27.0 The outline

The argument is complex.
Step 1: preliminaries
Step 2: Mental states can occur without being conscious
Step 3: If mental states were all conscious, or if being conscious were intrinsic to those states which are conscious, no explanation would be possible.
Modus tollens gives us either some mental states are not conscious, or being conscious is not intrinsic to those states that are conscious.
Step 4: this analysis paves the way for a theory of consciousness.

5- 7; develops that theory.
I will skip 2 (as we covered it w/ Armstrong) and 3 (in the interest of time)

27.1 Preliminaries:

27.1.1 State consciousness v. creature consciousness.
Assuming that not all mental states are conscious, we need to distinguish which states are, from which are not – this is the question of “State consciousness”
Assuming that not all creatures are conscious, we need to distinguish which creatures are, from which creatures are not – this is the question of “creature consciousness”
The answer to the second question is easy: To be conscious, a person must be awake and sentient.
There may be connections between these two – i.e. someone might argue that the one implies the other, but it is fairly obvious that an analysis of state consciousness can proceed without settling those arguments.

27.1.2 Introspective consciousness
When we pay deliberate attention to what mental state we are in, we are introspectively conscious of that state.
This, according to Rosenthal, is different and more elaborate than the way in which mental states are ordinarily conscious states - I think he means, in Armstrong’s terms “scrutinizing consciousness”
These are states where we are not just aware, but aware of being aware.
The difference between non-introspective and introspective consciousness becomes clear when one notes that the non-introspectively conscious mental states is potentially the object of an introspectively conscious mental state.

27.1.3 Transitive v. non-transitive
Transitively conscious mental states are states that are conscious of something.

Intransitive consciousness is a kind of creature consciousness – it is consciousness simpliciter.

27.2 The account

As a starting point, it seems natural to explain intransitive consciousness in terms of transitive consciousness. That is, that a mental state is intransitively conscious iff we are transitively conscious of it.

This is intuitive, as if a state is conscious, we can be transitively conscious of it.

(consider Kant’s mental states are mine in virtue of the fact that they can all stand under the one ‘I think’).

It is important to point out that the consciousness of is a particular kind of consciousness of – it is non-inferential and non-observational. In other words, Rosenthal is not concerned with the kind of case where you say ‘you’re angry’, and I become aware of my anger by inference.

27.2.1 Perceptual model?

On the common-sense natural intuition way of doing this, a mental state’s being intransitively conscious is simply one’s being transitively conscious of that state in a certain way.

Case of being conscious of something fall into to categories - being perceptually aware, and thinking about something - crudely, it is the difference between having a thought, and having an experience.

Prima facie, we should adopt the perceptual model, but Rosenthal argues against this:

1. each sensory modality has a range of objects to which it responds. There is no range of thoughts of which one can be conscious.

2. there seems to be no way in which the brain process that realizes introspection will explain introspective in the way that the ear and retina explain hearing and seeing.

3. “Perceiving something involves the occurrence of some sensory quality, which in standard circumstances signals the presence of that thing” Sense data? Introspection must then involve some sense-data.

27.2.2 The thought model

Thinking is no specific to a particular range of objects, and it is not involved with any organ in the way that perception is.

Also, the relationship between thought and object is not mediated by a sense-datum.

Therefore, we are conscious of something when we have a thought about it. So, a mental state is conscious iff it is accompanied by a thought about that state.
The occurrence of a higher-order thought (HOT) makes us conscious of a mental state, so the state we are conscious of is a conscious state.

The core of the theory is, then, this:

“A mental state is a conscious state when, and only when, it is accompanied by a suitable HOT” (741) or

“every conscious mental state is accompanied by a HOT about that state”.

This implies a few things:
HOTs confer intransitive consciousness upon mental states by making us transitively conscious of them
HOTs can themselves be nonconscious; in fact, they will not be conscious unless accompanied by yet another HOT.
Accompaniment between a mental state and a related HOT is explanatory sufficient; causal connectivity is not necessary.
A HOT requires only minimal self-consciousness.

27.2.3 Arguments
Tend to be from explanatory power.
Can explain why;
not all mental states are conscious
Introspection as the transitive consciousness of a transitively conscious mental state - therefore, there is another HOT whose content is a HOT.
The HOT explains the difference between expressing and reporting mental states:

expressing is a 1st order
Reporting is expressing a HOT.