

# Consciousness and Self-Consciousness

Uriah Kriegel, *Monist* 87 (2004): 182-205

What is the relation between consciousness and self-consciousness? In recent philosophy of mind, we are accustomed to underlining their independence. It is often emphasized that a person can be conscious of a host of objects, features, and states of affairs unrelated to her. When a person is conscious of the sky, or consciously experiences the blueness of the sky, she is not attending to herself in the least. That is, she is not self-conscious. Yet she is very clearly conscious. Therefore, consciousness can occur in the absence of self-consciousness.

I think there is something amiss in this picture. I will argue that consciousness essentially involves self-consciousness, in the sense that the former cannot occur in the absence of the latter. The argument will proceed as follows. In §1, I will discuss a familiar distinction between transitive consciousness and intransitive consciousness, and argue that the former depends upon the latter. In §2, I will introduce a parallel distinction between two modes of self-consciousness, which I will call transitive self-consciousness and intransitive self-consciousness. In §3, I will argue that the common reasons for claiming that consciousness is independent of self-consciousness apply only to transitive self-consciousness. And in §4, I will argue that when it comes to intransitive self-consciousness, it appears that no consciousness can occur in its absence. In that sense, consciousness is dependent upon intransitive self-consciousness.

## 1. TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

The term 'consciousness' is multiply ambiguous. In one sense it denotes a faculty, in another a property. When used to denote a property, the term can apply either to whole creatures or to concrete mental states of creatures. Consider the following three statements:

- (1) Smith is conscious.
- (2) Smith is conscious of her new car.
- (3) Smith's thought that her car is new is conscious.

In each of these statements, the term 'conscious' is used to denote a property. But at least on the face of it, the property denoted is different in each case. (1) attributes to Smith an intrinsic property, the property of being conscious, as opposed to asleep or comatose. (2) attributes to Smith a relational property, the property of standing in the conscious-of relation to her new car. (3) attributes an intrinsic property not to Smith, but to her thought. (FN1) These three properties are likely to turn out to be closely interrelated, but at least at the outset, we should treat them as conceptually distinct.

In choosing a terminology by which to label these three properties, we should take note of their similarities and differences. (1) is similar to (2) and dissimilar to (3) in being a property of Smith, rather than of one of Smith's particular mental states. But (1) is also similar to (3) and dissimilar to (2) in being an intrinsic, rather than relational, property. To reflect this, Rosenthal (1986) has introduced a pair of terminological distinctions. First, we should distinguish between creature consciousness and state consciousness. The former is a property of entire organisms,

or creatures, whereas the latter is a property of specific mental events or states. Second, we should distinguish between what Rosenthal calls transitive consciousness and intransitive consciousness. The former is a relational property, whose bearer must take something as an object, whereas the latter is an intrinsic, non-relational property. With these two terminological distinctions at our disposal, we can proceed to label the property denoted in (1) above intransitive creature consciousness, the property denoted in (2) transitive creature consciousness, and the property denoted in (3) intransitive state consciousness.

The reader will have noticed that we did not mention a property of transitive state consciousness. It is significant that statements such as the following are ungrammatical:

(4) Smith's thought is conscious of Smith's new car.

It is simply a fact about the way the phrase 'conscious of' works that mental states cannot be conscious of anything. At the same time, however, 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 if 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.

We should not be overly mesmerized by these terminological distinctions, though. After all, they are merely terminological, and any other terminological device for distinguishing the properties in question would do just as well. We could, for instance, describe the state of affairs reported in (3) in a more creature-centered way. The following appears equivalent to (3):

(5) Smith is consciously thinking that her car is new.

Here the adverb 'consciously' denotes a second-order property of Smith, a property of Smith's property of thinking that her car is new. We could, therefore, recast the distinction between state consciousness and creature consciousness as a distinction between first-order creature consciousness and second-order creature consciousness. The distinction would be the same, but set in different terms.

In the remainder of this section, I want to argue that despite our four-way terminological distinction, the properties of transitive creature consciousness, intransitive creature consciousness, and transitive state consciousness all depend upon the property of intransitive state consciousness (in the sense that the former cannot occur in the absence of the latter).

First, notice that each form of creature consciousness depends upon its corresponding form of state consciousness. As we just saw, a person is conscious of something in virtue of being in a certain mental state. That is, a person exhibits transitive creature consciousness only if she has a mental state that exhibits transitive state consciousness. So, transitive creature consciousness depends upon transitive state consciousness.

Plausibly, intransitive creature consciousness is likewise dependent upon intransitive state consciousness: for Smith to be conscious, she must be in at least one conscious state. A person cannot be conscious (i.e., exhibit intransitive creature consciousness) when none of her mental states is conscious (i.e., exhibits intransitive state consciousness). So the occurrence of intransitive creature consciousness depends

on the occurrence of intransitive state consciousness rather straightforwardly.

It could be objected, however, that there is another kind of claim we can make in terms of intransitive creature consciousness, in which the dependence of creature consciousness on state consciousness is not so straightforward. This is the sort of claim we make when we say, for instance, that gorillas are conscious, whereas snails are not. My response to this objection is twofold. First, there is a sense in which the property denoted in a claim of this sort is different from intransitive creature consciousness. We may call this property species consciousness, since we are here making a claim about a whole species, rather than about a particular creature. (FN2) Second, it seems to me that even species consciousness is dependent upon intransitive state consciousness. For to say of a species that it is conscious is to say that normal specimens are capable of being conscious, and more specifically, that they are capable of being in conscious states. A species of creature that cannot, in principle, have conscious mental states is an unconscious species.

It appears, then, that intransitive creature consciousness depends on intransitive state consciousness just as much as transitive creature consciousness depends upon transitive state consciousness.

I now want to argue that transitive state consciousness depends upon intransitive state consciousness. (FN3) Recall that transitive state consciousness is the property a mental state M has when M's subject is conscious of something in virtue of being in M. The question is whether the subject can be conscious of something in virtue of being in an unconscious state. This seems to run contrary to the normal usage of the terms. We would be reluctant to describe a person as conscious of the fact that 17.3 is greater than 13.9 just because she harbors a tacit belief to that effect. As long as the belief that 17.3 is greater than 13.9 remains unconscious, we would not say that the person is conscious of that fact. Therefore, if a person is conscious of the fact that 17.3 is greater than 13.9, then her belief that 17.3 is greater than 13.9 must be conscious. This appears to be a conceptual truth: the concept of consciousness-of presupposes the concept of consciousness. If it did not, there would be two ways a person could be conscious of something: consciously or unconsciously. But 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.

Furthermore, we want to say that, ordinarily, a person can only be conscious of a few things at a time. But if we allowed persons to be conscious of things in virtue of being in unconscious mental states, then any person would be conscious of innumerable many things at any one time, even during their sleep. (FN4) There is no question, of course, that it is possible for a person to be in unconscious intentional states directed at those many things. But we would not use the phrase 'conscious of' to describe the person's relation to those things. So again, persons who are conscious of something must be so in virtue of being in a conscious state. This means that transitive state consciousness cannot occur in the absence of intransitive state consciousness. The former is in this sense dependent upon the latter. This is intended, as I said, as a conceptual truth. (FN5)

In conclusion, every form of consciousness we have encountered--every property denoted by 'conscious' and its cognates--is somehow dependent upon intransitive state consciousness, in that it cannot occur in the latter's absence. (FN6) Intransitive state consciousness is in this sense a basic form of consciousness. It is perhaps for this reason that philosophical discussions of consciousness have thus far focused almost exclusively on it. When philosophers debate the nature of "phenomenal consciousness," what they have in mind is intransitive state consciousness. If I am right about the

dependence of the other forms of consciousness on intransitive state consciousness, this almost exclusive focus is well-motivated, for it is impossible to account for them without first having accounted for intransitive state consciousness.

What I want to argue in this paper, however, is that intransitive state consciousness is itself dependent upon a certain kind of self-consciousness. This would entail that the other three "consciousness properties" we have discussed are also dependent upon self-consciousness. But in order to appreciate the case for the dependence of intransitive state consciousness on self-consciousness, we must make certain distinctions between kinds of self-consciousness, in parallel with the distinctions we have laid out in the present section between kinds of consciousness. That is the topic of the next section.

## 2. TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

It is not often noticed that a similar four-way distinction applies to self-consciousness. We may call intransitive creature self-consciousness the property denoted in the following statement:

(6) Smith is self-conscious.

There is also a parallel to (2) above. The following may be ungrammatical in any literal sense:

(7) Smith is self-conscious of her new car.

But the following is grammatical:

(8) Smith is self-conscious of thinking that her car is new.

Superficially, (8) may appear ambiguous regarding what it is that Smith's state of self-consciousness takes as an object. On one reading, the object may be construed as Smith's thought about her car. On another reading, the object may be construed as Smith's having of the thought. Arguably, only on the latter reading is the reported mental state a genuine form of self-consciousness, since only in it is Smith reported to be conscious of herself. To see that the second reading is a legitimate, natural, and unforced one, consider the fact that (8) is equivalent to:

(8\*) Smith is conscious of her thinking that her car is new.

(8\*) is more perspicuously about Smith herself and her current mental state, but it is equivalent to (8). We may call the property denoted in (8) and (8\*) transitive creature self-consciousness. This is the property a creature has when she is conscious of herself and her mental states. (FN7) The reason (7) is ungrammatical is that transitive self-consciousness, unlike transitive consciousness, cannot take as an object an external entity, such as a car. The only entities it can take as an object are the subject and her internal states--for instance, the subject's thinking about her car. (FN8)

As with transitive creature consciousness, transitive creature self-consciousness holds in virtue of the subject's being in a certain mental state, which exhibits a property we may (therefore) call transitive state self-consciousness.

Similarly, there are statements that parallel (3) and (5) above (which, recall, are equivalent):

(9) Smith's thought that her car is new is self-conscious.

(10) Smith is self-consciously thinking that her car is new.

We may call the property denoted in these statements intransitive state self-consciousness.

Our four-way distinction regarding consciousness is thus reflected in a parallel four-way distinction regarding self-consciousness. However, the interrelations among the four forms of self-consciousness do not likewise parallel those among the forms of

consciousness. In the bulk of this section, I want to focus on the difference between transitive and intransitive state self-consciousness. I will then comment on their relation to creature self-consciousness.

It might be thought that (10) is simply shorthand for (8). Or, more sophisticatedly, it might be thought that to say that Smith is self-consciously thinking that her car is new is just to say that Smith is thinking that her car is new and Smith is self-conscious of her thought that her car is new. In the next few paragraphs, I am going to argue that, on the contrary, (8) and (10) denote two different properties.

The first thing to notice is that the sort of dependence claim just outlined is not borne out in the surface grammar of (8) and (10). As far as the surface grammar is concerned, in (8) Smith's thinking about her car is the object of an independent state of self-consciousness. So the state of self-consciousness must be numerically distinct from the thought about the car, since the latter is the object of the former. In (10), by contrast, the reported state of self-consciousness appears to be one and the same as the thought about the car. Here the self-consciousness modifies Smith's thinking about the car, it does not take it as an object. In (8), then, a mental state is said to be self-conscious in virtue of the sort of object it takes; but in (10), the state is said to be self-conscious in virtue of the way it is had by the subject: Smith has her thought that her car is new in a self-conscious sort of way.

What does it mean for a person to think something in a self-conscious sort of way? A good explication may be found in the following passage from Alvin Goldman:

[Consider] the case of [self-consciously] thinking about x or attending to x. In the process of [self-consciously] thinking about x there is already an implicit awareness that one is thinking about x. There is no need for reflection here, for taking a step back from thinking about x in order to examine it. . . . When we are thinking about x, the mind is focused on x, not on our thinking of x. Nevertheless, the process of thinking about x carries with it a non-reflective self-awareness. (1970: 96)(FN9)

Goldman's distinction between reflective and non-reflective self-awareness appears to parallel our distinction between transitive and intransitive self-consciousness. In what Goldman calls 'non-reflective self-awareness', the primary object of the subject's mental state is not herself or her mental state, but whatever the external object of these mental states may be. 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.(FN10) 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.(FN11)

Goldman identifies the difference between the two modes of self-consciousness in the focus of attention. In transitive self-consciousness (reflective self-awareness), we focus our attention on our internal state. We carefully attend to it and explicitly scrutinize it. In intransitive self-consciousness (non-reflective self-awareness), by contrast, our attention is focused elsewhere. Yet we are not totally unaware of being in the relevant internal state. Rather, we are aware of it in a more peripheral and unimposing manner. Our awareness of our internal state is thus inattentive and peripheral, as opposed to the attentive and focused awareness of it characteristic of transitive self-consciousness. By way of clarifying the matter, let us distinguish three ways in which a subject S may be related to the fact that she is in mental state M. S

may be either (i) completely unaware of being in M, or (ii) focally aware of being in M, or (iii) peripherally aware of being in M. When S is completely unaware of being in M, clearly there is no form of self-consciousness involved in S's being in M. The only way S's being in M may involve some sort of self-consciousness is if S is aware of it. But as we just saw, there are two ways S can be aware of being in M: she may be only peripherally aware of it, and she may be focally aware of it. (FN12) My suggestion is that when the subject is focally aware of being in M, it is the phrase 'self-conscious of' that is appropriate in reporting S's awareness of her being in M; when S is only peripherally aware of it, the appropriate report would be to say that she is in M "self-consciously." That is, transitive self-consciousness is involved in cases where the subject is focally aware of being in M, whereas intransitive self-consciousness is involved in cases where the subject is only peripherally aware of being in M.

This explication rests on a distinction between focal and peripheral awareness, which we have used quite uncritically thus far. In general, what does it mean for a person to be peripherally aware of anything? More specifically, what would it be like for a person to be peripherally aware of herself as the subject of a certain mental state?

Here it would be useful to start by considering other mental phenomena involving peripheral awareness. Consider the distinction, universally accepted among cognitive scientists, between foveal vision and peripheral vision. In my current visual perception, there is a distinction to be made between my foveal vision of my laptop before me and my peripheral vision of myriad objects surrounding the laptop (a stack of books on the left corner of the desk, a lamp on the right, etc.). This is, in effect, a distinction between two forms of visual awareness. My awareness of the object I am foveating (i.e., my laptop) is focal whereas my awareness of the other objects (e.g., the books) is not. What is important to emphasize is that the fact that I do not have a focal awareness of the books and the lamp should not mislead us into saying that I am wholly unaware of them. For clearly there is also a distinction to be made between my relation to the books and my relation to my neighbor's car. I am completely unaware (visually) of the neighbor's car in a way I am not of the books. So we should say that I have a sort of peripheral awareness of the books, which is distinguished from both the focal awareness of the laptop and the un-awareness of the neighbor's car.

It seems that the same distinction applies to auditory awareness. Suppose you are listening to Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. Your auditory perception of the piano is bound to be more focused than your perception of the cellos, or for that matter, of the cars driving by your window. That is, you are focally aware (auditorily) of the piano and only peripherally aware (auditorily) of the cellos and the cars. Likewise, for, say, gustatory awareness. When one eats a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich, one is typically focally aware of the jelly's flavor, or of the flavor of the jelly and peanut butter mixing in one's palate, and is only peripherally aware of the bread's flavor.

The competition for the focus of awareness is not only intra-modal, but also inter-modal. As I look at my laptop and focus on trying to make the next point in the paper's argument, Tchaikovsky's Concerto sinks to the background. I am now peripherally aware of the whole concerto, and indeed of all the stimuli I am auditorily aware of, and am focally aware only of the laptop before me, which is presented visually.

One might think that the distinction between the focal and the peripheral applies only to perceptual awareness, and not to more "intellectual" forms of awareness. When one thinks of yesterday's baseball game, or the lecture one is due to deliver tomorrow, one is aware of the game or the lecture. But one is not perceiving those events. So one's awareness of them is non-perceptual, or as I will call it, intellectual.

It might be thought that such intellectual awareness can never be merely peripheral. This would be encouraged by a conception of intellectual (non-perceptual) mental activity as involving the succession of discrete mental states with a propositional content. In such a propositional content, there is no place for a distinction between parts of the proposition one is focally aware of and parts one is peripherally aware of. Rather, one is fully aware of the proposition as a whole throughout.

A moment's reflection, however, should convince us of the poverty of this conception of thinking or intellectual activity. Thinking is not a sequence of successive discrete states that take a single proposition as their object. As many philosophers have noted (e.g., James 1890, Ryle 1949), thinking is rather a stream of thoughts, flowing sometimes in succession, oftentimes in parallel, sometimes calmly, oftentimes gushing. If we could examine in detail a stretch of this stream, we would be likely to find many different propositions before the mind at any one time. Thus, as I focally think of tomorrow's lecture, I may also be peripherally aware of the fact that I have yet to pay last month's electricity bill. (FN13)

Moreover, when a person is focally intellectually aware of something, she is also likely to be peripherally perceptually aware of something else. As an example of this may serve the indispensable long-distance truck driver. As she drives through the endless cornfields of Nebraska, the driver may contemplate yesterday's baseball game, or perhaps what she hopes to "get from life." That is, she is focally aware (intellectually) of yesterday's game or of the meaning of her life. And yet she is not completely unaware of the cornfields about her and the road before her. Rather, she is peripherally aware (visually) of them. To see this, compare the overall state of awareness of a colorblind truck driver. Her overall state of awareness appears to be at least somewhat different. This is because the contents of her peripheral perceptual awareness are different, even if the contents of her focal intellectual awareness are the same. (FN14)

There is a longstanding and complex debate about whether self-awareness is quasi-perceptual or rather intellectual (in the sense I am using the term here). But either way, given that the focal/peripheral distinction applies to both perceptual and non-perceptual awareness, it would appear unmotivated to deny its application to awareness of self (whether perceptual or intellectual in nature). My suggestion is that peripheral self-awareness constitutes intransitive self-consciousness. To say that Smith is self-consciously thinking that her car is new is to say that Smith is focally aware (intellectually) of her car's being new and peripherally aware of her thinking that the car is new. Likewise, if I am self-consciously perceiving the laptop before me, I am not only focally aware (perceptually) of the laptop, but also peripherally aware of my perceiving the laptop.

Still, one might object that peripheral self-awareness is nowhere to be found in one's phenomenology. To be sure, the phenomenologists themselves did claim to find it. From Brentano (1874), through Husserl (1928) and Sartre (1937, 1943), to recent work by the so-called Heidelberg School, (FN15) Smith (1989), and Zahavi (1999), the distinction between reflective and non-reflective self-awareness has been consistently drawn on the European continent. (FN16) My suggestion is that the distinction thus belabored in the phenomenological tradition is captured in the difference between transitive and intransitive modes of self-consciousness, that is, between being self-conscious of a thought or a percept and self-consciously thinking or perceiving. But a persistent objector could readily profess not to find anything like such peripheral self-awareness in her phenomenology and insist that the phenomenologists themselves have been, in this regard as in others, overly inflationist in their proclamations

concerning the actual phenomenology of mental life.

This is a fair objection. But it may unwittingly impose an inordinate burden of proof on the proponent of intransitive self-consciousness. For how would one argue for the very existence of a certain mental phenomenon? Thus, I have yet to encounter an effective argument against eliminativism about the propositional attitudes, or about consciousness and qualia, say of the sort espoused by Churchland (1984). Even so, we did encounter such an argument above, namely, that there appears to be peripheral awareness of every other sort, and it would be quite odd if the only exception was awareness of oneself. What I would like to do now is try and explain away the relative intuitive appeal of eliminativism about intransitive self-consciousness, in comparison to, say, eliminativism about the qualitative character of color experiences.

One factor may simply be that the qualitative character of color experiences is much more phenomenologically impressive. In this respect, the proponent of intransitive self-consciousness is in a similar position to those philosophers who claim that conscious propositional attitudes have a phenomenal character (Strawson 1994, Horgan and Tienson 2002, Kriegel 2003a, Pitt 2004). The problem they face is that the phenomenal character of propositional attitudes, if there is any, is clearly less striking than that of color experiences. But the common tendency to take color experiences as the gold standard of phenomenology may be theoretically limiting inasmuch as it may set the bar too high. For any other sort of phenomenology is bound to be milder.

Furthermore, special difficulties attach to noticing phenomena of peripheral awareness. Suppose a philosopher went eliminativist with respect to peripheral vision, claiming that there is simply no such thing. How would we convince her that there is such a thing? We face here a peculiar methodological difficulty, in that whenever we want to direct our attention to the periphery of our visual field, the latter thereby becomes the focal center. And yet we are disinclined to conclude that our eliminativist is right and there really is no such thing as peripheral vision. Similar remarks apply to eliminativism about peripheral self-awareness. If we attempt to turn our attention to it, it inevitably transforms into focal self-awareness. But this should not be taken as grounds for rejecting the existence of peripheral self-awareness.

Further yet, intransitive self-consciousness may be singularly elusive among mental phenomena. Consider the claims of some philosophers in the analytic tradition who have claimed to notice a peripheral form of self-awareness in their phenomenology. William James (1961: 42) writes that "whatever I may be thinking of, I am always at the same time more or less aware of myself, of my personal existence." More recently, David Chalmers writes:

One sometimes feels that there is something to conscious experience that transcends all these specific elements [visual experiences, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and taste experiences, experiences of hot and cold, pain and other bodily sensations, and conscious thoughts]: a kind of background hum, for instance, that is somehow fundamental to consciousness and that is there even when the other components are not. This phenomenology of self is so deep and intangible that it sometimes seems illusory, consisting of nothing over and above specific elements such as those listed above. Still, there seems to be something to the phenomenology of self, even if it is very hard to pin down. (1996: 10)

That this "phenomenology of self" is indeed fundamental to consciousness will be argued later in the paper. But observe that both Chalmers and James assume that peripheral self-awareness is ubiquitous. On their view, throughout our waking life, we

are aware of ourselves, in this unimposing, inattentive, and peripheral manner, as the subjects of our mental life (see also Kapitan 1999). By contrast, focal, attentive awareness of ourselves and our mental states is relatively rare. Most of the time we do not explicitly focus our attention on our own inner life; that would be pathological.

Another psychological difference between transitive and intransitive self-consciousness is in their connection to the will. Transitive self-consciousness appears to be quite voluntary: we can choose to deliberately turn the focus of our attention onto our own mental life. By contrast, intransitive self-consciousness is doubly involuntary. First, we do not normally choose to be peripherally aware of ourselves as the subjects of our experiences and thoughts. Indeed, in general we seem not to have the sort of control over the periphery of our awareness that we do over its focal center. Secondly, we cannot stop, at will, being aware of ourselves in the peripheral manner in which I claim we are. (FN17)

These two characteristics of intransitive self-consciousness--its ubiquity and its involuntariness--may partially explain the fact that it does not lend itself to easy noticing. It is difficult to notice even stimuli that are constant for a relatively short time. For instance, it is easy to fail to notice the hum of the refrigerator pump after only a few minutes. If intransitive self-consciousness is indeed ubiquitous, its absolute constancy throughout our waking life would account for the fact that it is so phenomenologically elusive, or as Chalmers puts it, "deep and intangible." And the fact that it is involuntary means that we cannot control the conditions of its presence and "compare," as it were, a situation in which it is present with one in which it is not, in a way that would accentuate its presence.

I conclude that the appeal of the eliminativist intuition about peripheral self-awareness, and hence intransitive self-consciousness, can be explained away in terms of the special psychological characteristics of intransitive self-consciousness, which indeed make it intangible and elusive in a way that other mental phenomena are not. At the same time, there is a positive argument in favor of its existence, namely, the fact that the existence of peripheral awareness of things other than oneself is uncontestable across the board, and there is no reason why awareness of oneself should be fundamentally different. (FN18)

The psychological differences we noted between intransitive self-consciousness and transitive self-consciousness also establish the independence of the former from the latter: Smith can self-consciously think that her car is new without becoming self-conscious of her thought that her car is new (i.e., she can enter a state of intransitive self-consciousness without entering a state of transitive self-consciousness). To become self-conscious of her thought that her car is new, she would have to deliberately turn the focus of her attention to her mental life. But she can self-consciously think of her car without doing so. So the distinction between (8) and (10) appears to be not merely linguistic, but to reflect a psychologically real difference between two different phenomena of self-consciousness.

Before closing this Section, let us consider the nature of intransitive creature self-consciousness, as denoted in (6), in light of the above discussion of state self-consciousness. There are two kinds of claims we can make in terms of intransitive creature self-consciousness. One is the sort of claim we make when we say that humans are self-conscious, whereas cats probably are not. Let us call the phenomenon denoted in this sort of claim species self-consciousness. Species self-consciousness appears to be a matter of a normal specimen's ability to entertain transitively self-conscious mental states, that is, to turn its attention to, and become focally aware of, its own mental states. In this sense, species self-consciousness is dependent upon

transitive state self-consciousness.

The other kind of claim we can make in terms of intransitive creature self-consciousness is the sort of claim we make when we say that Smith is more self-conscious than Jones. This appears to be a comment on Smith's and Jones's respective personalities. Being a self-conscious person is in this sense a character trait. What sort of character trait? A self-conscious person is a person who tends to attend to her own thoughts and feelings--a "reflective" person, as we say. That is, a person is self-conscious to the extent that she is disposed to enter transitively self-conscious states, i.e., states that take as their object the subject and her mental states. So in this sense too, intransitive creature self-consciousness depends on transitive state self-consciousness: the more a person tends to enter states of transitive self-consciousness, the more self-conscious a person she is.

### 3. INTRANSITIVE CONSCIOUSNESS AND TRANSITIVE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

If I belabor the distinction between transitive and intransitive self-consciousness, it is because this distinction is crucial to the thesis I want to defend, namely, that consciousness depends upon self-consciousness. What I want to argue in the rest of this paper is that although consciousness indeed does not depend on transitive self-consciousness, it does depend on intransitive self-consciousness. Thus the reason philosophers have failed to appreciate the dependence of consciousness upon self-consciousness is that they have failed to draw the distinction between transitive and intransitive self-consciousness.

I divide the argument into two parts. In this section, I argue that the common reasons for rejecting the dependence of consciousness upon self-consciousness apply only to transitive self-consciousness. In the next section, I will outline two positive arguments in favor of the dependence of consciousness on intransitive self-consciousness. Another preliminary remark on the argument to be developed: because all forms of consciousness depend on intransitive state consciousness, I will focus on showing the dependence of intransitive state consciousness on intransitive state self-consciousness. This would establish the following thesis: there is one form of self-consciousness, such that all forms of consciousness are dependent upon it.

When philosophers suggest that consciousness is independent of self-consciousness, they normally substantiate this simply by illustration. As I noted at the very beginning of this paper, when a person glances at the sky fleetingly and has a conscious experience of it, she is not ordinarily attending to herself and her experience. Rather, she is attending to the sky. Perhaps in some particularly reflective moods, the person may attend equally to the sky and to herself as she experiences the sky. But this is quite unusual. Normally, the subject is not consumed with herself, but rather with the world she is experiencing and thinking about.

This observation is correct as far as it goes, but the sort of self-consciousness the person is denied here is specifically of the transitive variety. Intransitive self-consciousness seems to be still present in such cases. The person who glances at the sky is not focally aware of herself, she is not self-conscious of her experience of the sky. But this does not show that the person is not experiencing the sky self-consciously. Given the independence of transitive and intransitive self-consciousness, a person can fail to be self-conscious of her experience of the sky without failing to experience the sky self-consciously.

It is sometimes remarked that if every state of consciousness involved self-consciousness, we would never be able to think about anything other than ourselves. The worry is that the notion that consciousness always involves self-consciousness

would lead to solipsism, making it impossible for us ever to be consciously aware of something other than ourselves.

Again, this worry would be well-motivated if consciousness were claimed to involve transitive self-consciousness. If consciousness necessarily involved transitive self-consciousness, it might be impossible for a person ever to become aware of objects and states of affairs in the world outside her mind. For self-consciousness of something is always directed at internal events or states. But if what consciousness is claimed to involve is only intransitive self-consciousness, no such consequences follow. When a person self-consciously experiences the sky (or self-consciously thinks of a car) the object of her experience (or thought) is the sky (or the car). Here self-consciousness merely modifies the mental act in question: the experience or thought is had by its subject in a self-conscious sort of way. But the object of the act thus modified is the same external entity the act would have if it were not modified in this way.

There are good reasons, then, to reject the notion that consciousness depends on transitive self-consciousness, (FN19) but they do not bear against the notion that consciousness depends on intransitive self-consciousness. In the next Section I will offer positive reasons for taking consciousness to depend on intransitive self-consciousness.

#### 4. INTRANSITIVE CONSCIOUSNESS AND INTRANSITIVE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Consider what fixes the reference of 'the conscious'. Conscious states presumably constitute a natural kind, and as such must have an underlying nature. But when we refer to a mental state as conscious, the surface feature that guides us in classifying it as conscious is what we may call the property of being first-person knowable. When we consider a certain phenomenon conscious, it is because our knowledge of it is first-person knowledge. Phenomena we have only third-person knowledge of are unconscious.

What first-person knowledge is, how it is acquired, and how it differs from third-person knowledge are all difficult and important questions. But it is not necessary to answer them in order to hold that, on the face of it, all and only conscious states are first-person knowable. All that is required is that there be a distinction between first-person and third-person knowledge. And there being such a distinction is hard to deny. 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. This does not mean that first-person knowledge defines the conscious, or captures its essence. Rather, it means that we use it in order to home in on the phenomenon we want to talk about. It is what fixes the reference of 'conscious' (and its cognates).

Now, it seems that the only experiences and thoughts we can have first-person knowledge of are experiences and thoughts we have self-consciously, that is, experiences and thoughts we are peripherally aware of having. (FN20) For when we have a mental state un-self-consciously--that is, without any awareness of it whatsoever--we have to infer its existence on the basis of evidence, which means that our knowledge of it is mediated in a way first-person knowledge is not. Thus, a blindsighted person can infer that she perceives a table on the basis of the fact that if she were to guess what she perceives her guess would be that what she perceives is a table. But this is not how the normally sighted knows that she perceives a table.

The present argument can be summarized as follows: conscious states are first-person knowable; first-person knowable mental states must be intransitively self-conscious; therefore, conscious states are intransitively self-conscious.

The second argument is due to David Rosenthal (1997). According to Rosenthal, conscious states are states we are aware of. Mental states we are not aware of are not conscious. This is almost a conceptual truth. The question, however, is whether the awareness of our conscious states is also self-awareness, that is, whether our awareness of our conscious states presents us as being in those conscious states (as opposed to presenting only those conscious states). When Smith consciously thinks of her new car, she is aware of her thought. But is she thereby aware of herself as having that thought? Only if we answer in the affirmative can we claim that self-consciousness is involved in Smith's conscious thought.

Rosenthal's argument for an affirmative answer is based on the notion that awareness of particular mental states, as opposed to awareness of types of mental states, requires awareness of the subject of those states. He writes:

Independent considerations point to the same conclusion. One cannot think about a particular mental-state token, as opposed to thinking simply about a type of mental state, unless what one thinks is that some individual creature is in that mental state. So [our awareness of our conscious states] will not be about mental-state tokens unless [its] content is that one is, oneself, in the mental state. (1997: 741)

The argument is this: It is impossible to think about a particular mental state without thinking about the subject whose mental state it is; our awareness of our conscious states is an awareness of the particular mental states we are in; therefore, our awareness of our conscious states is an awareness of ourselves as the subjects of those mental states.

An objector might try to reject the first premise of the argument. Suppose one is having a visual experience of a white wall. Then according to Rosenthal, it is possible to think of the general kind of experience--visual experience of white walls--in abstraction from its being someone's experience, but it is not possible to think of any particular instance of a visual experience of a white wall in abstraction from its being this or that person's experience. But what does this claim have to recommend it? Our objector might happily reject it.

However, even if it is not strictly impossible to think of a particular mental state in abstraction from the subject whose state it is, it is surely abnormal for a human thinker to do so. And the mitigated premise--that it is abnormal to think about a particular mental state without thinking about the subject whose mental state it is--is enough to sustain an argument to the effect that, normally, our awareness of our conscious states is also an awareness of ourselves. If so, consciousness at least normally involves intransitive self-consciousness.

The argument we can glean from Rosenthal is therefore this: particular conscious states are normally states the subject is aware of, presumably peripherally; it is not normally possible to have awareness of particular states without awareness of their subject; therefore, particular conscious states are normally states the subject is aware of herself as having.

If the two lines of reasoning sketched above are on the right track, then it is quite wrong to say that consciousness is independent of self-consciousness. Consciousness is independent of some kinds of self-consciousness, but there is a kind of self-consciousness upon which consciousness is very much dependent. This has, of course,

important implication for the theory of consciousness, both in philosophy and the cognitive sciences. In particular, it means that there cannot be a full theory of consciousness without an account of self-consciousness, at least of the intransitive variety. (FN21)

## 5. CONCLUSION: CONSCIOUSNESS AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

It is a common assumption in contemporary discussions of consciousness that the latter is independent of self-consciousness. To my mind, this assumption springs from a failure to appreciate a distinction between two modes of self-consciousness, a transitive one and an intransitive one. Being self-conscious of a thought or an experience is not the same as self-consciously thinking or experiencing. I have argued that when we are careful to draw this distinction, the assumption that consciousness is independent of self-consciousness appears unjustified. Consciousness is most probably independent of transitive self-consciousness, but it seems very much dependent upon intransitive self-consciousness. It is impossible to think or experience something consciously without thinking or experiencing it self-consciously, i.e., without being peripherally aware of thinking or experiencing it. More specifically, the thesis I defended in this paper is this: there is a form of self-consciousness, such that every form of consciousness is dependent upon it.

This thesis may be resisted on a number of grounds. Thus, the arguments offered above for the dependence of consciousness on intransitive self-consciousness may be rejected one and all. But also, the very existence of intransitive self-consciousness may simply be denied. Or the distinction between intransitive self-consciousness and transitive self-consciousness may be renounced. However, each of these moves faces considerable difficulties, as I have attempted to show above. At the very least, then, our default position should be that consciousness does involve essentially a form of self-consciousness. It should not be a working assumption in the philosophy of mind that the two are completely independent. (FN22)

ADDED MATERIAL

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## FOOTNOTES

1. In describing the properties denoted in (1)-(3) as intrinsic or relational, I only mean to claim that the properties are ostensibly intrinsic or relational. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the predicates denoting them are intrinsic (one-place) or relational (multiple-place) predicates. These features of the predicates are normally a guide to the features of the properties they denote. It is not a perfect guide, however. Thus, in the statement 'This elephant is heavy', the one-place predicate 'heavy' appears to denote an intrinsic property, but heaviness is in reality a relational property. However, to claim that a certain property is relational even though the predicate denoting it is not amounts usually to embracing an error theory regarding the property in question--which, I take it, it is better to avoid when possible.
2. That species consciousness is distinct from intransitive creature consciousness is indicated by the fact that the claim that gorillas are conscious cannot be falsified by noting that all living gorillas are asleep.
3. This is something that Rosenthal (1986) rejects. Rosenthal wants to explicate a mental state's being conscious in terms of its subject's being conscious of it. But this explication is circular if, as I am now going to argue, a subject's being conscious of something itself involves the subject's being in a conscious mental state. At least this

is the case if we stick with the regular usage of the phrase 'conscious of'. There may, of course, be technical (that is to say, stipulated) uses of the phrase 'conscious of' in which a person may be conscious of something in virtue of being in an intransitively unconscious state. But in the regular usage of the phrase this is impossible. Or so I argue over the next two paragraphs of the main text.

4. Thus, the person who would be said to be conscious of the fact that  $17.3 > 13.9$  would have to be said also to be conscious of the fact that  $17.4 > 13.9$ ; the fact that  $17.5 > 13.9$ ; the fact that  $17.6 > 13.9$ ; and so on.

5. Whether the converse holds is a complicated question to which we cannot do justice here. The question is whether a person can be in a conscious state without thereby being conscious of something, that is, whether a person can be in a conscious state that is not intentionally directed at something. Many philosophers would argue that all conscious states are intentional, or representational. Indeed, according to representational accounts of consciousness (Harman 1990; Dretske 1995; Tye 1995, 2000), what makes a mental state conscious is that it is endowed with a certain kind of of-ness, or intentionality, and what makes it the particular conscious state it is is its particular form of of-ness--what it takes as its object. If so, intransitive state consciousness cannot occur without transitive creature consciousness, and is indeed accounted for in terms of the latter. Coupled with the argument of the main text, this would entail that the two are at least co-extensive (and perhaps identical).

6. This is because both forms of creature consciousness depend on their corresponding form of state consciousness, and transitive state consciousness depends on intransitive state consciousness. It follows that all four forms of consciousness depend on intransitive state consciousness.

7. It is clear from what has been said so far that transitive creature self-consciousness is a special case of transitive creature consciousness.

8. Another example: one may be self-conscious of one's thought that the bus is late, or of one's disappointment with the bus's being late. But it is impossible for one to be self-conscious of the fact that the bus is late. An external state of affairs such as the bus's being late is simply not the kind of thing self-consciousness can take as an object.

9. I insert 'self-consciously' twice in this passage, not because this is something implicit in Goldman's original text, but because I am here bringing the passage as a potential explication of what it means to think something self-consciously, rather than as a comment on thinking in general, which is the way Goldman apparently means it.

10. I speak here as though awareness of oneself as owner and awareness of oneself as subject is the same thing. But there is probably an important difference between them. Awareness of oneself as owner of an experience or thought is awareness of oneself as the thing that does the experiencing or thinking, whereas awareness of oneself as a subject is merely awareness of oneself as the seat of the relevant experience or thought. What is lacking from the latter, then, is an awareness of oneself as active in the authorship of the experience or thought. These two forms of self-awareness normally go hand in hand, but they do go apart in certain pathologies of thought insertion (see Campbell 1999, and Stephens and Graham 2000).

11. It may be possible for Smith to think that her car is new without being aware that she is (or without being aware of the thought as hers), but then Smith is not having the thought self-consciously (in a self-conscious sort of way).

12. This is not so say that focal and peripheral awareness must be two exclusive states. There may be--and probably is--a wide spectrum of awareness, ranging from the very focal to the very peripheral.

13. More intangible elements in peripheral intellectual awareness are the so-called "feeling-of-knowing" and "rightness" phenomena (Mangan 2001).
14. Another element that commonly accompanies intellectual awareness in a peripheral sort of way is mood. If the truck driver is in a good mood as she drives across Nebraska's plains, her overall state of awareness will include, in its periphery, a certain feeling of cheerfulness.
15. For work on self-consciousness by members of the Heidelberg School, see Henrich 1966, Frank 1995, and Sturma 1995.
16. For other relevant work in the phenomenological tradition, see Brough 1972, Sokolowski 1974, Gurwitsch 1985, and Wider 1997. For discussion of these ideas from a more analytic standpoint, see Gennaro 1996, Kapitan 1999, Thomasson 2000, and Kriegel 2003a, 2003b.
17. We can, of course, stop this constant self-awareness by indirect means--for instance, by taking a certain drug that would put us to sleep. But it is involuntary in that we cannot directly shut it down just by deciding to do so (as we can, for instance, imagine a tree just by deciding to do so).
18. In any case we still need to account for the truthmakers of such statements as (10). If it is accepted that the truthmakers cannot be just states of transitive self-consciousness, then something else must be involved in making these statements true. The most obvious candidates are states of intransitive self-consciousness, understood in terms of peripheral self-awareness.
19. It might be objected that we have been too rash to dismiss the dependence of consciousness on transitive self-consciousness. According to Carruthers (2000), for instance, for a mental state to count as conscious, its subject must be at least disposed to become transitively self-conscious of it. Thus, Smith's thought that her car is new is conscious only if Smith is disposed to become self-conscious of her thought that her car is new. I am not going to discuss this possibility here. Obviously, if Carruthers is right, then I could rest my case for the dependence of consciousness on self-consciousness. At the same time, this form of dependence (i.e., dependence on dispositions) is weaker than the one I would like to defend. On the view I am going to argue for, there is an occurrent (not merely dispositional) state of self-consciousness involved in every form of consciousness.
20. Some philosophers use the term 'experience' to denote conscious experiences exclusively (e.g., Strawson 1994). This is not how I am using the term here. I am using it to cover mental states that, when conscious, have a certain qualitative character; perceptions, emotions, and bodily states such as pains and tickles. Such states can readily be unconscious (e.g., a subliminal perception, or a repressed emotion).
21. For discussion of possible reductive accounts of intransitive self-consciousness, see Kriegel 2003c.
22. I am grateful to Jose Luis Bermúdez for immensely useful comments on three previous drafts of this paper.

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