

Explaining Consciousness

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Rosenthal addresses the misconceptions that characterize the use and understanding of consciousness as a mental phenomenon. He argues that among other challenges, the use of the term “conscious” proves an uphill task. People use the word "conscious" in various contexts, whose meaning is not connected (Chalmers, 2002). For instance, the most common use of this term is in the context of being awake. Rosenthal posits that mindfulness is used in the context of depicting understanding and explaining.

Rosenthal explains various contexts of consciousness, like state consciousness and transitive consciousness. According to Rosenthal, the state may be considered “conscious”, even without the conscious attention of an individual. However, a state which an individual is not aware of is not conscious. Rosenthal seeks to explain how a state becomes conscious in terms of a person being mindful of the state. Rosenthal notes that a state is not made conscious by the awareness of a mental state. According to Rosenthal, mental state awareness can occur despite the state not being conscious. He adds that one can be aware of a mental condition even when a state is not conscious. Creature consciousness and state of consciousness are distinct yet intimately connected contexts (Chalmers, 2002). The creature's mental state is the non-conscious mental state of human beings when beings are awake. Transitive consciousness entails being aware of something. State of consciousness is the phenomenon of being aware.

Rosenthal formulates a hypothesis that a mental state can only be regarded as conscious if a particular type of thought accompanies it. Throughout the theory, Rosenthal seeks to classify the conscious state as intentional or sensory state. Rosenthal asserts that we are in a state consciousness in a manner that seems instantaneous when the state is conscious (Chalmers, 2002). The absence of mediation between one's awareness and a state of mind makes transitive consciousness internal to the state.

Rosenthal describes sensory consciousness as merely a unique case of state consciousness. Additionally, Rosenthal posits that sensory consciousness states include the states with sensory quality (Chalmers, 2002). Rosenthal concludes that for a sensory state to occur, the mental state must have two properties, which include the state consciousness property and sensory quality. Moreover, the two mental state properties are divergent and can occur independently. Further argument by Rosenthal points out that state consciousness is intrinsic or vital to sensory quality. Bodily sensations like pain can occur in unconsciousness.

Rosenthal rejects the perceptual model that proposes how individuals become conscious in their states of consciousness. Instead, he posits that the only way we become aware of conscious states is by thinking about our conscious states. He refers to the contemplations about other mental states as *higher-order thoughts* (HOTs) (Chalmers, 2002). Rosenthal argues that a HOT model is not just a disposition, but rather it must be occurrent thinking. An intentional state that brings about consciousness about something is usually assertoric. Rosenthal observes the HOT model is not an analysis of the concept of the nature of the state of consciousness but rather a hypothesis of the idea.

Rosenthal concludes his explanation by describing the confabulation of consciousness and function. He argues that there exists a well-known tendency that people have to confabulate being in various intentional states (Chalmers, 2002). The confabulation is often in ways that appear to make an *ex post facto* sense of their behavior. Therefore HOTs misrepresent the subjects' states.

References

Chalmers, D. J. (2002). *Philosophy of mind: Classical and contemporary readings*.

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