

## Is there a phenomenological argument for higher-order representationalism?

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**Abstract** In his 2009 article “Self-Representationalism and Phenomenology,” Uriah Kriegel argues for self-representationalism about phenomenal consciousness primarily on phenomenological grounds. Kriegel’s argument can naturally be cast more broadly as an argument for higher-order representationalism. I examine this broadened version of Kriegel’s argument in detail and show that it is unsuccessful for two reasons. First, Kriegel’s argument (in its strongest form) relies on an inference to the best explanation from the claim that all experiences of normal adult human beings are accompanied by peripheral awareness of those very experiences to the claim that all experiences are accompanied by peripheral awareness of those very experiences. This inference is inadequately defended, for the explanandum may also be given a straightforward evolutionary explanation. Second, contra Kriegel, I argue that phenomenological investigation does not support the thesis that we are always peripherally aware of our experiences. Instead, it delivers no verdict on this thesis. Kriegel’s phenomenological mistake may be explained via a highly diluted version of the famous transparency thesis about experience.

**Keywords** Higher-order representationalism · Phenomenology · Peripheral awareness · Introspection · Uriah Kriegel · Transparency

*Representationalism* is a broad approach according to which a mental state is a phenomenal experience in virtue of being an appropriate type of representational state, and perhaps also in virtue of playing a certain functional role. Common

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motivations for representationalism include (i) the transparency of experience<sup>1</sup> and (ii) the prospect of a naturalistic reduction of phenomenal experience (assuming that the phenomenon of representation can be understood naturalistically). A major internecine dispute among representationalists concerns how many layers of representation are required for a state to be an experience.

According to *first-order representationalists*, experiences merely involve ground-level representations of certain properties—say, environmental or bodily properties. First-order representationalists usually also require that such representations play a certain functional role—for instance, that they be available for practical reasoning, verbal report, and/or motor-control. So *first-order representationalism* is the view that a state is a phenomenal experience in virtue of appropriately representing certain properties, perhaps in conjunction with having a certain functional role.<sup>2</sup>

According to *higher-order representationalists*, a mere ground-level representation of this sort is insufficient for a phenomenal experience; experiences also require certain types of higher-level representations targeting these ground-level states.<sup>3</sup> More precisely, *higher-order representationalism* is the view that a state is a phenomenal experience in virtue of both (i) appropriately representing certain properties, perhaps in conjunction with having a certain functional role; and (ii) being the target of, or being disposed to be the target of, the appropriate type of higher-order representation.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, *self-representationalism* is a brand of higher-order representationalism according to which the ground-level representations and the higher-order representations of those ground-level representations are part of a single mental state. Thus, self-representationalism has it that experiences all involve representations of at least certain parts of themselves.<sup>5</sup>

In his 2009 article “Self-Representationalism and Phenomenology,” Uriah Kriegel argues for self-representationalism primarily on phenomenological grounds. Kriegel’s argument can naturally be cast more broadly as an argument for higher-order representationalism. In this paper, I will examine this broadened version of Kriegel’s argument in detail and show that it is unsuccessful for at least two reasons. First, it relies on an inference to the best explanation that is insufficiently defended. Second, phenomenological investigation does not adequately support the key phenomenological premise of the argument.

<sup>1</sup> See (Tye 2002) for an extended argument of this sort.

<sup>2</sup> For influential and extensive defenses of first-order representationalism, see Dretske (1995) and Tye (1995) and Tye (2000).

<sup>3</sup> On some varieties of the view, dispositions to form such higher-order representations are enough; actual higher-order representations are not required.

<sup>4</sup> See Carruthers (2000) for a comprehensive defense of this view. William Lycan (1996) and David Rosenthal (2005) also defend a view they call higher-order representationalism. However, so far as I can tell, the higher-order element in their views is meant to explain only *access* consciousness, not *phenomenal* consciousness (see Block (1995) for discussion of the distinction). So their views may be compatible with first-order representationalism about phenomenal experience.

<sup>5</sup> For a variety of defenses of self-representationalism, see Kriegel and Williford (2006). For an especially complete defense of the view, see Kriegel (2009b).

## 1 The phenomenological case for higher-order representationalism

Let us begin by examining Kriegel's argument. To introduce his argument, Kriegel contrasts *peripheral* awareness with *focal* awareness. As I type these words, I am focally visually aware of my computer screen. But I am simultaneously peripherally visually aware of my keyboard, the wall behind my computer screen, and the hum of the overhead lights. This isn't a precise theoretical characterization of the distinction between focal and peripheral awareness, but Kriegel presumably thinks (and I'm happy to grant) that such examples provide us with a good enough handle on this distinction.

Quite generally, phenomenological investigation suggests that experience is associated with a great deal of peripheral awareness. Now, Kriegel proposes, phenomenological investigation further suggests that experience is associated with peripheral awareness *of the experience itself*. To return to my example in the previous paragraph: when I experience my computer screen, I am also aware, albeit only peripherally, of my *computer-screen experience*.<sup>6</sup> This awareness can *become* focal, as when I introspect on that experience. But, Kriegel thinks, even before I engage in any such introspection, I am still peripherally aware of my computer-screen experience.

There is nothing special, on Kriegel's view, about my computer-screen experience; such peripheral awareness of one's experiences can be found in any experience one likes. This leads Kriegel to advance the following claim:

*Universal Awareness Thesis*: I have peripheral awareness of all of my phenomenal experiences.<sup>7</sup>

Kriegel says quite explicitly that the Universal Awareness Thesis is a purely phenomenological claim: "That a certain feature is sometimes *or always* present in consciousness may be phenomenologically manifest to us, say via introspection ... to the extent that there is a genuinely phenomenological argument for self-representationalism, it must take [the Universal Awareness Thesis] as its starting point" (Kriegel 2009a, p. 364, emphasis mine).

From here, Kriegel supposes, plausibly enough, that awareness requires representation: if I am aware of something, then I represent it.<sup>8</sup> When we apply this supposition to the Universal Awareness Thesis, we arrive at the following claim:

*Egocentric Higher-Order Representationalism*: For any phenomenal experience E that I have, I represent E.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See thesis (1) in Kriegel (2009a, p. 361). Kriegel talks of "conscious states" instead of phenomenal experiences, but he states in the abstract of this paper that he is speaking of *phenomenal* consciousness (rather than what Block (1995) calls "access consciousness").

<sup>7</sup> See thesis (2) in (ibid, p. 361).

<sup>8</sup> See thesis (a) in (ibid, p. 364).

<sup>9</sup> See thesis (2a) in (ibid, p. 365).

Finally, Kriegel takes this to support the following claim via “something like an inference to the best explanation” (Kriegel 2009a, p. 364):

*Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism:* Necessarily, for any phenomenal experience E of subject S, S represents E.<sup>10</sup>

Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism is not quite higher-order representationalism simpliciter. Higher-order representationalism is usually thought of as a thesis about what it is *in virtue of which* a state is a phenomenal experience, while Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism says nothing about this. Still, we may suppose that Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism strongly militates in favor of higher-order representationalism simpliciter.<sup>11</sup> So we have an argument for higher-order representationalism with a purely phenomenological starting point.

Indeed, one may strengthen this argument by inserting an intermediate step between Egocentric Higher-Order Representationalism and Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism. By discussing the topic with others, I can learn that they, too, have peripheral awareness of all of their phenomenal experiences. This, combined with the Awareness-Representation Thesis, supports a broadened version of Egocentric Higher-Order Representationalism. We need not pin down exactly which broadened version of Egocentric Higher-Order Representationalism is best, but to have a concrete thesis in mind I will work with the following claim:

*Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism:* for any phenomenal experience E of any normal adult human subject S, S represents E.

Presumably, Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism (or some nearby thesis) provides even more support for Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism than Egocentric Higher-Order Representationalism provides. Thus, my discussion will focus on this strengthened version of the argument. Call this the *Higher-Order Representationalist Phenomenological Argument*, or, more simply, the *HOR Phenomenological Argument*.

In the next section, I will raise a concern about the inference from Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism to Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism. Finally, in Sect. 3, I will argue that the Universal Awareness Thesis is inadequately supported by phenomenological investigation.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Kriegel’s argument is slightly different than the argument in the text. After putting forward Egocentric Higher-Order Representationalism, Kriegel argues that self-representationalism is the most plausible form of higher-order representationalism. So the conclusion of Kriegel’s inference that is “something like an inference to the best explanation” is that self-representationalism is true. I will ignore this wrinkle, as my criticisms of the argument in the text apply without modification to Kriegel’s original argument.

<sup>11</sup> One might argue, for example, that if higher-order representations did not at least partly constitute experiences, then there ought to be some possible experiences that aren’t accompanied by such higher-order representations. So, if every possible experience is accompanied by a higher-order representation, that must be because higher-order representations do at least partly constitute experiences—that is, if Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism is true, then higher-order representationalism simpliciter must be true.

## 2 Worries about the inference to the best explanation

Let us provisionally suppose that the HOR Phenomenological Argument is successful all the way to Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism—the thesis that, for any phenomenal experience *E* of a normal adult human subject *S*, *S* represents *E*. (I am granting this just for the sake of argument; in the next section I will criticize an earlier step in the argument.) For concreteness, I am focusing just on Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism, but the criticisms to come will apply to any argument that uses a nearby thesis.

I now want to scrutinize the transition from this premise to Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism—the claim that, necessarily, for any phenomenal experience *E* of *any* subject *S*, *S* represents *E*. My goal in this section is modest: while I will not show that this inference is mistaken, I will show that much more support is required for the inference than Kriegel provides.

Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism is a thesis about a certain limited sample of experiences—the experiences of all normal adult human subjects. Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism is a thesis about all experiences, actual or merely possible. How does Kriegel defend the inference from the former to the latter? In his 2009 article, he says virtually nothing beyond what I quoted in the previous section: that this inference is “something like an inference to the best explanation.”<sup>12</sup>

At first glance, one might think that little more needs to be said: it might appear that Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism is obviously the best explanation of Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism. Why else would all normal adult human subjects represent all of their experiences, if not because this is a necessary requirement for any subject to have an experience? Surely it’s not just a colossal *accident* that any normal adult subject represents all of his or her experiences; surely there is some modal robustness to this fact.

Fair enough. But to see why this inference is not plain sailing, consider these facts: for any experience *E* of a normal adult human subject *S*, (a) *E* includes a tactile component,<sup>13</sup> (b) *S* has a digestive tract, and (c) *S* has a rich self-concept. Indeed, there is at least some modal robustness to all of these facts. For any given experience *E* of a normal adult human subject *S*, it is plausible that, *in all nearby possible worlds where S has E*, *E* includes a tactile component, *S* has a digestive tract, and *S* has a rich self-concept.

Now, one could perform “something like an inference to the best explanation” on these facts, arriving at claims like this one: “For any experience *E* of a normal adult human subject *S*, *E* includes a tactile component” (or “*S* has a digestive

<sup>12</sup> Kriegel (2009a) does make some very brief remarks about the “subjective” or “for-me” character of experience; perhaps he means for these remarks to shed light on the inference to the best explanation, though how to interpret this passage is unclear to me. As far as I can tell, though, Kriegel’s claims about the “subjective” character of experience are grounded in phenomenological investigation, much like the Universal Awareness Thesis. If this interpretation is correct, then I think that my remarks in Sect. 3 about the Universal Awareness Thesis will apply equally well to any claim that experience is subjective.

<sup>13</sup> This takes *E* to be the subject’s total experience. For those averse to this approach, I can say instead that *E* occurs at the same time as some experience of *S* with a tactile component.

tract,” or “S has a rich self-concept”). But any such inference is highly suspect. It is clearly false that any experience must include a tactile component; there are certainly possible experiences (e.g., experiences of creatures that lack any sense of touch) that involve no such component. It is also clearly false that any subject of an experience must have a digestive tract.

It is less clear whether any subject of experience must have a rich self-concept. What *is* clear is that establishing this would take a great deal of work, for it is far from obvious that this is the best explanation of the fact that all actual normal human subjects with experiences have a rich self-concept. Another quite plausible explanation of this fact is simply that human beings have evolved to have a rich self-concept, though having a rich self-concept has nothing to do with the conditions for having an experience.

The moral of such examples is that it is often slippery to infer from the fact that all actual experiences that we’re familiar with have feature F to the thesis that, necessarily, all experiences have feature F. Bearing this moral in mind, let us revisit the inference from Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism to Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism. The latter is supposed to be the best explanation of the former. But is it? Let us consider another initially plausible explanation of Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism.

Consider the explanation that, as a result of natural selection, human beings possess a very sophisticated set of cognitive faculties. In addition to our first-order sensory faculties which monitor our bodies and our environment, we have various faculties which monitor our mental states. One of these faculties produces representations of our experiences. On this view, just as all normal human beings constantly represent at least some features of their environment, they also constantly represent at least some features of all of their experiences. However, these higher-order representations are not required for a state to count as an experience. (Except for this last claim, the higher-order representationalist might happily accept this explanation.)

On this evolutionary explanation, the fact that higher-order representations accompany all experiences of normal adult human subjects may be a very robust matter of fact: there may have been very strong evolutionary pressures against subjects who lacked faculties to monitor their mental states. But, on this explanation, higher-order representations accompany our experiences only as a contingent matter of fact. Moreover, for all this explanation says, there are actual experiences whose subjects do not represent those experiences. Perhaps animals and children have such experiences. The evolutionary explanation of Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism is a plausible rival to the explanation via Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism. But, at least in his 2009 article, Kriegel gives no reason at all for dismissing the evolutionary explanation.

Here is another way of putting the point. There are at least two types of first-order representationalist views worth contrasting with higher-order representationalism. On one view, many actual paradigmatic experiences are not accompanied by higher-order representations of the relevant sort. But on another view, all actual paradigmatic experiences are accompanied by higher-order representations of the relevant sort. However, what makes these states *experiences* has nothing to do with the presence of

these higher-order representations. Similar mental states that were not accompanied by higher-order representations would also count as experiences.

If one overlooks the second view and takes the first view as the only serious rival, then it may seem reasonable to infer from Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism to Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism. For Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism rules out the first view. But it does not rule out the second view, so the inference to Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism requires further support.

The vital question, then, is not whether actual experiences are accompanied by higher-order representations, but whether such higher-order representations are part of what *make* these states experiences. No mere survey of actual experiences will settle this question.

This point is worth lingering on. In general, a theory of experience aims to say what *constitutes* experience; actual experiences may have many non-constitutive features that are nevertheless quite modally robust. Once we recognize this point, we can see that almost any theory of experience is compatible with the claim that all actual experiences are accompanied by higher-order representations, just as almost any theory of experience is compatible with the claim that all actual experiences include a tactile component. Those who deny higher-order representationalism simply need to deny that these higher-order representations help constitute experiences, ubiquitous though such higher-order representations may be.

In sum, *even if we grant that some thesis like Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism is true*, much work remains to make the case that higher-order representationalism is the best explanation of this thesis. Perhaps this case can be made, but doing so is a substantial task.

### 3 Scrutinizing the universal awareness thesis

In the previous section, I granted my opponent, just for the sake of argument, the truth of Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism. Kriegel's argument for Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism, recall, rested on the Universal Awareness Thesis: the thesis that I have peripheral awareness of all of my phenomenal experiences. Kriegel claims that the Universal Awareness Thesis is phenomenologically manifest; a direct appeal to phenomenology is the only support that Kriegel provides for this thesis. In this section, I will examine this thesis. I will not argue that the Universal Awareness Thesis is false, but I will argue that a straight appeal to phenomenological investigation provides little support for it.

First, a clarification of the thesis. Note that I have good phenomenological access only to my current, and perhaps very recent, experiences. I have virtually no phenomenological access to the nature of my childhood experiences. I can't remember most of those experiences, and even the experiences that I seem to remember may be subject to memory distortion or fabrication. If the Universal Awareness Thesis is understood as applying to every experience that I have ever had, there is no plausibility to the idea that phenomenological investigation alone could establish the Universal Awareness Thesis. It must be that Kriegel intends the

Universal Awareness Thesis to be restricted to my current or very recent phenomenal experiences, and that is how I shall understand this thesis from now on.

Now I will lead up to the objection. First, let me present a helpful example. My remarks about this example are intended to clarify the objection to come, but they will bear no argumentative weight; the objection stands alone.

Suppose that, at time  $t$ , I am visually attending to my computer screen. At a slightly later time  $t^*$ , I shift my attention (without moving my eyes) to the periphery of my visual field. There is a small brown box there, near the boundary of what I can visually attend to without moving my eyes; I'm now focally aware of the box. But was I peripherally aware of that box at time  $t$ , while I was attending to the screen?

Having attempted serious phenomenological investigation of this matter, I state that I have *absolutely no idea*. I simply can't tell either way. I could have had some dim awareness of the box at time  $t$  (in a way that I could not have had even a dim visual awareness of the lamp behind me). But it could also have been that I had no awareness of it at all. And no matter how hard I try to investigate the issue phenomenologically, I report making no progress. Doing some psychological experiments might help, but I don't see how to make progress just by thinking harder about my experience.

Notice that I'm not denying that I have peripheral visual awareness of some objects (like the keyboard right below my computer screen). One could deny this—indeed, there is a heated debate in the philosophical literature about just such issues.<sup>14</sup> But I'm granting Kriegel that I have peripheral awareness of some things, and that I have a very clear phenomenological sense of such peripheral awareness in a broad range of cases. My point is merely that there are *some* objects such that I have no phenomenological sense whether I was peripherally aware of them just a moment ago.

Perhaps some readers will think that careful phenomenological investigation reveals *no* peripheral awareness of the brown box. Further reflection on the case does not change my own phenomenological verdict of uncertainty, but it's no problem for my argument if phenomenological verdicts differ amongst careful subjects after reflection. To reiterate, I present the brown box case solely to clarify my objection to Kriegel. The role of this case is merely to provide an example where phenomenological investigation delivers no clear verdict about whether or not one has a certain sort of peripheral awareness. Readers with diverging intuitions may substitute some other case of this sort; surely there are such cases.<sup>15</sup>

Here is my main objection. I report that, for me, trying to find peripheral awareness of my experiences themselves is much like trying to find peripheral awareness of the brown box. When I conduct phenomenological investigation into any peripheral awareness of my experiences, attempting to set aside any theoretical prejudices, I *haven't a clue* whether I've ever had such peripheral awareness. I can certainly become focally aware of my experiences; I have no trouble attending to my experiences. But take a moment when I am caught up in the bustle of ordinary

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, discussion of the so-called “refrigerator-light illusion” and related matters (Block 2007; Dennett 1991; Dretske 2007; Schwitzgebel 2007; Tye 2009).

<sup>15</sup> I thank an anonymous referee for helpful discussion on this point.



life, paying no heed to my experiences. Just after this moment, I have no clear phenomenological sense whether I was then peripherally aware of my experiences. In stark contrast, I have a very sharp phenomenological sense that I was peripherally visually aware of many external objects.

I want to separate this objection from a different one. One might worry that Kriegel's phenomenological investigations into his awareness of his own experiences are influenced by some background theory (perhaps an innocuous one). If this is so, then the Universal Awareness Thesis (the thesis that one has peripheral awareness of all of one's phenomenal experiences) is not a *purely* phenomenological premise. It is supported by phenomenology *plus* some (perhaps innocuous) background theory.

This is not my objection. I am not worrying about whether the Universal Awareness Thesis is supported purely via phenomenology or not. Presumably, if it is properly supported in any way, then it's fair game for Kriegel to use it in his argument. My objection is that when I conduct such (pure or impure) phenomenological investigation myself, I simply don't reach Kriegel's result.

So far, I've just flatly denied what Kriegel says: he finds it phenomenologically evident that he has peripheral awareness of his own experiences, and I don't. Is there any way of making progress in this standoff?

Well, my discussions of the issue with others suggests that I am not idiosyncratic here. And Kriegel (2009a) himself admits that peripheral awareness of one's experiences is "singularly elusive among mental phenomena". Given these facts, I predict with some confidence that if we tabulated the results of philosophers' careful phenomenological investigations, the best result Kriegel could realistically hope for is *recalcitrant disagreement*, with a hefty percentage of philosophers on either side of the issue.

If we did arrive at this result—which, as I've suggested, is the best case scenario for Kriegel—what bearing would this have on Kriegel's argument? I suggest that it would make the argument very easy to resist. As long as prolonged, careful phenomenological investigation delivers no clear verdict, it is perfectly reasonable to deny that we are always peripherally aware of our experiences. For precisely this reason, I am skeptical quite generally of attempts to build theories of experience around highly controversial phenomenological "data." Given that there are quite a lot of shared intuitions about experience (phenomenologically based and otherwise), won't *those* data provide a better starting point for theories of experience?

Even if one denies that we have a phenomenological sense of peripheral awareness of our experiences, how could Kriegel and those like him have gotten their own phenomenology wrong? I offer the following explanation, which relies on a *very* diluted construal of the famous *transparency of experience*. Advocates of some form of "transparency thesis" often make remarks like this one by Tye (2002, p. 139):

When you introspect your visual experience, the only particulars of which you are aware are the external ones making up the scene before your eyes. You are not aware of those objects *and* a further inner object or episode.

Tye, like many transparency theorists,<sup>16</sup> makes a positive claim—that introspection involves awareness of external particulars—and a negative claim—that introspection involves no awareness of any internal particulars.

The transparency thesis is enormously controversial.<sup>17</sup> Fortunately, I do not need to appeal to it, but only to this diluted claim which should be much less controversial:

*Minimal Transparency Thesis:* Normally, when one becomes aware of one's experience in the direct way associated with introspection, one does so by first becoming aware of the properties presented by that experience.

The Minimal Transparency Thesis doesn't claim that *merely* becoming aware of the properties presented by an experience makes one aware of that experience. It's natural to think that one must do something more to acquire such awareness. The thesis claims only that awareness of the properties presented by an experience is normally required for awareness of that experience.

The Minimal Transparency Thesis is much weaker than the transparency thesis simpliciter. For one thing, it does not involve any negative claim to the effect that introspection involves no awareness of any internal particulars. Further, its scope is sharply restricted: it concerns how we normally become aware of our experiences, not what nomologically or metaphysically *must* happen for us to become aware of our experiences. For these reasons, it should be far less controversial than the transparency thesis.

Examples support the Minimal Transparency Thesis. For instance: suppose that, while I am looking closely at a peach, I consider the nature of my visual experience. To become aware of my peach-experience, surely I must first become aware of the visually apparent properties of the peach. I might become aware of the particular (apparent) color and shape of the peach, and thereby become aware of what my experience of the peach is like. Rephrasing the point: I cannot bypass the (apparent) properties of the peach when I try to introspect my experience of the peach. To tell what my *experience* of the peach is like, I must first know what the *peach* is apparently like. This example is representative. Since the Minimal Transparency Thesis concerns only what *normally* happens, unrepresentative counterexamples would not threaten it.

To forestall one possible source of resistance to the Minimal Transparency Thesis, I emphasize that it is compatible with a *very* wide range of views about the nature of introspection. It should be immediately clear that this thesis says nothing about whether introspection is inferential or non-inferential, or whether it provides object-awareness or merely fact-awareness of our experiences.<sup>18</sup> To further demonstrate the relative innocuousness of the Minimal Transparency Thesis, let me show how it pairs with several plausible accounts of introspection. It is

<sup>16</sup> Such as Harman (1990, p. 39) and Dretske (1999, p. 112).

<sup>17</sup> For debates over the nature and extent of this phenomenon, (see Block 1996; Harman 1990; Jackson 2007; Kennedy 2009; Kind 2003; Martin 2002; Schroer 2007; Stoljar 2004; Tye 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Dretske (1999) has consistently underscored the distinction between object- and fact-awareness; see his for an illustrative and extended discussion.

unsurprising that the Minimal Transparency Thesis pairs well with the accounts of introspection offered by proponents of stronger transparency theorists, like Tye<sup>19</sup> and Dretske.<sup>20</sup> Thus I will use my limited space to focus on accounts of introspection less obviously compatible with the Minimal Transparency Thesis.

Consider a *syntactic* theory of introspection, according to which introspection of one's experiences involves merely simple syntactic transformation. On a paradigmatic version of this kind of view, introspection works as follows. Introspection (of experiences) takes experiences as input and yields a mental representation as output. Specifically, when I have an experience that presents certain properties  $F_1 \dots F_n$ , introspection can take that state as input and deliver as output a state that represents *that I am now experiencing*  $F_1 \dots F_n$ .<sup>21</sup>

The syntactic theorist about introspection can gladly accept the Minimal Transparency Thesis. The idea might be that activation of my introspective faculty on an experience that presents certain properties normally requires me to focus on those properties; normally, only by focusing on the properties presented by an experience can I trigger introspection of that experience. This thought has some independent plausibility: there must be *something* that directs introspection to operate on (say) my visual experience rather than my auditory experience, and focusing on visually presented properties is a reasonable candidate for part of what normally does this.

Now consider *inner-sense* theories of introspection, which hold that introspection is a faculty of inner sense importantly analogous to familiar faculties of outer sense (like vision, hearing, etc.). Inner-sense theorists tend to lack enthusiasm for transparency theses like Tye's (see Lycan 2002), for example). Surprisingly, though, the Minimal Transparency Thesis plays quite nicely with inner-sense theories. A paradigmatic version of inner-sense theory is Lycan's (1996, p. 22) view, where introspection involves the activation of "banks of ... second-order internal monitors" that scan our first-order sensory faculties like vision, taste, etc.

Now, minimal transparency is preserved as long as the exercise of inner sense—these second-order internal monitors—on a first-order sensory faculty normally requires first becoming aware of the properties of the external world presented by that first-order faculty. It's plausible that this is required for the same reasons as on the syntactic view: inner sense needs some cue about which outer-sense faculties to monitor, and awareness of the properties presented by outer-sense is a good candidate for a typical part of that cue.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See his (2000) and (2009) for accounts of introspection compatible with his transparency thesis.

<sup>20</sup> Dretske (1999, p. 112) endorses this strong transparency thesis: "One is made aware of what a pumpkin experience is like ... not by an awareness of the experience, but by an awareness of the pumpkin and awareness of its (the pumpkin's) properties". Dretske offers different accounts of introspection in his (1995) and (1999), both compatible with the Minimal Transparency Thesis.

<sup>21</sup> Nichols and Stich (2003) propose such a theory of the introspection of beliefs and desires. Such an account could easily be extended to the introspection of experiences.

<sup>22</sup> As an anonymous referee pointed out, some inner-sense theorists will balk at this suggestion. For some inner-sense theorists hold that conscious awareness of any external-world property F involves both a first-order representation of F and a higher-order representation of the first-order representation of F. The idea is that the higher-order representation is what makes the first-order representation of F conscious. So genuine conscious awareness of F cannot precede the higher-order representation of the first-order representation of F.

Finally, and most relevantly, let me connect the Minimal Transparency Thesis to Kriegel's theory of introspection. One would expect Kriegel's theory to be compatible with the Minimal Transparency Thesis, since Kriegel (2009a, pp. 371–376) argues that his theory is compatible with the stronger full-fledged transparency thesis. And, as expected, Kriegel's theory of introspection is compatible with the Minimal Transparency Thesis.

On Kriegel's (2009b, p. 372) theory, any phenomenally conscious state consists of a first-order representation (typically of some environmental/bodily property) and a higher-order representation of the phenomenally conscious state itself. Such representations provide awareness, so one is typically experientially aware of both (i) some environmental/bodily property and (ii) of the experience itself. Further, normally one's awareness of one's environment/body is focal, and one's awareness of the experience itself is peripheral. In introspection, however, one "reorganiz[es] the center/periphery structure of one's overall experience, by transforming one's peripheral inner awareness of one's current experience into a focal one". In other words, in introspection one normally promotes one's awareness of the experience to focal awareness, while demoting one's awareness of one's environment/body to peripheral awareness.

This view is perfectly compatible with the Minimal Transparency Thesis. This thesis, recall, says that normally, when one becomes aware of one's experience in the direct way associated with introspection, one does so by first becoming aware of the properties presented by that experience. On Kriegel's view, "awareness of one's experience in the direct way associated with introspection" amounts to a certain kind of *focal* awareness. And Kriegel thinks that this focal awareness of the experience is normally preceded by focal awareness of the environmental/bodily properties presented by that experience. This does not quite entail the Minimal Transparency Thesis. For Kriegel does not say that one normally becomes focally aware of one's experience *by* first becoming aware of these bodily/environmental properties. The Minimal Transparency Thesis does say this. But there is no obstacle to adding this proviso to Kriegel's theory.

So Kriegel's theory of introspection is compatible with the Minimal Transparency Thesis. What bearing does this have on my response to Kriegel? Well, it means that any remarks Kriegel has made in favor of his theory of introspection do not undermine the Minimal Transparency Thesis; that's good news for my response. Nor do I know of anything else Kriegel has said that would undermine the Minimal Transparency Thesis.

That concludes my discussion relating the Minimal Transparency Thesis to extant theories of introspection. Even so, this thesis may be controversial, and I lack room here to adequately defend it.<sup>23</sup> To those who reject the Minimal Transparency

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Footnote 22 continued

Still, one may hold an inner-sense theory of introspection without taking on this additional commitment about conscious awareness. So the Minimal Transparency Thesis remains compatible with an inner-sense theory of introspection.

<sup>23</sup> Am I violating my own stricture against resting too much weight on controversial phenomenological points? No, for I think that the Minimal Transparency Thesis should be widely accepted, given a proper defense. Only unnecessarily bold transparency theses are controversial.

Thesis, I note that my primary point about the dialectic stands without it: Kriegel's central phenomenological claim is just too disputable to be especially dialectically effective. But those who accept the Minimal Transparency Thesis can also (I will argue shortly) see why one might mistakenly think that the Universal Awareness Thesis is phenomenologically manifest. Indeed, if my argument succeeds, the fact that the Minimal Transparency Thesis can explain Kriegel's tempting mistake may provide some measure of support for the Minimal Transparency Thesis itself.

Consider this analogy: I may become aware of my cat by becoming aware of her paw prints on my kitchen tiles. But I can be aware of the paw prints without being aware of the cat. Similarly, one might think, I normally become aware of my experience by first becoming aware of the properties that my experience presents to me; but I can be aware of those properties without being aware of my experience.

Now here is how the Minimal Transparency Thesis can explain Kriegel's phenomenological mistake. When I am looking at the peach, I am aware of certain properties apparently of the peach. According to the Minimal Transparency Thesis, becoming aware of my experience of the peach normally requires awareness of just the same properties. So it is easy to become confused about whether, when I am looking at the peach, I am focally aware of these properties of the peach *and* peripherally aware of my peach-experience, or merely focally aware of these properties of the peach—and thereby focally aware of the properties which *are required for* awareness of my peach-experience—*while still lacking* any awareness of my experience. Put another way: it is easy to become confused between *being aware of the properties which put me in a position to become aware of my experience*, and *actually being aware of my experience*.

I conclude that the HOR Phenomenological Argument fails. The inference to the best explanation from Restricted Higher-Order Representationalism (or some nearby thesis) to Necessary Higher-Order Representationalism requires substantial further support. Further, the pivotal Universal Awareness Thesis cannot be adequately supported solely via phenomenological investigation. Finally, the Minimal Transparency Thesis (which is compatible with many theories of introspection, including Kriegel's) explains the misleading temptation to think otherwise. Thus, the HOR Phenomenological Argument ought not move opponents of higher-order representationalism.

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