**Current concepts of consciousness and thinking**

The words “conscious” and “consciousness” are umbrella terms that cover a wide variety of mental phenomena. Both are used with a diversity of meanings, and the adjective “conscious” is heterogeneous in its range, being applied both to whole organisms—creature consciousness—and to particular mental states and processes—state consciousness (Rosenthal 1986, Gennaro 1995, Carruthers 2000).

An animal, person or other cognitive system may be regarded as conscious in a number of different senses.

Sentience. It may be conscious in the generic sense of simply being a sentient creature, one capable of sensing and responding to its world (Armstrong 1981). Being conscious in this sense may admit of degrees, and just what sort of sensory capacities are sufficient may not be sharply defined. Are fish conscious in the relevant respect? And what of shrimp or bees?

Wakefulness. One might further require that the organism actually be exercising such a capacity rather than merely having the ability or disposition to do so. Thus one might count it as conscious only if it were awake and normally alert. In that sense organisms would not count as conscious when asleep or in any of the deeper levels of coma. Again boundaries may be blurry, and intermediate cases may be involved. For example, is one conscious in the relevant sense when dreaming, hypnotized or in a fugue state?

Self-consciousness. A third and yet more demanding sense might define conscious creatures as those that are not only aware but also aware that they are aware, thus treating creature consciousness as a form of self-consciousness (Carruthers 2000). The self-awareness requirement might get interpreted in a variety of ways, and which creatures would qualify as conscious in the relevant sense will vary accordingly. If it is taken to involve explicit conceptual self-awareness, many non-human animals and even young children might fail to qualify, but if only more rudimentary implicit forms of self-awareness are required then a wide range of nonlinguistic creatures might count as self-conscious.

What it is like. Thomas Nagel's (1974) famous“what it is like” criterion aims to capture another and perhaps more subjective notion of being a conscious organism. According to Nagel, a being is conscious just if there is “something that it is like” to be that creature, i.e., some subjective way the world seems or appears from the creature's mental or experiential point of view. In Nagel's example, bats are conscious because there is something that it is like for a bat to experience its world through its echo-locatory senses, even though we humans from our human point of view can not emphatically understand what such a mode of consciousness is like from the bat's own point of view.

Subject of conscious states. A fifth alternative would be to define the notion of a conscious organism in terms of conscious states. That is, one might first define what makes a mental state a conscious mental state, and then define being a conscious creature in terms of having such states. One's concept of a conscious organism would then depend upon the particular account one gives of conscious states (section 2.2).

Transitive Consciousness. In addition to describing creatures as conscious in these various senses, there are also related senses in which creatures are described as being conscious of various things. The distinction is sometimes marked as that between transitive and intransitive notions of consciousness, with the former involving some object at which consciousness is directed (Rosenthal 1986).

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