



Editorial: Self-Consciousness Explained—Mapping the Field

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1 Pre-Reflective Self-Consciousness: A First Sketch

Self-Consciousness ranks among the most urgent topics in today's *Philosophy of Mind*. In particular, one of the most challenging agenda is the explanation of *pre-reflective self-consciousness*.¹ According to philosophers like Anna Giustina and Uriah Kriegel pre-reflective self-consciousness consists in a subject's awareness of her ongoing experience.² It is a case of "peripheral" self-consciousness, i.e. while a subject's attention is mostly focused on the external objects, events, and states of affairs, the experience itself is much more dimly conscious.³ Pre-reflective self-consciousness is a constant "humming in the background of our stream of consciousness."⁴ By consciousness Giustina and Kriegel mean phenomenal consciousness, i.e. conscious mental states, such as a conscious visual perception of a tomato, which have a conscious qualitative character.⁵ The conscious qualitative character is characterized, in Thomas Nagel's famous words, by "what it is like"

¹ Instead of the expression 'pre-reflective self-consciousness' the expressions 'inner awareness', 'subjective character', 'sense of self' and others are also used. For an overview cf. Guillot 2017, 25–26.

² Kriegel 2009a, 362. Cp. Montague 2017, 363.

³ Kriegel 2009a, 361.

⁴ Kriegel 2003, 105.

⁵ On the question of how far-reaching phenomenal consciousness is, cf. for example Bayne/Montague 2011.

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for a subject to have consciousness of an object and its properties.⁶ In the case of the conscious visual perception of a red tomato, qualitative character corresponds to the “reddish way” in which the tomato is experienced by a subject. For Giustina and Kriegel, then, when a subject directs her attention to the tomato, for example, she also has consciousness of her experience, or precisely pre-reflective self-consciousness, peripherally, “at the edge” of her consciousness.

Pre-reflective self-consciousness is therefore to be distinguished from reflective self-consciousness. Reflective self-consciousness, in view of the debates about pre-reflective self-consciousness, is often understood as introspection, i.e. the (deliberate) focusing of a subject’s attention on the subject and its conscious mental states or experience.⁷ Reflective self-consciousness occurs, for example, when a subject focuses her attention on her feeling of being in love or her auditory perception of a melody. Reflective self-consciousness is also understood as “the having of conscious thoughts that one is in particular mental states.”⁸ It is important to distinguish pre-reflective self-consciousness from *conscious* thoughts about one’s mental states, since for some philosophers pre-reflective self-consciousness includes an unconscious thought.⁹ Thus it is understandable why this case of self-consciousness is called *pre-reflective*. Pre-reflective self-consciousness is *pre-reflective* because (or when) it exists in temporal terms before reflective self-consciousness occurs,¹⁰ and this also means it exists independently of the current presence of reflective self-consciousness.¹¹ For example, before a subject directs her attention to her perception of a melody, she already has awareness of her perceptual state.¹²

⁶ Nagel 1974. Cf. the detailed analysis of “what it is like” by Charles Siewert in: Siewert 2011.

⁷ Henrich 1970, 265, Rosenthal 1997, 745. The following explanation of reflective self-consciousness does not claim to be exhaustive. Cp. e.g. Gurwitsch 1941, Horgan/Nichols 2016, Zahavi 2020.

⁸ Rosenthal 2006, 43. Cp. Gennaro 2012, 105, Gennaro [this volume]. In addition, types of introspection are distinguished. Rocco Gennaro distinguishes, for example, between momentary focused and deliberate introspection: Deliberate introspection is deliberate activity involving sustained conscious thinking directed at one’s inner states. In momentary focused introspection one is not engaged in deliberation but consciously thinking about one’s mental state, for example briefly consciously focusing on an emotion (Gennaro 1996, 19). In the light of this quotation, an objection to the explanation of reflective self-consciousness as presented is obvious. This objection states that the division of reflective self-consciousness into conceptual self-consciousness and focusing attention on the subject and its mental states is not meaningful, since the latter includes conceptual self-consciousness. Cf. Montague 2017, 361. However, it is debatable whether reflective self-consciousness always involves the use of concepts. Kenneth Williford claims that there are cases of non-conceptual reflective self-consciousness. Williford explains this with the following example: “Consider reflecting on something that continues to unfold while you are reflecting (for example, reflecting on how good the shower feels to you while it continues to feel that way). Consider just paying attention to the fact that this shower feels good. [...] I submit that one is not thereby necessarily judging or using concepts. One is merely attending to the *good-feeling shower*, rather than judging that *the shower feels good*. Attention to *X* seems to be situated somewhere between pre-predicative experience of *X* and explicit judgment about *X*” (Williford 2016, 84–85).

⁹ Cf. Gennaro [this issue], Weisberg 2019.

¹⁰ Cp. f.e. Gallagher and Zahavi 2021.

¹¹ It is important to note that pre-reflective self-consciousness is independent of the current presence of reflective self-consciousness. This does not mean that pre-reflective self-consciousness also exists independently of the disposition to have reflective self-consciousness. Cf. Rosenthal 2012.

¹² According to a third meaning of the expression ‘pre-reflective self-consciousness’, ‘pre-reflective’ means that it is a condition of the possibility of reflective self-consciousness. Cf. Cramer 1974, 563, Zahavi 2020, 639–640.

2 “For-me-ness”, “Me-ness”, “Mine-ness”

What exactly is the conscious information contained in pre-reflective self-consciousness? Marie Guillot makes an important contribution to answering this question in “I Me Mine: on a Confusion Concerning the Subjective Character of Experience.”¹³ Guillot distinguishes between “for-me-ness”, “me-ness” and “mine-ness”. These expressions denote different cases of pre-reflective self-consciousness.¹⁴ By “for-me-ness” Guillot means that the experience of a subject (S_1) is a conscious object for the subject (S_1). Guillot includes in the experience, for example, feeling hungry or elated. Consciousness of the experience is thereby a way in which the subject is “affected” by the experience. The consciousness of experience is thus a phenomenal kind of consciousness.¹⁵ “For-me-ness” also means that a subject (S_1) is conscious of an experience (E_1) of a subject (S_1) in a way that the experience (E_1) is not conscious to any other subject (S_2). This includes an epistemic and a phenomenal difference.¹⁶ The subject (S_1) has an inner access to her experience of being hungry (E_1) that no other subject (S_2) possesses (epistemic distinction), and a subject (S_2), in the case of his awareness of the subject’s (S_1) being hungry (E_1), is also not “affected” (in the same way) as the subject (S_1) (phenomenal difference).¹⁷ The subject (S_2) can have consciousness of the feeling of hunger of the subject (S_1), e.g. by the subject (S_1) telling the subject (S_2) that she is hungry, but only the subject (S_1) already has an awareness of the feeling of being hungry by virtue of the existence of the experience (E_1). Moreover, the subject (S_2) can also have an experience (E_2) of the same type in an inner way, for example, a feeling of being hungry, but this does not apply in view of the experience (E_1) of the subject (S_1). The subject (S_2) cannot grasp the experience (E_1) “from the inside”.

For the distinction between “for-me-ness”, “me-ness” and “mine-ness” it is crucial that in the case of “for-me-ness” a subject does exist. The subject has consciousness of her experience. However, the subject is not the “object” of consciousness, but the one for which the experience, the “object”, exists. The subject is exclusively the

¹³ Marie Guillot’s paper appeared in a Special Issue of the *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* (Volume 8, issue 1, March 2017) edited by Jonathan Farrell and Tom McClelland, entitled “Consciousness and Inner Awareness.”

¹⁴ According to Guillot, the distinction between for-me-ness, me-ness and mine-ness is not an exclusively conceptual distinction. Rather, these terms are used to denote different properties. One of Guillot’s points is that in the literature on pre-reflective self-consciousness, the three terms are often not adequately distinguished “which is damaging to a number of current argumentative strategies.” Guillot 2017, 26.

¹⁵ Guillot 2017, 28.

¹⁶ Guillot 2017, 28: “If I am feeling hungry or elated, you, too, can be aware of my hunger or elation, but not merely *by virtue* of the experience’s existence. Moreover, my own awareness of my experience is a way the experience *affects* me; it is a *phenomenal* kind of awareness. Not so with your awareness of my experience. You can’t grasp it “from the inside” (although you can of course have a – distinct – experience of the same type).”

¹⁷ The expression “in the same way” is put in brackets, since it is questionable for us whether, according to Guillot, the consciousness of the subject (S_2) of the experience (E_1) of the subject (S_1) does not include any phenomenal dimension at all, or only a different one than for the subject (S_1).

“recipient” of the relation of consciousness.¹⁸ Thus, the subject is not itself also an object that is conscious.

If, on the other hand, there is consciousness of the subject, there is me-ness.¹⁹ “Me-ness” thus means that the subject (S_1) has consciousness of the subject (S_1) or itself. The subject is manifested to herself through her experiences: “Enjoying phenomenal consciousness is a way to be phenomenally *self*-conscious.”²⁰ “Mine-ness”, finally, means that the subject not only has consciousness of the subject itself; in addition, the subject has the conscious information that the conscious experience is her *own* experience. Mine-ness thus includes an awareness of the relation between the subject and its experience. It includes the awareness that the subject is the owner of the experience.²¹

3 Other Accounts: “Anonymous Self-Consciousness” and “FOR”

However, Guillot’s distinction between “for-me-ness,” “me-ness,” and “mine-ness” does not exhaust the spectrum of interpretations of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Rocco Gennaro, for example, argues that while there is pre-reflective self-consciousness, it is unconscious.²² It is a case of self-consciousness, since (to put it in an oversimplified way) a higher-level thought represents a mental state in a non-inferential way, and both mental states are proper parts of a complex conscious mental state.²³ This case of pre-reflective self-consciousness, however, is unconscious, since the higher-level thought is itself unconscious, so that, except in the case of introspection, *conscious* self-awareness does not exist.²⁴ Thus, pre-reflective self-consciousness does not include for-me-ness or me-ness or mine-ness in Guillot’s sense.²⁵

Moreover, Manfred Frank, Aron Gurwitsch or Jean-Paul Sartre, among others, argue that there is anonymous (non-egological) pre-reflective self-consciousness.²⁶ The consciousness includes consciousness of the consciousness (respectively of the experience or mental states). For this reason it is a case of self-consciousness, since one and the same experience itself has consciousness of itself. However, there is no subject for which there is conscious experience. Accordingly, neither for-me-ness,

¹⁸ Guillot 2017, 29.

¹⁹ Guillot understands a “subject” to mean the following: “Subjects are *parts* of the world, just like mountains, hurricanes and chairs, but the world also *appears to* them, or is ‘given’ to them, as it does not appear – is not ‘given’ – to mountains or chairs. But to “be appeared to”, for the subject, just is to have experiences, and for those experiences to have a subjective character.” Guillot 2017, 27. On the question of what is meant by a subject, see the comprehensive studies of Galen Strawson (Strawson 2011, 2019).

²⁰ Guillot 2017, 29.

²¹ Guillot 2017, 27.

²² Gennaro, [this issue].

²³ A part “x” is proper if “x is part of y *and* y is not part of x.” Gennaro 2012, 94.

²⁴ In this introduction we use the expressions ‘self-awareness’ and ‘self-consciousness’ interchangeable.

²⁵ Gennaro, [this issue].

²⁶ Frank 2012, 357 and in this issue, Gurwitsch 1941, 229–330, Sartre 1960, 36, 41.

me-ness nor mine-ness exists.²⁷ Given this range of different interpretations of pre-reflective self-consciousness, it is not surprising that there is not only controversy about what is meant by pre-reflective self-consciousness,²⁸ but moreover whether pre-reflective self-consciousness exists at all and which of the variants of pre-reflective self-consciousness presented are present. Does not a subject possess consciousness of the subject (me-ness) only when it has conscious conceptual self-consciousness? Does not merely a conscious experience exist? Why should it be necessary that there is actual (not merely dispositional)²⁹ awareness of the experience?

In any case, according to proponents of first-order (FOR) theories of consciousness such as Fred Dretske or Michael Tye, having an experience does not entail having consciousness of the experience.³⁰ Dretske emphasizes: “Conscious mental states – experiences, in particular – are states that we are conscious *with*, not states we are conscious *of*. They are states that make us conscious, not states that we make conscious by being conscious of them.”³¹ In justifying the thesis that conscious experience does not involve awareness of experience, the “transparency of experience” is often invoked. According to Michael Martin, the “transparency thesis” (with respect to perceptual experiences) states the following: “At heart, the concern is that introspection of one’s perceptual experience reveals only the mind-independent objects, qualities and relations that one learns about through perception. The claim is that one’s experience is, so to speak, diaphanous or transparent to the objects of perception, at least as revealed to introspection.”³² The transparency thesis thus states that in introspection the experience itself is not glimpsed, but only the objects of the experience. Therefore, it is doubtful that (conscious) experience includes consciousness of experience. In contrast, defenders of pre-reflective self-consciousness often claim that it is a phenomenal fact or self-evident that pre-reflective self-consciousness exists.³³

In any case, current debates about pre-reflective self-consciousness continue to focus on the question whether pre-reflective self-consciousness exists at all. The investigation of this question is therefore also a focus of the contributions to this Special Issue. The contributions in this volume share the viewpoint that pre-reflective self-consciousness exists and contain justifications for this existence thesis.

4 Pre-Reflective Self-Consciousness Explained?

Provided that there is pre-reflective self-consciousness, the question arises how this phenomenon can be explained. Robert Van Gulick pointed out some time ago that in

²⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (2012) as well as Williford, Bennequin und Rudrauf [this issue], among others, treat other variants of pre-reflective self-consciousness.

²⁸ Cf. Kriegel/Zahavi 2016, Guillot 2017.

²⁹ Cf. Carruthers 2000.

³⁰ Dretske 1995, Tye 1995.

³¹ Dretske 1995, 100–101.

³² Martin 2002, 378.

³³ Cf. the discussion in Giustina [this issue] and Lang 2022.

the philosophy of mind different things are understood by an explanation and he elucidated different types of explanations.³⁴ In view of pre-reflective self-consciousness and the contributions in this Special Issue, theories of constitution and production are of particular importance.³⁵ An explanation of constitution explains what a phenomenon consists in. It explains the necessary constituents of a phenomenon as well as their necessary relation to each other. For example, the constitution of sulfuric acid (H_2SO_4) consists in the fact that a certain number of certain atoms are connected in a certain way. An explanation of production, on the other hand, shows how a phenomenon is produced, for example, how sulfuric acid is produced.³⁶ However, it should not be overlooked that some philosophers, such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte and John Barnden, link their theories of the constitution of human consciousness to theories of production.³⁷ In the view of Fichte, who has received little attention in analytic discourse apart from important exceptions such as Barnden, Hector-Neri Castañeda, Robert Nozick, Galen Strawson,³⁸ there is, for example, a far-reaching isomorphism between the production of the ego and its self-consciousness and the constitution of the ego and its self-consciousness. A statement about the production of self-consciousness therefore at the same time reveals something about the constitution of this phenomenon and vice versa.

5 “HOR”: “HOP”, “HOT”, and “SR”

Among the most significant explanations (of the constitution) of pre-reflective self-consciousness in recent years are Higher-Order-Representational Theories (HOR) of pre-reflective self-consciousness, broadly classified as Higher-Order-Perception Theories (HOP), Higher-Order-Thought Theories (HOT), and Self-Representationalist Theories (SR).³⁹

These theories (often)⁴⁰ agree on the point that the constitution of pre-reflective self-consciousness is explained by the fact that a mental state (m_1) of the subject (S_1) represents a mental state (m_2) of the subject (S_1) in a non-inferential way. Roughly speaking, SR differs from HOP and HOT in that according to SR (simplified speaking) one and the same mental state represents itself, so that holds: $m_1 = m_2$. In contrast, for HOP and HOT both mental states are numerically distinct, $m_1 \neq m_2$.⁴¹ For

³⁴ Van Gulick 1995.

³⁵ Of course, there are important alternative explanations such as Robert Van Gulick's teleofunctionalist interpretation of self-consciousness. Van Gulick 1988.

³⁶ Cf. Kriegel 2009b, 142.

³⁷ Fichte 1994, 2021, Barnden [this issue].

³⁸ Barnden [this issue], Castañeda 1989, 65, Nozick 1981, 89, Strawson 2011, 349-351, 2017, 12-13.

³⁹ HOR theories are often primarily theories of phenomenal consciousness. However, HOR theories often develop explanations of pre-reflective self-consciousness as part of their answer to the question of what makes a mental state (a phenomenally) conscious mental state. Therefore, the division into HOP, HOT, and SR seems to us to be appropriate also with respect to pre-reflective self-consciousness.

⁴⁰ This does not apply (or at least only to a limited extent) to all HOR theories. Cf. Van Gulick [this issue].

⁴¹ This classification of HOR theories serves as a first orientation. For an overview see Carruthers 2004. There are a large number of different HOR theories. For some theories the classification is unclear. For

their part, HOP and HOT differ in how the question is answered as to whether the higher-level mental state is thought-like (HOT) or corresponds more to an inner sense respectively is perceptual (HOP).⁴² For example, according to David Armstrong, consciousness of experience is “a perception-like awareness of current states and activities in our own mind.”⁴³

In contrast, David Rosenthal argues that a mental state is a conscious mental state if a subject possesses an occurrent assertoric and unconscious higher-level thought (HOT) that represents the mental state in an unmediated way.⁴⁴ Pre-reflective self-awareness is thereby gained through “tacit” identification.⁴⁵ When a subject has a conscious mental state, the higher-level thought attributes a mental state to a particular subject (some particular individual).⁴⁶ The content of the higher-level thought refers to the subject who is in this state, since it includes a mental analogue of the expression ‘I’.⁴⁷ Just as the expression ‘I’ refers to the subject who uses this expression, the mental analogue also refers to the subject who has the higher-level thought. However, the subject that has the higher-level thought does not thereby simultaneously identify the subject that has that thought. The subject (S_1) who has a higher-level thought has the disposition to identify the subject (S_1) who is in the mental state thematized by the higher-level thought with the subject (S_1) who grasps that thought. Because of this disposition, when a subject is in a conscious mental state, she possesses the awareness that it is her own mental state and that she herself is in that state.⁴⁸ However, in order to have pre-reflective self-consciousness, it is not necessary to have occurrent awareness that one is the subject thinking a higher-level thought.⁴⁹

However, since HOP and HOT assume that a conscious mental state exists when two distinct mental states are in a particular representational relationship, the possibility of misrepresentation exists.⁵⁰ The misrepresentation can concern the content of the represented mental state or consist in the fact that a higher-order state has no

example, Robert Lurz’s theory of state consciousness is called a variant of SR (cf. Kriegel 2006, 143), although according to Lurz in the case of a conscious mental state there is a representational relation between two different mental states (Lurz 2004, 240).

⁴² HOP theories and HOT theories, in turn, can be further divided. Cf. Carruthers 2004, 118, Gennaro 2012, 104–105.

⁴³ Armstrong 1997, 724.

⁴⁴ Rosenthal 1997, 737, Rosenthal 2012, 24. Representation occurs in an unmediated manner when it is not based on observation or obtained by inference (Rosenthal 1997, 737–738).

⁴⁵ Rosenthal 2012, 29.

⁴⁶ Rosenthal 2012, 30.

⁴⁷ Rosenthal 2012, 30, 47. This is true, of course, if the subject who thinks the higher-level thought is at the same time the subject whose mental state is captured by this thought.

⁴⁸ Cf. Rosenthal 2012, 31.

⁴⁹ One might ask whether Rosenthal develops a theory of pre-reflective self-consciousness at all. As we see it, Rosenthal presents a dispositionalist account of pre-reflective self-consciousness: Even before a subject has occurrent awareness that she is the subject of a higher-order thought, i.e. reflective self-consciousness, she possesses the awareness that a mental state is her own mental state and that she herself is in that state.

⁵⁰ Levine 2001, 108. Within the scope of this introduction, of course, only a small selection of objections to the approaches discussed below will be presented. In addition, a variety of responses to these objections have been developed. The articles published in this Special Issue also provide a more detailed insight into this debate.

target at all, i.e. that there is no lower-order state that is represented. The incorrect representation of the higher-order state concerns the content if, for example, a HOT has the qualitative character “reddish”, but the represented mental state has the qualitative character “bluish”. In this case, it is unclear which qualitative character is conscious. If we assume that the qualitative character “reddish” is conscious, there is a problem that according to HOR the represented mental state should be the conscious mental state. However, the represented mental state does not seem to play a role in determining qualitative character. If, on the other hand, the qualitative character “bluish” is supposed to be conscious, it is questionable which role the higher-level thought plays. Now, the higher-level thought does not seem to be of importance for the determination of the qualitative character.⁵¹ However, it should hold good precisely that a mental state is thereby a conscious (phenomenal) mental state in which a higher-order state represents a lower-order state. This objection is mainly relevant with respect to conscious qualitative character and less relevant for the explanation of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Even if both mental states represent different qualitative characters, there is a representation of one mental state by another mental state, so that it is at least comprehensible why there is not merely an experience but also consciousness of the experience. With regard to pre-reflective self-consciousness, therefore, the second problem is more significant. According to this, there are situations in which an HO-state has no target at all and yet a conscious mental state exists. Such a situation exists, for example, in the case of dental fear, i.e. when a “dental patient seems to experience pain even when nerve damage or local anesthetic makes it impossible for such a pain to occur.”⁵² If it is possible that the representation of a higher-order mental state is defective in that there is no mental state represented and yet there is a conscious mental state, then the assumption that a conscious mental state exists if and only if a higher-order mental state represents another mental state does not seem correct. In this case, a conscious mental state exists although it is not true that a HO state represents a lower state. This makes it difficult to see why there should be pre-reflective self-consciousness or consciousness of experience. A central concern of some of the contributions to this Special Issue is therefore to show that the explanations of pre-reflective self-consciousness developed in these contributions are not contradicted by the possibility of misrepresentation.

One of the attractions of self-representationalist theories is that the problem of a misrepresentation (supposedly) does not arise because a mental state represents itself.⁵³ The self-representation can be direct or indirect. It is *direct*, if a mental state represents itself unmediated, so that M_1 represents M_1 . The self-representation is *indirect*, if the self-representation takes place by means of a “mediating” representation (or a component of a mental state), e.g. if a representation (R_1) represents a representation (R_2) and the representation (R_2) in turn represents the representation (R_1), so that the representation (R_1) represents itself (R_1) indirectly or by means of the representation of the representation (R_2).⁵⁴ In recent years, indirect self-repre-

⁵¹ Cf. Gennaro 2012, 60.

⁵² Gennaro 2012, 69.

⁵³ See, however, for example, the criticism of SR in Picciuto 2011.

⁵⁴ Cf. Williford 2006, 134.

sentationalist theories have been at the center of debates.⁵⁵ According to Kriegel, for example, the self-representation of a “maximally” conscious mental state occurs indirectly, in that a logical part M_1 of a mental state M represents a (sufficiently) big and highly (suitably) integrated other logical part M_2 of that mental state M , and thus represents the entire mental state M .⁵⁶ A maximally conscious mental state contains multiple mental states, conscious qualitative characters, pre-reflective self-consciousness, and, for example, time-consciousness.⁵⁷ Self-representation is indirect because a logical constituent M_1 of a mental state M represents the whole mental state M through the representation of another logical constituent M_2 of that mental state. The represented constituent M_2 is sufficiently big that by its representation the whole mental state is represented. For example, a drawing of a house in which a section is faded represents the whole house by virtue of the fact that a large section of the house can be seen. The represented component M_2 is highly integrated into the maximally conscious mental state if the relationship between it and the whole mental state is “deep and cohesive,” such as the relationship between the surface of an apple and its core. By indirectly representing the whole mental state M , the whole mental state M is conscious, so that the representing component M_1 is also conscious.

6 Acquaintance-Theories and Non-Relational-Theories

Meanwhile, HOR in its manifold variants does not exhaust the spectrum of explanations of pre-reflective self-consciousness. In recent years, acquaintance theories⁵⁸ and Non-Relationalist theories⁵⁹ have gained prominence.⁶⁰ Both approaches share the belief that the notion of representation is inadequate to explain pre-reflective self-consciousness. One justification for this belief is that in the case of a representation there is a difference between the representation and that which is represented, so that both are “wholly distinct”.⁶¹ In the case of pre-reflective self-consciousness, on the other hand, there is no difference between the experience and the consciousness of the experience in the sense that both are wholly distinct.

⁵⁵ Williford 2006, 134, Kriegel 2009b, 224–228.

⁵⁶ On Kriegel’s interpretation of the meaning of the expression ‘logical constituent’ see Kriegel 2009b, 216–217. Kriegel emphasises as well that the self-representation has to be *non-derivative*, *specific* and *essential* (Kriegel 2009b, 158–162). These details are not covered in this introduction.

⁵⁷ Kriegel 2009b, 229. A maximally conscious mental state consists, in addition to self-representation, in the representation of response-dependent properties of external objects. Kriegel 2009b, 59–111. Indirect self-representation is crucial for explaining pre-reflective self-consciousness, so Kriegel’s multilayered explanation of phenomenal consciousness will not be presented in more detail here.

⁵⁸ Williford 2006b, Hellie 2007.

⁵⁹ Frank 1991a, 2012, 2015, Lang 2019, Preyer 2020, Zahavi 1999, 2005.

⁶⁰ This is also true for adverbial theories, which, however, are not considered by the contributions in this Special Issue. At this point, the question can be left open whether adverbial theories should be counted among the non-relational theories and whether they form a subgroup of non-relational theories. Cp. f.e. Thomasson 2000.

⁶¹ Montague 2016, 57–58, 2017, 363.

Thus, the notion of representation does not seem to be suitable to explain the constitution of pre-reflective self-consciousness.

Williford therefore uses the term acquaintance instead of the term representation in recent studies. Williford explains the concept of acquaintance as follows: “[Acquaintance is] not a straightforward representation relation. Importantly, if *x* is acquainted with *y*, then *y* exists. This does not hold for representation generally. [...] The acquaintance relation *assumes* presence. [...] If *x* is acquainted with *y*, then *y* is *present to x*.”⁶² In the case of acquaintance it is assured that the “object” exists. “Presence” according to Williford is a “phenomenologically primitive notion” and means “having something before your conscious mind,”⁶³ as it is familiar through perception. According to Williford, pre-reflective self-consciousness consists in acquaintance with something different from consciousness, i.e. sense data, and pre-predicative acquaintance with consciousness itself and its structure.⁶⁴

Non-relationalists often connect to the work of the Heidelberg School around Dieter Henrich in the 1960 and 1970s.⁶⁵ While acquaintance theories assume that pre-reflective self-consciousness is non-representationally constituted but still has a relational structure in that, for example, consciousness is acquainted with itself, the “Neo-Heidelbergians” reject the thesis that pre-reflective self-consciousness is relationally constituted.⁶⁶ Pre-reflective self-consciousness is not only pre-reflective but also *pre-reflexive*, that is, it does not consist in a mental state or the subject being in a reflexive relation to itself. Thus, pre-reflective self-consciousness also does not exhibit a subject-object structure.⁶⁷ A justification of this thesis follows the previously presented objection against theories which use the notion of representation. This justification is that in a relation there is a relation between two items which are distinct from each other or at least could be distinct in principle.⁶⁸ Precisely this is not true in the case of pre-reflective self-consciousness. The consciousness of experience is not distinct from experience, but a constitutive component of this experience itself.⁶⁹

Moreover, a general objection of representatives of the neo-Heidelberg point of view against HOP, HOT, SR and acquaintance theories is that these theories fail because of the *De-Se problem*. This problem, briefly summarized, states that in the case of a relational interpretation of self-consciousness, two parts are related to each

⁶² Williford 2006b, 4.

⁶³ Williford 2006b, 8.

⁶⁴ Williford 2016, 89, 91. Cp. Williford 2019.

⁶⁵ Cf. Henrich 1966, 1970, Cramer 1974, Pothast 1971, 1987, 1988. Frank 1986, 1991a, 2012, 2015, 2019, [this issue], Lang 2019, Preyer 2020, Viertbauer 2018, Zahavi 1999, 2005.

⁶⁶ The literature does not consistently distinguish between acquaintance theories and non-relational theories.

⁶⁷ Cf. Zahavi 2020, 639.

⁶⁸ Montague 2016, 58. Cf., however, Williford’s reply to this objection (Williford 2016, 91) and Strawson [this issue].

⁶⁹ Cf. Frank [this issue]. Montague 2016, 58: “Typically, we think of relations as relating two distinct items: Bob is taller than Jim, Lisa is next to Jane, the book is on top of the table. However, this can’t be the structure of awareness of awareness, because what one is aware of, the experience, is partly constituted by the awareness of awareness itself, so we don’t really have two distinct items to be related to one another.”

other. Inevitably, however, this raises the questions of (a) how one part is able to recognize that it is identical with the other part, and (b) how it is able to relate to that which is identical with it *as* to itself.⁷⁰ These questions are to be asked whether or not it is assumed that the two parts are numerically identical, and whether or not the relation is interpreted in terms of a representation or an acquaintance relation. However, according to representatives of the neo-Heidelberg point of view, a convincing answer to these questions cannot be found within the framework of HOP, HOT, SR and acquaintance theories.

According to the Non-relationalists, pre-reflective self-consciousness is a *sui generis* phenomenon: it is not adequately interpreted with the conceptual repertoire of “acquaintance, intentionality, inner sense, representation, and self-representation.” The linguistic representation of pre-reflective self-consciousness therefore does not adequately express the phenomenon, according to non-relationalists. The phenomenon is not adequately characterized when it is stated that consciousness of experience exists, since this way of speaking suggests an intentional structure. For this reason, following Sartre, the “of” of the phrase “consciousness of experience” is often placed in parentheses “(of)” to indicate in this way that it is a case of non-intentional and non-relational consciousness.⁷¹ Consequently, the task for non-relationalists is to elaborate on how this phenomenon can be positively characterized. According to the critics of non-relationalists, however, there is a lack of comprehensible non-relational explanations of pre-reflective self-consciousness.⁷² One objection is that talk of “non-relational self-consciousness” is not intelligible.

A key question of current debates about pre-reflective self-consciousness is therefore, what is the nature of pre-reflective self-awareness, i.e. in the words of Anna Giustina [this issue]: “*in virtue of what* a subject is innerly aware of their experience”? The essays in this Special Issue contribute to answering this question. The spectrum ranges from Rocco Gennaro, who advocates a higher-order theory of pre-reflective self-consciousness, to Manfred Frank, who defends a neo-Heidelbergian point of view.

7 An Outlook: Historical Dimension

An introduction to the topic of this Special Issue would be one-sided if it did not conclude by at least hinting at the historical depth dimension of the debate on pre-reflective self-consciousness.⁷³ While self-consciousness has played a significant role in analytic philosophy since the investigations of Elizabeth Anscombe, Hector-Neri

⁷⁰ Cf. Frank [this issue].

⁷¹ Cf. Sartre 1991, 380. Williford, Bennequin, and Rudrauf [this issue] also adopt this notation, although they advocate an acquaintance theory.

⁷² Kriegel 2009b, 105–106, Montague 2016, 63.

⁷³ Moreover, this Special Issue does not address important questions centering on pre-reflective self-consciousness. These include the questions of whether plural pre-reflective self-consciousness exists and how bodily pre-reflective self-consciousness can be explained (cf. Schmid 2014, Legrand 2006). The issues discussed in connection with the study of the phenomenon of pre-reflective self-consciousness are now too complex to be comprehensively addressed within a Special Issue.

Castañeda, Roderick Chisholm or, for example, John Perry and Sydney Shoemaker (to name but a few of these authors), the topic of “Pre-Reflective Self-Consciousness Explained” has come to the fore not too long ago. However, this should not obscure the fact that pre-reflective self-consciousness has been studied for centuries. This is true for different religious as well as philosophical traditions: While in Hinduism one can refer to the Advaita-Vedānta and in Christianity to theologians in the 19th Century like Schleiermacher or Kierkegaard,⁷⁴ one should not least remember post-Kantian thinkers (f.e. Fichte, Hölderlin, Schelling, Hegel) or phenomenologists like Brentano or Husserl and Gurwitsch.⁷⁵ It is also hard to overlook that contemporary debates within analytic philosophy have been significantly influenced by “continental schools” or even Buddhist teachings and insights. Dieter Henrich, for example, influenced not only Robert Nozick or Roderick Chisholm, but also Frank and Zahavi, who follow up on his investigations.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, non-analytic traditions continue to receive too little attention. Given the objections and problems faced by HOR, acquaintance theories, and non-relationalism, it is a task and challenge of future philosophical investigations of pre-reflective self-consciousness within analytic philosophy to focus more on other traditions as well. After all, the task of explaining pre-reflective self-consciousness is manifestly too difficult not to exhaust all resources.⁷⁷ In any case, no consensus is foreseeable within analytic philosophy as to what an explanation of pre-reflective self-consciousness might look like. This is made clear by the contributions in this Special Issue. Perhaps, however, this is not a reason for resignation, but a characteristic of genuine philosophical problems and fascinating phenomena such as pre-reflective self-consciousness.

8 The Contributions of the Volume

Manfred Frank opens the Special Issue with a sketch of a new “Heidelberg Theory (2.0)” of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Of fundamental importance is the distinction between two types of self-consciousness: egological self-consciousness and anonymous self-consciousness. Egological self-consciousness exists in connection with the use of concepts. A subject has consciousness of itself as the subject of its thought and consciousness and also understands itself as this subject. Anonymous self-consciousness, in contrast, consists in a non-conceptual consciousness of consciousness (phenomenal consciousness) without an I existing. Anonymous self-consciousness is a case of self-consciousness because consciousness itself is familiar with itself, consciousness, in an immediate way. An example of anonymous self-consciousness is the conscious experience of a pain, where the consciousness of the

⁷⁴ Cf. Dalal 2021, Frank 1986, 2004, 2012, 2015, Viertbauer 2017.

⁷⁵ Cp. Frank 1991b.

⁷⁶ Henrich describes his influence on analytic philosophy in “Dies Ich, das viel besagt” (Henrich 2019, 150–162). On the influence of insights gained through meditative practices on debates within analytic philosophy, cf. Gennaro 2008, Metzinger 2020.

⁷⁷ A good example of how productive a close reading of older works of non-Western traditions can be for contemporary analytic philosophy is Uriah Kriegel’s paper “Dignāga’s Argument for the Awareness Principle 2019”.

pain is a component of the pain itself. In the case of anonymous self-consciousness, according to Frank, there is an indistinction between consciousness and consciousness (of) consciousness. Thus, it is not a case of representational and intentional consciousness. However, according to Frank, thoughts also include phenomenal consciousness. Thoughts are conscious thoughts by virtue of anonymous self-consciousness, and the subject-object indistinction of anonymous self-consciousness underlies egological self-consciousness in that it is the “unity” that is grasped in the case of I-thoughts. According to Frank, HOR and acquaintance theories fail to explain consciousness and pre-reflective self-consciousness. Frank shows this, among other things, in critical discussion of the viewpoint of Rocco Gennaro, who in turn criticizes Frank in his contribution in this volume.

In his paper, *Rocco Gennaro* argues that pre-reflective self-consciousness ubiquitously accompanies conscious mental states. Gennaro grounds this viewpoint in his theory of state consciousness, the wide intrinsicality view (WIV), a variant of HOR. The key question of theories of state consciousness is what makes a mental state a conscious mental state? Gennaro’s answer to this question is that (to put it in an oversimplified way) a mental state (M) of a subject S is a conscious mental state if and only if it is represented by a higher-order thought (M*) of this subject S, such that both mental states (M and M*) are proper parts of the same conscious complex mental state (CMS). Here it holds good that the represented mental state is outer-directed. Otherwise, introspection is present. A complex unit is characterized by the fact that it has certain constituents which stand in a certain relation to each other, so that a “psychologically real relation” is present.⁷⁸ A complex unit does not only *not* exist if a constituent is missing, but if the specific relation is no longer present. A part “x” is proper if “x is part of y and y is not part of x.”⁷⁹ According to Gennaro, a conscious mental state thus contains pre-reflective self-consciousness, since, in his view, self-consciousness is “having any kind of meta-psychological thought”.⁸⁰ However, since the higher-level thought is unconscious except when reflected upon (and thus introspection is present), pre-reflective self-consciousness is unconscious. With the help of his model, Gennaro also succeeds in explaining why misrepresentation is excluded. Since a mental state is a conscious mental state only if the specific relation Gennaro cites between a higher-level thought and the state it represents is present, misrepresentation is ruled out. However, this is not true with respect to the relation between a conscious mental state and the “outer reality” it represents, nor is it true in the case of introspection. Gennaro defends his point of view against objections and justifies why his theory is superior to alternative theories.

Galen Strawson justifies, among other things, the theses that pre-reflective self-consciousness exists and ubiquitously accompanies conscious experience, i.e. experiential “what it is like-ness”. The structure of pre-reflective self-consciousness includes immediate self-acquaintance and intentionality, so that pre-reflective self-consciousness is relationally constituted and the subject is an intentional object of its consciousness. However, the danger of a mistake about who one is is not a threat

⁷⁸ Gennaro 2012, 92. For details cp. Gennaro 2012, 94–95.

⁷⁹ Gennaro 2012, 94.

⁸⁰ Gennaro [this issue].

when it comes to pre-reflective self-consciousness. The starting point of Strawson's argumentation is the justification of the thesis that every conscious experience involves a subject of experience. Every experience, Strawson argues, is necessarily an experience for someone-or-something who has it. By the subject of experience here is meant the "minimal self," i.e. a subject that exists with the experience it has and does not exist when it has no experience. The existence of the minimal self thereby consists in obtaining pre-reflective self-consciousness. It includes awareness of oneself as a mental subject, but it does not include any sort of awareness of the subject as oneself or the experience as one's own. A key role in Strawson's argumentation is played by the justification of the thesis that all experience, simply put, involves pre-reflective self-consciousness. Other theses, such as that pre-reflective self-consciousness involves intentionality, follow (more or less) from this according to Strawson. Strawson justifies the key thesis by saying, among other things, that when a subject has an experience, having the experience is a property of the subject, and that the subject also has an experience of having that property. To have an experience "is to experience having it."⁸¹ Now, since the experience of an occurrently instantiated property of a thing is an experience of that thing, any experience involves the subject of the experience having consciousness of itself as a mental subject.

Robert Van Gulick presents in his paper the sketch of a new theory of consciousness and of the conscious self. Van Gulick combines his philosophical Higher-order Global State (HOGS) model of consciousness with the neuropsychological Global Neuronal Workspace (GNWS) theory and develops an original explanation of the conscious subject of experience - the virtual-self integration (VSI) model of the self. According to HOGS, a conscious mental state does not consist in a higher-level mental state representing another mental state. Furthermore, the content of the higher-order state does not involve "the explicit representation of the fact or proposition that one is currently in the relevant lower-order state".⁸² Rather, a mental state (M_1) is "transformed" into a conscious mental state in that it is embedded in a global state that embodies phenomenal intentionality and includes self-consciousness. Global states are neural realizations of phenomenal experiences.⁸³ By means of embedding, reflexivity and meta-intentionality are inscribed into this mental states (M_1) content without the HO content being explicitly represented. However, as a result of embedding, the mental state (M_1) is modified in terms of its content and functional role. The Global Neuronal Workspace theory explains the functional architecture of consciousness and its underlying neural realization. The basic idea of a workspace is that information contained in a particular modular system is available to other interconnected modules by means of a network. Consciousness thus consists in a global exchange of information between multiple brain regions. According to the VSI model of the self, the conscious subject is created through the global integration of contents, and the integration unifies "those contents so that they cohere *in a self-like way*, i.e. *as if from the perspective of a single unified self*."⁸⁴ Thus, the self does not produce or

⁸¹ Strawson [this issue].

⁸² Van Gulick [this issue].

⁸³ Van Gulick 2004, 88.

⁸⁴ Van Gulick [this issue].

precede the integration of content. Rather, integration produces the “virtual self,” i.e. the “unified point of view [...] from which all the contents of experience cohere”.⁸⁵ The virtual self is an illusion insofar as there is no homunculus and no substantial self. However, the unified contents together constitute the experience of a “real” self, so that it is comprehensible how a (human) organism becomes a (conscious) self. The contents, in turn, must be integrated into the global state in order to be part of experience. Thus, the aforementioned unification of contents as if from the perspective of a single unified subject is given. The conscious self is therefore among the necessary conditions of conscious mental states and of experience.

Anna Giustina presents in her paper a new defense of the existence of pre-reflective self-consciousness. By pre-reflective self-consciousness Giustina means “awareness of one’s own current conscious experience.”⁸⁶ Giustina pursues two aims, namely the justification of a (weaker) ubiquity thesis (=primary aim of her paper) and a comparatively stronger constitution thesis which is “the strongest thesis that can be formulated” about pre-reflective self-consciousness.⁸⁷ The ubiquity thesis of pre-reflective self-consciousness states: “For any conscious state *M* of a neurotypical human adult subject *S* at *t*, *S* is innerly aware of *M* at *t*.” Thus, the ubiquity thesis that Giustina defends does not claim to apply to animals, infants, and mentally impaired humans. In contrast, the constitution (grounding) thesis of pre-reflective self-consciousness reads: “Necessarily_m, for any mental state *M* of a subject *S* at *t*, if *M* is conscious, *M* is conscious in virtue of *S*’s being innerly aware of *M* at *t*.” The expression ‘Necessarily_m’ means metaphysically necessarily. Giustina justifies both theses by examining what she considers the “best argument” for pre-reflective self-consciousness. The argument states, roughly, (a) that one can only remember something if one was aware of it at the time of its occurrence; (b) that one can remember experiences that one has had, e.g. seeing an event and sensing a strange odor, so that (c) one must have been aware of the experiences at the time of their occurrence. Giustina explains different ways in which this argument can be spelled out in more detail, and justifies the ubiquity thesis in response to a new objection by Daniel Stoljar.

Kenneth Williford, *Daniel Bennequin* and *David Rudrauf* develop, in interdisciplinary collaboration, an original explanation of pre-reflective self-consciousness (PRSC) and the perspectival character of consciousness. The expression ‘perspectival character’ of consciousness refers to the givenness of the world and its objects to consciousness under a perspective and thus from a subjective point of view. According to Williford, Bennequin and Rudrauf, pre-reflective self-consciousness is not representational and consists in an acquaintance of consciousness with itself as a phenomenal totality, including “all of the phenomenal features of consciousness, PRSC itself among them”.⁸⁸ They distinguish two levels of pre-reflective self-consciousness. The base level of pre-reflective self-consciousness (PRSC₀) consists in experiencing a phenomenal space with properties like continuity and closedness. However, PRSC₀ does not include any specific viewpoint. The second level of pre-reflective self-con-

⁸⁵ Van Gulick [this issue].

⁸⁶ Giustina [this issue].

⁸⁷ Giustina [this issue].

⁸⁸ Williford, Bennequin and Rudrauf [this issue].

sciousness (PRSC₁) issues from the adoption of a specific point of view on the phenomenal world. In this case, consciousness is pre-reflectively conscious of itself as “framing the world under a specific perspective”.⁸⁹ PRSC₁ rests upon PRSC₀, and both in turn underlie reflective self-consciousness. The key thesis of Williford, Bennequin and Rudrauf is that central properties not only of the perspectival character of consciousness but also of both types of pre-reflective self-consciousness can be explained with the help of their Projective Consciousness Model (PCM) and thus with the help of projective geometry. According to the PCM, consciousness has the structure of a projective 3-space and the dynamics of consciousness (in imagination and perception) is in part “governed by the transformation group integral to that space (the Projective Linear Group).”⁹⁰ Williford, Bennequin and Rudrauf use concepts like duality, reciprocity, polarity or closedness as used in projective geometry to demonstrate how the PCM can explain features of both types of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Drawing on the PCM, they also succeed in explaining the relationship between pre-reflective self-consciousness and the perspectival nature of consciousness.

John A. Barnden presents an original physicalist, process-based explanation of phenomenal consciousness and (non-egological) pre-reflective self-consciousness, the Meta-Causal Approach (MCA). According to his view, phenomenal consciousness is an objectively existing and pre-reflective (i.e., pre-conceptual, etc.) constituent of the physical world, and this indirectly implies that it is an instance of an internally reflexive meta-causal process. MCA is a “physicalist type-identity theory of consciousness: being-conscious as a property of physical processes is identical to the process possessing within itself the special sort and arrangement of physical meta-causation.”⁹¹ *Meta-causality* is present when an instance of causation serves as a causal relatum. The meta-causality in a conscious process is *reflexive*, since there is a meta-causal structure which (speaking oversimply) affects itself meta-causally in a time extended (not synchronic) way. The meta-causation is *internally reflexive*, because the “self-affecting” happens within the meta-causal structure itself. The physical process is thereby meta-causally (not representationally) sensitive to its own internal causation: the process’s internal causation is itself a direct cause of effects within the process. Barnden argues further that the account naturally implies that pre-reflective self-consciousness is an intrinsic aspect of any case of phenomenal consciousness. Thus, the centrality of pre-reflective self-consciousness gains additional support, going beyond typical justifications, which are based on phenomenological considerations or on what is needed as a foundation for reflective self-consciousness or for memory of experiences.

All contributions in the Special Issue deal in detail with questions that we formulated in the Call for Papers for this Special Issue. Since several contributions explicitly address these questions, some of these questions will be reiterated here. The questions are: What is the constitution of pre-reflective self-consciousness? Are HOR (HOT, HOGS, WIV, ...) or SOT a suitable form for explaining the constitution

⁸⁹ Williford, Bennequin and Rudrauf [this issue].

⁹⁰ Williford, Bennequin and Rudrauf [this issue].

⁹¹ Barnden [this issue].

of pre-reflective self-consciousness? Is pre-reflective self-consciousness a kind of representation, self-representation or self-acquaintance? What is the relation between the constitution of pre-reflective self-consciousness and the constitution of phenomenal consciousness? Does pre-reflective self-consciousness contain a sense of me-ness or mine-ness or is it anonymous? Does so called pre-reflective self-consciousness exist or is it a philosophical chimera?

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