

The Case for Intrinsic Theory: IV. An Argument from How Conscious₄ Mental-Occurrence Instances Seem

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More consistently than Aron Gurwitsch, whose intrinsic account of consciousness₄ was the topic of the previous two articles of the present series, David Woodruff Smith maintains that, within any objectivating act that is its object, inner awareness (i.e., direct occurrent awareness of the act) is inextricably interwoven with the outer awareness (i.e., occurrent awareness of or as though of something else) that is involved in the act. I begin here an examination of arguments Woodruff Smith proffers pro an understanding of inner awareness as intrinsic. However, in the present article, I give attention only to one of his arguments, and my discussion focuses largely on how David M. Rosenthal, who holds instead that inner awareness is accomplished by a separate mental-occurrence instance, has interpreted the empirical evidence that Woodruff Smith cites. Woodruff Smith considers how a conscious₄ mental-occurrence instance seems to its owner to be empirical evidence that lends support to intrinsic theory of inner awareness. When one introspects a mental-occurrence instance, one finds a single unified experience, not two of them as Rosenthal proposes. Rosenthal accepts this firsthand evidence as tending to support intrinsic theory, but tries to explain the appearances away, mentioning G.E. Moore's description of consciousness as "transparent."

The present series of articles (Natsoulas, 1996a, 1996b, 1998) is directly concerned with one kind of consciousness from among the several different kinds that are commonly referred to with the word *consciousness* (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989; "OED"). For discussion of the various ordinary senses of the word, see Dewey (1906), Husserl (1900/1970, p. 535), Lewis (1967, Ch. 8), and Natsoulas (1978, 1983). The general topic of the present articles is the particular dimension of mental life that the OED picks out in the first half of its fourth subentry under *consciousness*, and which I have been calling, therefore, "consciousness₄" (e.g., Natsoulas, 1994). Also, I refer

to individual mental-occurrence instances as being “conscious₄” when their owner, the one to whom they occur, has “consciousness₄” of them, or is “conscious₄” of them.

Contrary to some theoretical views (e.g., Brentano, 1911/1973; Locke, 1706/1975; James, 1890/1950), including the view expressed in the fourth OED definition itself, I hold (with Freud [1923/1961] and many others) that not all mental-occurrence instances are suitably described as “conscious₄.” That is, the mental life of any person partially consists of mental-occurrence instances that are not “conscious₄.”

A nonconscious₄ mental-occurrence instance is so constituted intrinsically that it perforce transpires without one’s taking notice of anything about it, including its occurrence. From the perspective of the owner of a nonconscious₄ mental-occurrence instance, it is as though the mental-occurrence instance does not occur. Also, when a nonconscious₄ mental-occurrence instance has an object — that is, something (e.g., an event or state of affairs) that the mental-occurrence instance gives awareness of — it is as though this object too does not occur or exist unless, of course, another, conscious₄ apprehension of the same object takes place as well at the time.

And there are, too, nonconscious₄ mental occurrences, that is, mental occurrences whose instances are all nonconscious₄. By definition, no conscious₄ instance of a nonconscious₄ mental occurrence is possible. In contrast, there may be both conscious₄ and nonconscious₄ instances of a conscious₄ mental occurrence. A mental occurrence of which one is conscious₄ in one of its instantiations may fail to be conscious₄ when it takes place again later on.

Compare my claim that not all mental-occurrence instances are conscious₄ with Freud’s (1938/1964, 1940/1964) discussion of “the psychological quality of being conscious” (*Bewusstheit*: Strachey, 1957, p. 165). Freud repeatedly argues that the quality of being conscious is more often absent than present in mental life. That is, most of the mental-occurrence instances that have transpired in your “psychical apparatus” did not possess and could not have possessed the quality of being conscious. They differed essentially from your many other mental-occurrence instances that transpired in the perception–consciousness subsystem of your psychical apparatus. The latter mental-occurrence instances were all intrinsically conscious; they instantiated the quality of being conscious, each of them in its own individual structure (Natsoulas, 1984, 1985).

Any mental-occurrence instance that instantiates the property of being conscious₄ is an intentional object of immediate, or direct, awareness. As a nonconscious₄ mental-occurrence instance may, a conscious₄ mental-occurrence instance may give awareness of something else, but the owner of a conscious₄ mental-occurrence instance undergoes, in addition, immediate

awareness of this mental-occurrence instance itself. It is sometimes put that a “dual awareness” occurs whenever one undergoes an instance of a conscious₄ mental occurrence.

Depending on which kind of theory of consciousness₄ is closest to the truth, immediate awareness of a mental-occurrence instance takes place either closely after the mental-occurrence instance (e.g., James, 1890/1950; Rosenthal, 1993c; Skinner, 1976) or as an intrinsic constituent of the mental-occurrence instance itself (e.g., Brentano, 1911/1973; Gurwitsch, 1950/1985; Woodruff Smith, 1986, 1989). If the latter kind of account is true, a mental-occurrence instance instantiates the property of being conscious₄ on its own and not by standing in some relation to another mental-occurrence instance.

Inner awareness is my term for any direct occurrent awareness of a mental-occurrence instance. Any mental-occurrence instance that is an object of such awareness, I describe as being “conscious₄” rather than “nonconscious₄.” However, it should be emphasized that a nonconscious₄ mental-occurrence instance, too, may be a kind of consciousness, albeit a different kind of consciousness from consciousness₄. That is, whereas there takes place no inner awareness of a nonconscious₄ mental-occurrence instance, a nonconscious₄ mental-occurrence instance may give awareness of something else. It may be a kind of consciousness in the latter sense, but this is not to say that one knows when one is having such an awareness (cf. footnote 6).¹

The “immediacy” of inner awareness is its occurrence in the absence of any present psychological mediation except

(a) if, as some (“appendage”) theorists of inner awareness hold, the object of the inner awareness, the mental-occurrence instance that the inner awareness is about, is what produces the mental-occurrence instance that is the inner awareness;

(b) if, as other (“intrinsic”) theorists of inner awareness hold, an inner awareness is intrinsic to the mental-occurrence instance that is its object and this mental-occurrence instance is produced by another mental-occurrence instance; or

(c) if an introspective attitude or set to introspect has some responsibility for the inner awareness’s occurrence, by helping to increase the frequency of

¹See Natsoulas (1992b, 1995) on “the awareness meaning” of *consciousness*. Cf. Husserl’s (1900/1970) third concept of consciousness, which “ranges over the same phenomenological field as the concept of ‘mental act’” (p. 552), and James’s (1890/1950) section of his famous chapter on the stream of consciousness titled “*Human thought appears to deal with objects independent of itself; that is, it is cognitive, or possesses the function of knowing*” (p. 271). This statement of James’s is supposed to apply to all the basic durational components of the stream of consciousness, that is, to every state of consciousness or mental-occurrence instance that in fact transpires. James in *The Principles* rejected, with numerous arguments, the existence of nonconscious₄ mental-occurrence instances.

mental-occurrence instances that intrinsically include or are succeeded by an inner awareness that is directed on them.

By definition, an inner awareness would be considered no less “immediate” in any of the latter three cases. That is, inner awareness of a mental-occurrence instance does not require any additional awareness’s occurring, except for the inner awareness itself. Moreover, inner awareness may be — if intrinsic theory is correct (e.g., Husserl, 1913/1983, pp. 79–80) — bodily included in the mental-occurrence instance; in other words, inner awareness may be an intrinsic feature of the particular object upon which it is directed.²

What are the grounds that theorists of consciousness proffer in support of one or another intrinsic theory of inner awareness? This series of articles seeks to assemble from the literature and to examine the positive case for the intrinsic kind of account of consciousness.₄ The deficiencies of conceptions of consciousness₄ alternative to intrinsic theory receive much less attention throughout the series (see Natsoulas, 1996a, pp. 270–271). However, criticism of intrinsic theory is naturally quite relevant and sometimes includes what is alleged to be a better understanding of inner awareness than the intrinsic kind. Such proposals of superiority to intrinsic theory must also be examined given the present purpose.

An Account of Inner Awareness as Intrinsic, Interwoven, and Variably Present

When I speak of intrinsic theory, I am referring, of course, to a kind of theory and not to a particular theory of inner awareness (Natsoulas, 1993a). For example, Gurwitsch’s (1950/1985) account of inner awareness, which is the main topic of the preceding two installments in the present series, does not agree in all respects with other conceptions of inner awareness that are also varieties of intrinsic theory — not even with those that are proposed by other phenomenologists (e.g., Woodruff Smith, 1989). Among the distinguishing features of Gurwitsch’s (1950/1985) conception are (a) its being only about objectivating mental acts, not about mental-occurrence instances in general, and (b) the thesis that every objectivating act instantiates the property of being conscious₄.

²See Natsoulas (1993b) on the mediation that has to be absent in order for inner awareness to be considered as instantiated. Cf. Rosenthal’s (1993a, 1993c) allowing, on the contrary, a kind of nonconscious₄ mental mediation to be responsible for inner awareness: “It may well be that much mental processing mediates between our conscious mental states and our being transitively conscious of those states” (1993c, p. 359). Also, see my replies to four published objections to the thesis that inner awareness is bodily included in the mental-occurrence instance that is its object (Natsoulas, 1989).

Gurwitsch uses the term *objectivating act* for any mental-occurrence instance that presents to the mind an object other than the mental-occurrence instance itself. There is, in every case of any objectivating act's occurrence, something else that this mental-occurrence instance is about or, at least, appears to be about. For certain other accounts of consciousness₄ (e.g., Woodruff Smith, 1986, 1989), although inner awareness of an objectivating act is always intrinsic to the objectivating act, it is not claimed that every objectivating act possesses this intrinsic property (cf. Natsoulas [1984] on Freud's intrinsic consciousness).

That is, some mental-occurrence instances take place without inner awareness of them although these nonconscious₄ mental-occurrence instances are no less "intentional" for that. Just like conscious₄ objectivating acts, these mental-occurrence instances are about something else or they are as though about something else. They are "as though" about something else in those many cases where what an objectivating act would be about, given its particular content, is a state of affairs, entity, or event that, in fact, has no actual, potential, or past existence.

All nonconscious₄ objectivating acts are cases of "outer awareness," as just explained, but none of them instantiates inner awareness. In contrast, every conscious₄ objectivating act instantiates both outer and inner awareness. Perhaps, moreover, as certain intrinsic accounts of consciousness₄ in effect claim, inner awareness is as Gurwitsch himself states at one point: namely, "interwoven" with the outer awareness that is an essential dimension of any objectivating act.

Such an intrinsic view of inner awareness — which turns out not to be Gurwitsch's intrinsic kind of view — might include the notion that inner awareness is a "primary" form of awareness, rather than a merely "secondary" one. With reference to the more frequent notion of inner awareness as secondary, let me merely comment for now as follows.

Not only is it sometimes supposed, by "appendage" theorists, that inner awareness takes the form of a separate mental-occurrence instance from the mental-occurrence instance that is its object. But also, even when inner awareness is held to be intrinsic to each conscious₄ mental-occurrence instance, it may be conceived of (by, e.g., Gurwitsch, 1950/1985) as no more than a concomitant of the outer awareness and other ingredients that constitute a conscious₄ mental-occurrence instance, rather than its being more intimately related to them.

In the immediately preceding article of this series (Natsoulas, 1998), the following relevant footnote can be found:

It will be objected that no instance of consciousness₄ can qualify as a "primary awareness," for the reason that any inner awareness is, by definition, an (unmediated)

awareness of a mental-occurrence instance — which may be itself a primary awareness. The sense in which, to the contrary, intrinsic inner awareness may be a primary awareness is developed gradually in the present series. (p. 6)

I shall proceed with reference to the issue of primary versus secondary awareness somewhat less gradually in the next article of the present series. That article will be devoted to the intrinsic conception of consciousness,⁴ introduced in the present article (Woodruff Smith, 1989). Continued discussion of Woodruff Smith's conception there will help me to explain what I mean by primary inner awareness.

Primary inner awareness comes to my mind when I encounter a statement of Gurwitsch's regarding the connection between mentally representing a musical note and having inner awareness of this representational act. In Gurwitsch's intrinsic view, it is in the nature of this objectivating act to present both the musical note and the representation of the musical note. Thus, Gurwitsch (1950/1985) writes,

In the case of the representation of a note there is but one psychic phenomenon, which, however, is of such a nature as to present us at once with both the note heard and the awareness of the hearing of the note. The representation of the note is so intimately connected and so inextricably interwoven with the awareness of the representation that the former by its very existence contributes to the existence of the latter. The self-awareness of an act is then implied in this act as an intrinsic component. (pp. 3–4)

The occurrence of a representational act “contributes” inner awareness of itself, but this contribution is not causal, the representational act's producing a mental-occurrence instance directed on the representational act. The representation and the inner awareness are not two separate acts, but a single, unitary mental-occurrence instance. They are so inextricably interwoven with each other as to make it correct to say that they are equally so ingredients of that instance of mental representing. Being mutually interwoven ingredients of this objectivating act throughout the act's brief duration, neither outer awareness nor inner awareness follows upon the other, nor do these two ingredients occur merely side by side.

Thus, at one point at least, “interwoven” rather than “concomitant” appears to be Gurwitsch's view of inner awareness. However, as brought out in the preceding two installments, Gurwitsch does not maintain this view; rather, he holds that inner and outer awareness are concomitant components of all objectivating acts (Natsoulas, 1996b, pp. 383–384). In the next article of the present series, I shall be examining arguments that another author has put forward on behalf of an intrinsic theory of inner awareness. Woodruff Smith (1989) is more consistent than Gurwitsch in maintaining that inner awareness is interwoven with outer awareness within the mental-occurrence instance that is its object.

An Argument for Intrinsic Theory from How Conscious₄ Mental-Occurrence Instances Seem to Us

I begin my discussion of Woodruff Smith's case for intrinsic theory in the present article. However, my focus here is on just one of his arguments, and my discussion of the argument derives, albeit critically, from how a very different theorist of inner awareness (Rosenthal, e.g., 1986) — one who holds that inner awareness is accomplished by a separate mental-occurrence instance — has interpreted, in terms of his own appendage account, the empirical evidence that Woodruff Smith cites in making his argument.

Woodruff Smith (1989) speaks of having “acquaintance” with a mental state of one's own as it transpires and having “acquaintance” with oneself therein at the same time. He describes acquaintance as an “intentional relation” existing between a mind and something with which this mind is at the moment occurrently “acquainted.” What accomplishes this relation of acquaintance are “intentional” states belonging to the mind that is so related. “That is, [these mental states] ‘present’ or ‘represent’ something to the subject, they are ‘of’ or ‘about’ something, they ‘refer’ to or are ‘directed’ to something” (p. 6).

For the acquaintance relation to obtain, a mental state cannot be just any kind of awareness or cognition of something. Acquaintance requires a “direct” awareness or cognition, as contrasted with a “mediated” awareness or cognition. A mediated awareness depends, as a direct awareness does not, on having awareness of something else, such as a concept or a proposition. A direct awareness may be (a) directly of something that is now affecting one's senses or (b) directly of the mental state itself that instantiates the awareness or (c) directly of oneself as the subject of that mental state.

Woodruff Smith's (1989) aim is to analyze the structure of inner awareness. How, in what “way” (Mulligan, 1995, p. 169), are we occurrently acquainted with our own conscious₄ mental-occurrence instances and, in addition, with ourselves as their subject? What is the phenomenological structure, or content, of a mental-occurrence instance whence it is conscious₄? However, Woodruff Smith's analysis is preceded by preliminary argument pertaining to how an inner awareness is related to the mental state which is its object, beyond the fact that the inner awareness is an acquaintance with the mental state.

As an intrinsic theorist of consciousness₄, Woodruff Smith (1989) holds that inner awareness “must be an occurrent part of the given mental event itself” (p. 81). One of his reasons for so holding has its basis in the firsthand evidence of how we find our conscious₄ mental-occurrence instances to be. When one has a conscious₄ mental-occurrence instance, how does one's mental-occurrence instance seem to one? Does the mental-occurrence instance seem to be its own object or does it seem to be the object of a separate inner awareness?

Woodruff Smith considers how a conscious₄ mental-occurrence instance seems to its owner as being empirical evidence that lends support to an intrinsic theory of inner awareness. There exists an evident intrinsic reflexivity, in his view. When one introspects a mental-occurrence instance, one finds that one has therein a single unified experience, not two of them, namely, the mental-occurrence instance followed by one's inner awareness of it. With reference to a perceptual example, Woodruff Smith (1989) states, "But it seems phenomenologically false that I am now having two experiences, a perception and a second-order judgment as well" (p. 84).

His empirical argument for the intrinsicalness of inner awareness would seem to be expressible as follows:

When I know that I am seeing a toadstool, there does not seem to me to take place within me a separate judgement or observation or introspection that I see the toadstool. Yet, I am aware not only of the toadstool but also of my having a visual perceptual experience of it. Therefore, my inner awareness, which I doubtlessly have, must be part of the perceptual experience. Otherwise, I would notice two mental-occurrence instances, rather than just one when I introspect my visual perceptual experience of the toadstool. Even when, mindful of the competing kinds of theory of inner awareness, I make a special effort to apprehend a separate inner awareness, I do not find any such awareness to take place among the mental-occurrence instances that make up my total experience of the toadstool.

A Critical Evaluation of the Firsthand Evidence

Rosenthal (1986) is a theorist of consciousness who has developed a contrasting, nonintrinsic account of inner awareness, an "appendage" theory. Specifically, inner awareness is supposed to be accomplished by individual thoughts, called "higher-order thoughts," that accompany each mental-occurrence instance that is conscious₄. Roughly contemporaneously with any conscious₄ mental-occurrence instance, its owner "thinks about it" and is, thereby and therein, conscious₄ of the mental-occurrence instance.

However, Rosenthal freely acknowledges that this is *not* how our inner awareness of our mental-occurrence instances seems to us firsthand. Our inner awarenesses of our mental-occurrence instances do not appear to us to "dog" (track) them (O'Shaughnessy, 1972, p. 33). Similarly to Woodruff Smith, Rosenthal (1986) speaks of a "strong intuitive sense that the consciousness of mental states is somehow reflexive, or self-referential" (p. 345).³

³At this point in his writings concerning the phenomenon of inner awareness, Rosenthal (1986) brings in a notion that he later explicitly disavows (Rosenthal, 1993a, p. 165). To account for that intuitive sense that I just mentioned in the text, Rosenthal (1986) proposes that a higher-order thought is partially about itself, and thus we get a sense that something reflexive is going on. Rosenthal later disavows this proposal of his as not consistent with the

This phenomenological evidence is problematic for those hypotheses, such as Rosenthal's, that explain inner awareness as extrinsic. The advocates of such hypotheses must argue either that the evidence is faulty, that some sort of factor is operating to distort the appearances, or that the evidence is not actually incompatible with the thesis that a distinct objectivating act accomplishes inner awareness.

Why do we not find, when introspecting, that there is a separate inner awareness, as Rosenthal's appendage account holds? Rosenthal accepts the evidence as tending to support intrinsic theory, and he attempts to explain away the appearances as follows. Note that, in the following quoted paragraph, the word *consciousness* could be replaced by *inner awareness* without affecting Rosenthal's sense.

One reason that consciousness seems intrinsic to our sensory states is that it is difficult to isolate that consciousness as a distinct component of our mental experience. When we try to focus on the consciousness of a particular sensory state, we typically end up picking out only the sensory state we are conscious of, instead. As Moore [1903/1922] usefully put it, consciousness is "transparent," or "diaphanous." Since efforts to pick out consciousness itself issue instead in the states we are conscious of, it is tempting to conclude that the consciousness is actually part of those states. But the present account gives a better explanation of the diaphanous character of consciousness. We normally focus on the sensory state and not on our consciousness of it only because that consciousness consists in our having a higher-order thought, and that thought is usually not itself a conscious thought. (p. 345)

Accordingly, the phenomenological evidence is compatible with Rosenthal's thesis of a distinct inner awareness; and this evidence does not reflect well what is actually taking place.

In the remainder of the present article, I consider Rosenthal's interpretation of the evidence in the form of five categories of comment on the paragraph that I have just quoted from him (and shall refer to as "paragraph A"). I draw on other pertinent statements of Rosenthal's from other publications as well.

1. *Discrimination Fails To Occur as Higher-Order Thought Theory Expects*

Rosenthal's (1986) answer to the question why, when we introspect, we do not find that our inner awareness of a mental-occurrence instance is a separate mental-occurrence instance begins on the same page where he asserts, "We have no nonarbitrary way to tell when one mental state is part of another" (p. 345). Rosenthal makes the latter claim notwithstanding his own

fact that higher-order thoughts are seldom conscious, (Rosenthal, 1993a). Also, he acknowledges that, his understanding of inner awareness would be, contrary to his general view, a partially intrinsic one if he held that higher-order thoughts make reference each one to itself.

important proposal *that those higher-order thoughts, which are the separate inner awarenesses of other mental-occurrence instances, can themselves be the objects of still higher-order thoughts*. Thus, there is a way that we have by which to pick out higher-order thoughts of ours and to “focus” on them. Indeed, Rosenthal (1993d) states that conscious₄ higher-order thoughts “normally distract us from the mental states they are about, so that the states no longer occupy centre stage in our stream of consciousness” (pp. 205-206).

Does Rosenthal’s proposal of still higher-order thoughts not imply that we have a firsthand way to distinguish our inner awareness of a mental state from that mental state? In Rosenthal’s view, not only must we have (a) a separate inner awareness of a conscious₄ mental-occurrence instance, we must also have (b) another separate inner awareness — not to be confused with the first — of the first inner awareness whenever the first inner awareness, in addition to its object, is conscious₄. And this is the case, according to Rosenthal, whenever we introspect a mental state. First we are conscious₄ of the mental state and then we are conscious₄ of the higher-order thought that is our inner awareness of the mental state.

Compare this case with seeing a flash of lightning and then hearing thunder. Suppose that, as often occurs, both the seeing and the hearing are conscious₄ experiences. One is not simply perceptually aware of the lightning and the thunder; one has inner awareness of seeing lightning, and then one has inner awareness of hearing thunder.

If one reports these experiences, one does so — in accordance with Rosenthal’s perspective as I understand it — as a result of one’s undergoing inner awareness in the form of *two higher-order thoughts that are respectively about one’s having a visual experience and about one’s having an auditory experience*. Rosenthal (1991) argues, “The ability to report a mental state is the same as the ability to express the very thought [that one is in that state] postulated by the higher-order thought hypothesis” (p. 11). Also germane to my above understanding of Rosenthal’s account of inner awareness is his description of another case: a light flash produces a visual sensory state of which one has a higher-order thought that does not “register mentally” and does not lead to one’s reporting the visual sensory state. The higher-order thought is ineffective in this particular case because, Rosenthal states, the higher-order thought happens to be quickly followed by another light flash, another visual sensory state, and a distinct higher-order thought about this second sensory state (Rosenthal, 1993b, p. 913).

In all three cases that I have just mentioned, there are involved two distinct objects of inner awareness and two distinct inner awarenesses. A difference between them is that in the first case the second inner awareness is what I have referred to as a still higher-order thought; it is an inner awareness of an inner awareness of a mental state. From Rosenthal’s own perspec-

tive, should it not nevertheless be clear to their owner that neither one of the two objects of inner awareness (i.e., the mental state and the inner awareness of it) is a part of the other (cf. footnote 7)? Just as, in the second case, it is clear that one has a visual experience of lightning followed by an auditory experience of thunder.

However, as Rosenthal himself states in paragraph A, discrimination in keeping with his higher-order thought theory fails to occur. Rather: *we take the two objects of inner awareness as though they were the same mental-occurrence instance.* We fail to distinguish from each other, for example, an auditory experience of a brief musical tone and a higher-order thought that is an inner awareness of this auditory experience. Is this failure of introspection not convincing evidence against Rosenthal's appendage theory of inner awareness, and in favor of an intrinsic theory as Woodruff Smith suggests?

2. Higher-Order Thought Too Is Apprehended When We Are Introspecting Any Mental State

As judged from paragraph A (p. 265 above), Rosenthal (1986, p. 345) holds that our intuitive notion — which agrees with intrinsic theory — that we apprehend our sensory states by means of the very act of having them does not rest on something that we notice about our sensory states themselves when we have inner awareness of them. It is not the case, as an intrinsic theorist might hold, that we have direct awareness of the phenomenological structure of a sensory state and find this structure to be reflexive, that is, to possess an aspect of some kind that has reference to the sensory state itself (cf. footnote 3; Woodruff Smith, 1989).

Our intuitive notion is proposed to be, rather, a conclusion that we draw from an introspective failure. But the claim is *not* that we cannot apprehend our inner awareness firsthand when its object is a sensory state. Note how Rosenthal (1986) makes his points in paragraph A:

(a) that it is “difficult,” he does not say “impossible,” to isolate inner awareness;

(b) that we are “typically,” he does not say “always,” aware of only the sensory state that is the inner awareness's object; and

(c) that we focus “normally,” he does not say “perforce,” on our sensory state.

He goes on to say in paragraph A that, when we introspect our sensory state, we normally focus on it and not on our inner awareness of it because the latter is a higher-order thought and is usually nonconscious₄. But, again, Rosenthal is not saying that our inner awareness of a sensory state cannot be conscious₄.

According to Rosenthal's (1990) general account of the activity of introspecting, not only can we apprehend our inner awareness, we do so *whenever*

we introspect a sensory state. *To introspect any mental state is to have a conscious₄ higher-order thought about it.* He states,

Introspecting one's own mental state implies deliberately focusing on one's being in that state. And that involves not merely being in that state, but being actually aware that one is thus aware. Introspection is a kind of higher-order consciousness; it is the transitive consciousness of being conscious of one's mental states. (p. 52)

What Rosenthal is speaking of when, in paragraph A, he says that our inner awareness is "usually" not conscious₄ are not cases of introspection, or of what he calls the "introspective consciousness of a mental state." Rather, he is speaking of cases of "nonintrospective consciousness of a mental state." That is, on very frequent occasions, we have inner awareness of a sensory state and no awareness of being so aware. For us, it is as though no such awareness took place and also, presumably, as though we did not have the sensory state either, since we lack all awareness of it.

Of primary pertinence to the present discussion is the introspective consciousness of our sensory states. What do we find when we are deliberately trying to determine whether our inner awareness is, as Rosenthal contends, a separate mental-occurrence instance from the sensory state that is its object or a dimension of the sensory state itself, as Woodruff Smith (1989) claims?⁴

3. Higher-Order Thoughts May Not Be Taken for What They Actually Are

Rosenthal may leave the impression of proposing that, although we have inner awareness of our sensory states, we do not have such awareness of our higher-order thoughts about them. That is, although still higher-order thoughts give us awareness of higher-order thoughts, they do not serve in this respect when the object of such a thought is a sensory state. It is natural to wonder why else, other than for the latter reason, Rosenthal (1993c) would say, "We are not aware of anything extrinsic to these [sensory] states in virtue of which we might be transitively conscious of them" (p. 360).

However, sentences such as the latter and those that comprise the following paragraph (which I shall call "paragraph B") should be read very carefully.

Because our higher-order thoughts are seldom conscious, we never notice anything extrinsic to our conscious states that could plausibly be responsible for our being conscious of [our conscious states]. This is why the [intrinsic] theory is intuitively appeal-

⁴The thesis that inner awareness is a feature of the sensory state itself does not imply that all sensory states possess that feature. Intrinsic theory can allow for both conscious₄ and nonconscious₄ sensory states. For example, one may look straight up into the sky as one lies on the beach and have, over time, visual awarenesses of a blue expanse some possessing and some not possessing a reflexive character.

ing. Since we are unaware of anything extrinsic to our conscious states in virtue of which we might be conscious of them, it is tempting to think that our being conscious of them must be intrinsic to those states. Even when one explicitly adopts an alternative theory, therefore, the [intrinsic] model may continue to exert an intuitive pull on one's thinking. (Rosenthal, 1993a, p. 165)

In the first sentence of this paragraph, why does Rosenthal feel free to move (without explanation) from *seldom* in the first clause to *never* in the second?

It is not Rosenthal's view that our inner awarenesses are never conscious₄; rather, they are seldom so. Rosenthal (1993d, p. 362) states that we can, when introspecting, consciously direct our inner awareness to one or another of our mental-occurrence instances, for example, to a sensory state. When we do "direct" our inner awareness, our inner awareness too is conscious₄. And Rosenthal (1990, p. 53) is very explicit as regards what we are conscious₄ of when we introspect: we have inner awareness of both a primary mental-occurrence instance and of "thinking about" that mental-occurrence instance.⁵

From here, should not this line of thought proceed in the following direction?

Noticing this higher-order thought, which is a separate mental-occurrence instance from the sensory state that is its object, we discriminate it from the sensory state. And noticing what the content is of this higher-order thought, we can plausibly judge (a) that it is this higher-order thought that gives us our awareness of the sensory state and (b) that higher-order thoughts are the locus of our inner awareness even when they happen not to be themselves objects of inner awareness.

A careful reading of paragraph B (pp. 268–269 above) and the sentence that I quoted from Rosenthal (1993c, p. 360) will reveal that, contrary to how this material may first strike one, Rosenthal is not ruling out our ability to apprehend our inner awarenesses of certain mental-occurrence instances. Rather, what he is ruling out is *our recognition of our inner awarenesses for what they actually are when their objects are sensory states*.

Accordingly, when aware of having inner awareness of our sensory state, we do not notice — because of the rarity of our being aware of our inner awareness — any mental-occurrence instance that we might take to be our inner awareness. Conscious₄ of our inner awareness from time to time, we do not ascribe this awareness to the respective higher-order thought that per-

⁵Elsewhere, I have critically discussed Rosenthal's account of inner awareness (Natsoulas, 1992a), pointing out that Rosenthal's own account of the activity of introspecting requires that there take place inner awarenesses of those higher-order thoughts that Rosenthal claims to be distinct inner awarenesses. For example, Rosenthal (1990) asserts that in introspecting a mental state, one does not merely have inner awareness of the state, but also one is "actually aware that one is thus aware" (p. 52). From Rosenthal's perspective, we could not know that we were aware of our mental states during introspection if we lacked awareness of those higher-order thoughts that he proposed to be our inner awarenesses of our mental states.

forms this function. The proposed thesis would seem to be *that we apprehend our higher-order thoughts well enough to know that we are having inner awareness of the particular sensory state, but not well enough to know that our inner awarenesses are the distinct occurrent thoughts that they are*. This would seem to be the implication of the following as well:

But when we are unaware of having any higher-order thought, we lack any sense of how we come to know about the conscious mental state. It is this very feeling of mystery about how we come to be aware of conscious mental states which encourages us to regard such consciousness as phenomenologically immediate. (Rosenthal, 1993d, pp. 205–206)⁶

But do we not have to be aware of the content of the particular higher-order thought and so of this thought's occurrence? Contrary to Rosenthal's (1990) earlier statement, although we are engaged in introspecting, we are now said not to apprehend ourselves as thinking about our sensory state. *What then do we take our inner awarenesses to be instead, if not the distinct thoughts that Rosenthal claims that they are?* For our inner awareness is conscious₄ in the cases under discussion, although we lack awareness — the suggestion seems to be — of our inner awareness's being, as it is, a separate mental-occurrence instance and a thought.

Before I answer the above question, let me say that I find Rosenthal's negative statements regarding the firsthand evidence for intrinsic reflexivity surprising, because of our common familiarity with many cases in which we experience sensory states, of the setting sun for example, and at the same time have thoughts that are about the sun. We experience no difficulty in taking notice of the thoughts as they occur and of the sensory states that are taking place along with them. Nor do we confuse the thoughts and the sensory states with each other, although the thoughts are about the setting sun. Our thoughts in this situation may also be about our experiences of the setting sun, for example, the similarity of the present experience to an experience of the sun in a painting or film that we have seen. If these thoughts are not somehow occluded from inner awareness by the sensory states that are their objects, why should sensory states be assumed to be capable of somehow

⁶However, Rosenthal proposes in the same paragraph that the feeling of immediacy is most vivid in those cases where our inner awareness is accomplished by nonconscious₄ higher-order thoughts. It is not clear how it is possible for us to feel that we are intrinsically aware of a mental-occurrence instance when our inner awareness of this mental-occurrence instance takes place completely outside our ken. If our inner awareness of a mental-occurrence instance is nonconscious₄, it is as though not only the inner awareness but the mental-occurrence instance that is its object did not occur. Although we are in fact aware of this mental-occurrence instance, we lack any awareness of being aware of it. What we take to exist is not everything of which we are aware, but only those objects of our awareness that we apprehend ourselves as aware of.

occluding the kind of thoughts that are claimed to be our inner awarenesses of the sensory states?

4. Higher-Order Thoughts Taken for the Sensory States That Are Their Objects

Given that we do apprehend our inner awareness of our sensory state when introspecting that state, Rosenthal may be saying *that we take our inner awareness to be not a thought about a sensory state but, rather, the sensory state that is its object*. This is probably what Rosenthal means by our introspective effort's "issuing" instead in the sensory state itself. In a different context, Rosenthal (1993b) states, "Even introspective impressions may occasionally be erroneous because one's third-order thought misrepresents the content of a second-order thought" (p. 917).

This would be why, from Rosenthal's perspective, our inner awareness of a sensory state is apprehended neither as being a part of that state nor as being a mental-occurrence instance distinct from that state. If, when engaged in apprehending our sensory states, we ask how this apprehension of ours is accomplished, which of our mental-occurrence instances are responsible for this awareness, we will find that we have no basis to answer. For, according to Rosenthal as I have interpreted him to be saying, we are not aware of the identity of the means of our knowledge; we are aware of having inner awareness but not how we are so aware.⁷

Note that, according to Rosenthal's account of inner awareness, the inner awareness involved in the example of an auditory experience of a brief musical tone and a higher-order thought that is an inner awareness of this auditory experience is not an auditory experience, it is not a kind of instant replay of the auditory experience that is its object. It is, rather, a different kind of mental-occurrence instance altogether, namely, a thought about having the particular auditory experience. Rosenthal (1993c) states, "We are conscious of our conscious mental states by virtue of having accompanying thoughts about those states . . . thought[s] to the effect that [we are] in the target mental state" (p. 361).

How is it then that we take, as Rosenthal would seem to be proposing, a mere thought about an auditory experience for an auditory experience? If the thought's content is something along the conceptual lines of "I am having such and such kind of auditory experience," what is the resemblance with the

⁷Another appendage theorist of inner awareness (James, 1890/1950, p. 297) found that the stream of consciousness contains certain distinct appropriative acts ("the self of all the other selves") that do the job of apprehending other mental-occurrence instances making up the same stream. James asserted, "No subjective state, whilst present, is its own object; its object is always something else" (p. 190). When it seems otherwise to us, we are suffering from an illusion, which "a little attention unmasks" (p. 190).

auditory experience of a musical tone that would cause one to take the thought for the auditory experience?

The resemblance is not to be found in some sort of actual presence of the auditory experience in the inner awareness of it. According to Rosenthal's own appendage theory of inner awareness, the higher-order thought that we are taking notice of is not an ingredient of the auditory experience that is its object nor is the auditory experience that is its object an ingredient of the higher-order thought. As another appendage theorist of inner awareness expressed the more general point, "The object of any act is in fact no part of the act. The relation which obtains between an act and its object is not that of a whole to one of its parts. Nor is the object in any other sense immanent in the act" (Grossmann, 1965, p. 18).

Suppose that, contrary to our own conviction, we grant to Rosenthal that we take our inner awareness of experiencing a brief musical tone to be simply the auditory experience of which it is the awareness. Thus, in succession, we have awareness of the same auditory experience twice. Should it not seem to us in that case that we are hearing the same tone twice? The purported fact that we take our inner awareness to be the auditory experience of which we have inner awareness does not somehow cancel either our having the experience or our having inner awareness of the experience. We have the experience and we have inner awareness of it, but we take, *ex hypothesi*, our inner awareness to be the experience. The first two facts in the last sentence are unaffected by the third, alleged fact. Clearly, therefore, if Rosenthal were correct, the phenomenological evidence would be different. We should find that we have two auditory experiences, or that we hear two tones, although only one tone actually impinges on our auditory system.

5. *The Inner Awareness of a Sensory State Is Not Another Sensory State*

The reference to Moore (1903/1922) in paragraph A (p. 265 above) can be useful. Moore applies the words *transparent* and *diaphanous* to consciousness, and Rosenthal borrows them as suitable for the description of higher-order thoughts that are directed on sensory states. According to Rosenthal, our attempts to "focus on" our inner awareness of a sensory state typically "issue" in our sensory state and not in our higher-order thought. Aware of our sensory state by means of a higher-order thought, we do not succeed in picking the latter out as such. As it were, we "see" through the thought, that is, we "see" by means of it, but we do not "see" the thought itself as what it really is.

In the present article, I have in effect brought out that, from Rosenthal's own perspective as I have understood it, *conscious₄ higher-order thoughts of sensory states are not suitably described as transparent*. There are at least two

respects in which the thoughts that Rosenthal posits, assuming that they exist, do not qualify as transparent.

a. When we apprehend, as we do when introspecting, our having inner awareness of a sensory state, we must be aware of a higher-order thought, for this thought is, according to Rosenthal, what our inner awareness amounts to.⁸ *Ex hypothesi*, it is because the respective higher-order thought takes place that we are aware of having inner awareness of the particular sensory state; and having this inner awareness is, according to the theory, to have a higher-order thought. Thus, a higher-order thought is not transparent except on those occasions when we are not conscious₄ of having inner awareness of the higher-order thought.

Compare with apprehending a sensory state. We may be aware, by means of our inner awareness of the sensory state, of having perceptual awareness of one of the sensory state's environmental causes. However, as Rosenthal (1993b) states, in apprehending a sensory state, we may have awareness of very little about the sensory state itself. One's higher-order state may "represent one's sensory state as being just of a bookcase with lots of things on it" (Rosenthal, 1993b, p. 915). Yet, limited as our inner awareness of this sensory state may be, we are aware of having perceptual awareness of the bookcase — or, in other cases, of something else however vaguely — and to this extent the sensory state is not to be properly considered transparent. In contrast, sensory states would seem to qualify as transparent *whenever we have no awareness of them although they make us aware of something*. Truly transparent cases of consciousness are all those cases in which we undergo a nonconscious₄ mental state that has an object.

b. When we apprehend Rosenthal's higher-order thoughts, they wrongly appear to us, *ex hypothesi*, to be the respective sensory state that is their object. To take something for something else does not make either item transparent. Such erroneous taking is not analogous to what happens when we look through a window or through eyeglasses. Rather, it is analogous to seeing something not for what it actually is, for example, a juniper bush for a man wearing a caftan and waving his arm. A misidentified item may also obstruct one's seeing something else, which is not what fully transparent items do.

Now, what is Moore (1903/1922) suggesting when he applies the words *transparent* and *diaphanous* to how consciousness seems to us? He is speaking of the consciousness itself that all sensory states have in common although they may otherwise be very different from each other. Which consciousness

⁸I do not agree that inner awareness amounts to a higher-order thought. I am expressing Rosenthal's account, and not the kind of account of inner awareness that I hold to be on the right track (Natsoulas, 1993b).

is this that Moore means? Whenever we undergo any sensory state, we have therein, in having the state, a consciousness of something that lies outside this particular mental-occurrence instance. Sensory states are states of consciousness in the sense of their being apprehensions or awarenesses of something.

For example, in the case of some visual sensory states, the consciousness is of blue. Moore (1903/1922) emphasizes that to have a sensory state is “to know something which is as truly and really *not* a part of my experience, as anything which I can ever know” (p. 27). For Moore, blue counts as no exception to the latter general statement concerning sensory states. (Whether it should count need not detain us, given the present purpose.) Thus: “‘Blue’ is as much an object, and as little a mere content, of my experience, when I experience it, as the most exalted and independent real thing of which I am ever aware” (Moore, 1903/1922, p. 27).

In addition to a sensory state’s having blue as its extrinsic “object,” the sensory state instantiates the property of being an awareness, or a consciousness. The sensory state is an awareness of its object; in having a sensory state, we are aware of, are conscious of, something, such as blue. This intrinsic property, called “awareness,” that belongs to our sensory state is what makes our sensory state a kind of mental-occurrence instance. The awareness constituting a sensory state is not only distinct from its object, but also stands to its object in “a perfectly distinct and unique relation,” which we call “knowing.” Thus, when we are aware of our sensory state that has blue as its object, we are “aware of an awareness of blue” (Moore, 1903/1922, p. 25).

In the latter statement, Moore adds, *aware* and *awareness* are being used in exactly the same sense. However, I would want to add *that when we introspect our sensory state, which is a consciousness of blue, we cannot apprehend the state as we apprehend blue by means of it.* That is, we cannot have a sensory state (i.e., a second-order sensory state) that is a consciousness of our sensory state, of our awareness of blue; our sensory state cannot be the object of a further sensory state.

Nevertheless, according to Moore (1903/1922), the sensory state itself, which consists of awareness and not of blue, “*can* be distinguished if we look attentively enough, and if we know that there is something to look for” (p. 25). We can take notice of our having an awareness of blue. However, as compared to its object, the awareness — which Moore called “the only essential element in the experience” — is transparent or diaphanous. That is, the awareness cannot be seen or otherwise perceived and, consequently, its existence is sometimes doubted.

Moore does not agree with the doubters that the awareness is inapprehensible, although he admits that it can seem so. It can seem to be transparent, or incapable of being fixated with attention. Moore might welcome the point

that I made just above. That is, we cannot expect the awareness of which a sensory state consists to be noticeable in the way that blue is, because we do not have sensory states that have other sensory states as their objects. Although we can distinguish our awarenesses, we cannot compare them with their objects in the way that we compare blue with green.

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