our brain yields a sophistication and integration of mental processes. Without a faculty that makes us aware of our internal states, it will be much more difficult to distinguish and differentiate between mental states. Furthermore the integration of states we are aware of can support the planning and organizing in complex situations. We all know how high our awareness is in situations we have not encountered before, and in contrast how automatic we seem to function when we perform standard routines like 'cleaning up the flat'.

Lycan highlights three clear advantages of his Inner Sense Doctrine. He begins with the general feature of any Higher-Order Theory that is to distinguish "awareness and conscious states from mere mentation [mental states or events]". [7] Of course many questions arise with splitting off the process of becoming conscious from what we are conscious of. Secondly, and this is very specific to Lycan, his Inner Sense Doctrine allows for different degrees of consciousness. This issue will be discussed later in this chapter; thirdly it "sorts out a longstanding issue about sensations and feeling." [7] If we talk about pain we can "mean just the first-order representation of damage and

disorder” [7]. But most of the time we use the word pain to refer to our feeling of pain. “On that usage the phrase ‘unfelt pain’ is simply self-contradictory.” [7]

**The argument of threatening regress** - There is one argument against the Inner Sense Model that appears very often in HOR-literature. I will follow the reasoning of Rosenthal [13] on that matter. If we take the analogy with the ‘outer’ senses seriously, we realize that sensing involves qualities which serve to draw an inner picture of our perceptual world. Thus, inner sensing should also include a qualitative aspect - let’s name it 2<sup>nd</sup> order quality. But what can we really tell about this 2<sup>nd</sup> order quality? What we are aware of are represented properties of the outer world, there is no inner quality we seem to experience. The 2<sup>nd</sup> order quality could, though, be a solution to the problem of how first-order mental states ‘light up’ and become qualitative for me. For when we are conscious of something there is a certain way it is like to experience it. The 2<sup>nd</sup> order quality of the higher-order state could be responsible for this “lighting up”. But this bears the difficulty that within this theory the 2<sup>nd</sup> order quality needs to be conscious itself and this can be only done via a 3<sup>rd</sup> order mental state. An infinite regress is looming. Lycan [7] responds to this problem by stating that we should not take the analogy with our outer senses too far.

This is one of a few objections that can be put forward against the Inner Sense Doctrine. Rosenthal came up with his own theory, how a higher-order representation could work and thereby he avoids difficulties the ISD creates.

### 3.2. Rosenthal’s Theory of Consciousness

David Rosenthal in contrast to William Lycan does not suggest that we have internal scanners which make our mental states conscious, but rather that what makes a mental state conscious is that the state is accompanied by a second-order thought. It is very important for Rosenthal to get it clear that we have mental states which are not conscious. Of course this is partly a matter of definition. No one denies that there is a lot of activity going on in my brain which I am not aware of, but many people will argue that it only makes sense to speak of a mental state if this state is “for me” and thereby has a subjective character. Rosenthal’s aim, however, is to show that there

are mental states in our brain which do have intentional or sensory character (or both) but are not conscious. He wants to achieve a division of labour. Take the example of someone walking down a street, singing a song, then suddenly she becomes aware that she is singing. It is difficult to maintain that while she was not aware of her singing, there was no mental state which she has entertained. To take another example, we report a painful state by saying that I am "feeling a pain". But as soon as I get distracted I do not feel it anymore, although it would be wrong to argue that the pain is not represented in my brain anymore. During that time the pain is simply not present "to me". There is another intuitive objection against unconscious mental states. We seem to discriminate states only if they are conscious. But classifying and having mental states are two different things and should not be intertwined. Rosenthal argues that this demonstrates that mental states can have sensory character but not be conscious.

**Avoiding circularity** - Another good reason for the existence of non-conscious mental states is the avoidance of circularity. To explain what it is for a mental state to be conscious if all mental states are conscious is not informative. To explain what it is for a mental state to be conscious by stating that another mental states is conscious of it, is circular. Rosenthal therefore uses the concepts of transitive and intransitive consciousness. A mental state can be transitively conscious if it is directed upon an object or another mental state. It is intransitively conscious if another mental state is representing it. And this is what we are really interested in. The downward hierarchy provides hope for an explanation of consciousness. Conscious mental states could be explained by non-conscious mental states and mental states themselves in terms of non-mental properties. The intrinsicity of consciousness prevents 'it' from having a structure and from being explainable. Therefore HOR-theorists favour consciousness as a relational property.

**The Problem of the Rock and the argument of inference** – The use of the terms transitive and intransitive consciousness have evoked two further objections. If we are transitively conscious of a mental state, this state, so the theory goes, will be a conscious state. Why does this not apply to any objects of any kind? A rock will not be conscious although a mental state of mine can be transitively conscious of it. HOR theorists answer this question evasively by stating that a rock is not a mental state – only a mental state can become conscious. HOR-theorists also need to maintain the impossibility of inferred consciousness. An example should illustrate this point:

“Suppose I am angry, but unaware of it, and suppose that you see this from my behaviour, and tell me. I trust your judgement, but still consciously experience no anger. In this case I am conscious that I am angry even though my anger is not a conscious state. Or suppose that I myself notice my angry behaviour and infer that I am angry, but again experience no conscious feeling of anger.”  
(Rosenthal [12])

For these cases we need to exclude the possibility of inference in our definition of a conscious state. But imagine that this inference is performed non-consciously. Rosenthal says we should allow for this kind of inference unless we do not want to contradict common sense. I disagree with Rosenthal on this issue. Either we entertain a conscious mental state in a certain way (e.g. accompaniment of a higher-order thought) or we are in danger of mixing up of different concepts. We should stick to our definition here. However, if we believe Rosenthal, our ‘fine-tuned’ definition of a conscious state would now read: ‘Conscious mental states are mental states we are transitively conscious of, but without relying on any inference or observation of which we are transitively conscious.’

**Tackling the problem of the ‘self’** - As I have hinted before, what a HOR-theorist wants to achieve is a separation of the HOW (process of becoming conscious) and the WHAT (what becomes conscious). All HOR-theorists are under pressure to explain how their higher-order representation is somehow “for me”, especially with the constraint that mental states can be as unconscious as stones. A mere second-order representation does not suffice, for representation itself does not relate to the creature (human being) that is the ‘representer’.

Rosenthal for that matter, answers that question in demanding a concept of the self which creatures like human beings and perhaps primates have developed. What makes this representation “for me”, is that the second-order thought relates to me by being an assertoric, occurrent state. What does he mean by that? It does not mean, that having mental attitudes about something, like wondering, fearing, hoping will make the mental state conscious. We have argued that this can happen with unconscious states too. It is more that I need to ascertain that this mental state is real - is occurring - that ‘I am’ in that state.

Lycan also takes this objection very seriously. He looks more closely at an argument from George Rey, himself a first-order representationalist. Rey states that if HOR is true, then a “simple” belief-desire machine could easily have consciousness. We would ‘just’ have to give this machine a concept of ‘self’ and an internal monitor which can refer to the ‘self-concept’ and therefore establish a first-person representation. How does Lycan respond to that? Searle has argued that consciousness is an on/off affair, but Lycan’s theory of internal monitors allows for consciousness which comes in degrees. He now uses this property in order to rebut both the objection of Rey and the plausibility of Searle’s proposition. One internal monitor yields already a bare consciousness, but the more monitors that operate, the richer our consciousness is. Lycan is convinced to deny Rey’s intuition by arguing that “what is special about us is not our being conscious per se but that we monitor so much at any given time and achieve so high a degree of integration and control.” [7] [This view actually seems to contradict with Lycan’s interpretation of the long-distance truck-driver example. On the one hand he assumes that consciousness comes in degrees, but on the other he denies that the higher-degree of awareness of the truck-driver has anything to do with internal scanning.] He supports his view of “consciousness in degrees” by presenting a couple of examples which underline the intuition of his assumption, 1. sick people or people under drugs are often semiconscious; 2. evolution did not bring about consciousness instantaneously, and there is hardly a clear separation of conscious animals from unconscious ones; 3. where do we want to draw the line between robots that are functionally equivalent to us and rather simple input-output machines? 4. at which stage do babies become conscious?

**Too many HOT’s** - An ‘actualist’ account proposes that we are conscious of being in a mental state if this state is somehow represented by another one. But why would evolution produce loads of HOT’s that take up cortical resources and thus are a serious threat to survival? Well, the standard reply to this is that it could have evolved as a by-product, and there supposedly are superfluous resources in the brain which are not used anyhow. Moreover it is likely that consciousness has indeed an important functional task.

Dennett has argued that we might not need so many HOT’s as proposed. Our experience seems to be richer than it actually is. The richness does not lie within the experience itself but how well we are able to discriminate our experiences. However there is a theory that avoids the problem of cognitive overload completely, which I will now turn to.

### 3.3. Carruthers' Dispositional Theory

The objection of cognitive overload can be overcome by proposing that higher-order states do not really occur, but that there is only a disposition for them to happen. This leads us directly to the theory of the third philosopher I would like to focus on. Carruthers is the main advocate for a dispositional HOR-theory. He actually agrees with Rosenthal that it is rather thinking about than sensing or perceiving which makes a mental state conscious. But unlike Rosenthal, Carruthers is convinced that these higher-order thoughts do not occur, unless we really reflect introspectively on our mental states. So an actual second-order thought in Carruthers theory takes the same place as a third-order thought in Rosenthal's theory. What makes a mental state conscious is its disposition for a higher-order thought.

**Phenomenal Consciousness** - Carruthers is in general much more concerned with the problem of qualitative states than Rosenthal and Lycan. Lycan explicitly says that the problems of qualia and awareness are independent. In "Natural Theories of Consciousness" [3] Carruthers disputes the opinion of first-order representationalists for two reasons. Firstly, they cannot explain what it is like "for me" to have such-and-such an experience. This is the problem of subjectivity which we have already looked into using Rosenthal and Lycan. Secondly, he is concerned with the difference between 'phenomenal world' and 'phenomenal experience'. He is criticising any account that does not distinguish between 'what the world is like for an organism' and 'what the experience of the world is like for an organism.' Regarding this distinction, I disagree with Carruthers. There are not only theoretical reasons for arguing against this distinction, but also our intuition does not support such an idea. Let's get back to the example of the 'red tomato'. I am not capable of focusing on my experiences rather than the outer properties of the tomato. Some scholars agree that if they concentrate on their experiences of redness, an appearance-feature is added to the outer properties. I suggest however that these philosophers use the possibility that experiences can be mistaken to make an invalid reality-appearance distinction. If outer properties 'seem' to me in a certain way, then with Dennet's words what is added is only a second-order seeming – to me the redness of the tomato 'seems to seem' to be in a special way. But even if we grant that there is a felt difference between worldly-subjectivity and mental state subjectivity, we certainly do not discriminate distinctively between the outer properties and the

properties of the experience. A certain shade of red is always the same no matter if I focus on the outer property or focus on the experience itself. Thus, to use HOR not only for capturing the subjective feature of consciousness but also to use an alleged difference in the phenomenal aspect between a first-order and second-order mental state as evidence for HOR, seems rather unjustified to me. I will pick up this topic in chapter 4.

**Possibility of Misrepresentation** – The dispositional theory seems to have two big advantages. We do not have to propose millions of HOT's that take up a load of the cortical resources in one's brain. And secondly it avoids the problem of misrepresenting which has been elaborated by Karen Neander [11]. Her argument is build upon the possibility of a misrepresentation of higher-order states.

Suppose, because of some neural misfiring, I go into higher-order state HG [G = Green], rather than HR [R = Red]. HG is the state whose representational content is that I am having a greenish experience, what I normally have when in state G. The question is, what is the nature of my conscious experience in this case? My visual system is in state R, the normal response to red, but my higher-order state is HG, the normal response to being in state G, itself the normal response to green. Is my consciousness of the reddish or greenish variety? (Levine, [5])

If we answer “Red”, then the whole theory of higher-order representation falls apart, if we say “Green”, then the qualitative state has nothing to do with the original state anymore and “HO now collapses qualitative character and subjectivity back together again.” [5] Gennaro and Kriegel advanced the problem by arguing that higher-order states are part of their target. But this move seems to rob the notion of any significance. What we want are distinct states. Rosenthal has met this objection by showing that there is no difference between a misrepresentation of the target and an absent target. The more the two (higher-order representation of A – and a first-order state B) are apart, the less we think of a misrepresentation and of the absence of the target. Rosenthal is willing to accept, that it makes no difference to me, if the first-order state is present or not. It is the higher-order thought that counts. The problem still remains. HOR wants to “split off the character from what it is the character of.”, and it is not clear after all if this move is reasonable.

## 4. Summary and a personal argument against HOR

### 4.1. Summarizing the ideas connected with HOR

In our analysis of HOR we have seen that there exists a variety of different theories connected with higher-order representation. The higher-order theory is a fascinating theory of subjectivity for it incorporates one of the two main features associated with consciousness (see Introduction). The basic idea behind HOR is that in order for a mental state to be conscious, the original state has to be represented by a higher-order state. Philosophers who accept the validity of HOR have tried to get the details right, like Lycan, Rosenthal and Carruthers. There are quite a number of objections that have been raised, among them the problems of circularity and infinite regress, the possibility of misrepresentation, the problem of the rock and of inference, the threat of cognitive overload, the reference to the self, etc. HOR-philosophers have rebutted some of these arguments in a quite successful manner, but there still remains a lot of disagreement in how the representation of a lower-order state can be made to work. In the next and last section of this essay I am concerned with a more fundamental problem of the Higher-order theory. I am going to dispute the very definition of consciousness which has been proposed by HOR-theorists and argue especially against an extension of the applicability of consciousness in HOR-terms to more fundamental occurrences.

### 4.2. The Problem of Defining Consciousness in Different Conceptual Settings

Let's go once more back to the definition of consciousness in HOR-terminology. Consciousness is said to be the awareness of being in one's own mental state. Awareness seems to be the keyword in this definition. If someone uses the phrase "I am aware", then we normally want to know what he is aware of. I can at least see four different kinds of categories in which someone is aware [of something]. These are:

1. Awareness of an object: I can be aware of an object like a red tomato and focus my view on it. In the same category fall abstract things like a piece of music to which I can attentively listen to.
2. Awareness of a mental state: If I am in pain, I become aware of my mental state, which is a representation of the pain.
3. Awareness of being in a mental state: While being aware of a mental state, I can become aware of referring to 'I', who is in that mental state.
4. Awareness that I am aware of being in a mental state: In this case we 'introspectively reflect' on our awareness and thus gain awareness and knowledge about it.

I think that awareness definitely lies at the heart of consciousness, but what kind of awareness are they (HOR-theorists) referring to that makes up consciousness. Well, if we use their own definition then it seems to be the third option they are favouring. Firstly they want to account for the subjectivity of experiences, and secondly their argument of another state representing the original state only makes sense if we are aware of a mental state not of an object. Actually, HOR philosophers do not make a precise distinction between category two and three; we find both definitions in HOR literature. For some of them, awareness of a mental state automatically implies awareness of me being in that mental state. But this seems to leave out quite a bit. If I perceive an object and become aware of it, is it not the case that I am conscious in some sense, or in other words, that my mental state becomes conscious? On the one hand, Lycan explicitly dismisses Dretske's idea that conscious mental states are mental states through which we are conscious of objects, on the other Lycan cannot hear 'a natural sense of the phrase conscious state other than as meaning "state one is conscious of being in". [10]. For Levine, it also seems that awareness of objects are included within HOR. "When I look at my red diskette case, I have a reddish conscious visual experience, ..." [5]

If we want to include object-consciousness into the HOR-theory, but still try to preserve their definition then there seem to be two possibilities to me in how to circumvent this problem:

Now, one could argue that this problem is a mere linguistic one. When I mention my awareness of an object, what I really mean is my awareness of a mental state. There is no such thing as an

outside object, but only mental states I can be aware of. And if this knowledge were to intrude on our way of speaking, I would say that I am aware of a mental state. The second option is to go for an ontological argument. Our intuition tells us that in certain situations we are aware of an object rather than a mental state. Awareness is directed outwards, and in times I am in a state of awareness, I have knowledge or perception of a situation or a fact. But ontologically there are only mental states that represent the outside world to me. I do think I am aware of outside objects, but I can only be aware of my mental states.

Option one sounds rather obscure and does not grasp what we understand when we talk about awareness of an object. Option two seems to be the better fare, but it carries the burden of denying our intuitive force that awareness of objects is not related to me by any means. Maybe the best way of dealing with it, is to change our definition in such cases. We could say that the higher-order state is representing the original state, which is of course itself a representation of the outside world. In both ways though, there seems to be a missing link to subjectivity, and HOR-philosophers are under pressure to explain why the reddishness is “for me”, without being conscious of the “for me”.

To make the situation clearer, I would like to contrast three different conceptual settings and discuss in which category of awareness the examples fall. The settings are:

1. Observation of a red car
2. Feeling anger
3. Walking down a street singing a song (analogous to the truck-driver)

In scenario one I am aware of a red car. This is category one in our classification – awareness of an object. We feel that we do not conceive of the mental state we are in, but of the car itself. What do we verbally report in such a case? Well, we sometimes say – “oh, there is a red car” –, at other times we include our concept of the self into an exclamation like – oh, I see a red car. I maintain that in most situations there is no difference at all, but we are conditioned in the use of our language to include the word ‘I’ into such sentences. In cases where there is a difference, HOR theorists argue that in the latter use, with the including “I”, - that’s when I am conscious. But our phenomenal world does not change in either case. If I am aware of the red car, in both cases the

qualitative state – reddishness – is lighting up, and the reference to the self does not add anything qualitatively that isn't already existent without it.

Scenario two is concerned with the situation of feeling angry. If I am aware of my anger then I would argue that I am aware of a mental state, this is point two. There is no intervening awareness of an object possible. I am directly aware of my mental state. This does not deny that the feeling of anger has something as its intentional object, like a person or a situation. But the feeling itself is intimately connected with our minds, thus I am aware of a mental state.

The last example covers, as you can probably anticipate, category three in my classification. If I am walking down a street, unconsciously singing a song, and then suddenly become aware of myself singing, then I contend that I become aware of “being in a mental state”. This is due to my activeness in that situation.

There is a big difference between active and passive processes when I become “aware of”. If I become aware of myself singing a song, then I become aware of being in a certain state; when I focus my attention on something that is passing by, then I do not become aware of me being in that state, I become aware of an object or at most of a mental state, but certainly not of being in that state. Of course I am the one, who is perceiving, but this perception-like awareness does not refer to me. It is a passive process, insofar as it does not include “me” acting in a special way.

### 4.3. Conclusion

I still think that subjectivity plays an important role when it comes to the phenomenon of consciousness. But relating the subjective character to a necessary “I”-concept seems not to work in all conceptual settings. While HOR definitely is of advantage in explaining what it is like “for me” when e.g. I have a pain, a first-order representational theory can at least account for qualitative experiences in cases of awareness of outside objects. In cases of object-awareness it does not make any sense to split off the qualitative character from its subjective aspect. The subjective character of experience is connected with an awareness of some kind, but just because “I” am aware, I am not necessarily aware of myself and thus I do not need to refer to myself in order for something to have a special qualitative character. We are not in a position to explain conscious experiences without reference to our first-person point of view. But that does not mean that what makes an experience conscious is our scanning the world from a first-person perspective.

## Appendix A: References

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## Appendix B: A logical analysis of Lycan's simple argument

This is Lycan's simple argument:

- (D) A conscious state is a mental state whose subject is aware of being in it
- (P1) The „of“ is the „of“ of intentionality; what one is aware “of” is an intentional object of the awareness
- (P2) Intentionality is Representation; a state has a thing as its intentional object, only if it represents that thing.
- (C1) Awareness of a mental state is a representation of that state.
- (C2) A conscious state is a state that is itself represented by another of the subject's mental states.

What I basically want to show is that from the two premises (P1) and (P2), Conclusion 1 does not follow.

This can be demonstrated as follows.

1. Special Case of (C1): Awareness of mental state B is a representation of state B (C1')
2. Take the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of (C1') and substitute into (P2): a state A has a state B as its intentional object, only if state A is a representation of state B (P2')
3. In order to get to (P1) we need to substitute „awareness“ for state A in (P2'): awareness has state B as its intentional object, only if awareness is a representation of state B (P2'')
4. Now use (P2'') and (P1): one is aware of state B, if awareness is a representation of state B
5. (C1) is not valid: it should read: one is aware of state B, if awareness of state B is a representation of state B

It is just not valid to jump between two different levels of analysis. Either we analyze what it is for a conscious state to be aware of something, or we focus on the person who is aware of something and thus represents that state by another state. But how do we apply the term awareness to mental states? I cannot hear any plausible meaning of a mental state which is aware of another state.