

The Nature of Consciousness
Handout [4]
Güven Güzeldere: *Is Consciousness the Perception of*
What Passes in One's Own Mind?

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§ The Goal:

- ___ (i) To refute the "higher-order representation" theories of consciousness.**
- ___ (ii) To refute the distinction between the higher-order perception theories and the higher-order thought theories.**

§ Two Senses of Consciousness

(i) individual consciousness [or creature consciousness]:

___ one's being conscious in the sense of being awake and alert, or one's consciousness being directed upon something (an overall state one is in).

(ii) state consciousness:

___ to talk about whether a particular mental state is conscious (concerns the classification of mental states).

§ The Higher-Order Representation (HOR) Theories of Consciousness

___ **The theories that are built upon the Introspective Link Principle.**

*** The Introspective Link Principle:**

___ A mental state M in a subject S is state-conscious if and only if S is individual-conscious of M.

[Under HOR]:

(i) [HOP]:

___ M' is regarded as a perception-like state, where M's relation to its object M is somehow like the relation between perceptual state and its object. [Armstrong, Churchland, Lycan]

(ii) [HOT]:

___ M' is taken to be a type of cognitive mental representation, a higher-level thought-like state, the content of which is either the content of M or a fact involving M (e.g. that S is having M). [Rosenthal, Carruthers, and Dennett]

§ To Show: The Trilemma for the HOP Theorists:

- (i) They have to abandon the two-tiered structure of their account of introspective consciousness, or**
- (ii) commit themselves to the "fallacy of the representational divide," or**
- (iii) allow the central HOP thesis to transform into the thesis of the competing HOT theory.**

§ Three Options for the HOP Theorist

Example: S is sitting on her desk and looking at her cup right in front of her, under all the "normal circumstances".

Option 1. S is aware of the cup in front of her, simpliciter.

Option 2. S is aware of her visual state V (i.e., she is aware of V-qua-vehicle, the cup-representing internal state.)

Option 3. S is aware of the fact that she has a visual state V, which has the content: [cup in front].

*** Q: Which one of these three readings truly reflects what the HOP theorists have in mind?**

*** Q: What are his critiques of the three options?**

Option 1 ==> the first horn

Option 2 ==> the second horn

Option 3 ==> the third horn

§ The Fallacy of the Representational Divide

*** "the fallacy of the representational divide"**

___ 1. Mental states qua brain states (in a materialist ontology) are the vehicles that represent for us the world around, as well as in, us. They are the "representers" while the objects in the world are the "represented."

___ 2. When one tries to replace what is being represented with what is the representer; namely, when one uses the properties of the representers when what is called for is how the representers represent what they represent (the properties of the represented), one is committing a fallacy of the representational divide.

___ 3. Armstrong's theory commits such a fallacy:

Armstrong talks as though we should expect the truck driver to become (attentively) aware of the red light in virtue of his "internally perceiving" (scanning, monitoring) his ordinary perception of the light. Notice that there seems to be some causal role for the second-order perception involved in what the first-order state is about here. The force of the example comes from the conviction that when the truck driver "comes to," he does not merely gain access to an inventory of what kind of internal states he is currently having but that the content of one of his first-order states starts to figure in his behavior. More generally, it seems to be assumed that by gaining higher-order access to the intrinsic, non-representational properties of a first-order state (a visual perception), which happens to represent something (the red light), one gains access, perhaps more attentively, to the extrinsic, representational properties of that state itself (its content, the red light).

[Question: Has Armstrong really committed this "fallacy of representational divide"? Can you defend his view for him?]

[Question: If neuroscientists conclude that there is no internal scanner in the brain, would all of these HOR theories be automatically refuted?]

[Final Question: Can you think of a way to explain the higher-order perception of mental states while avoiding the trilemma posed here?]