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## FOR-ME-NESS: SHEDDING THE IMPLICIT ONTOLOGICAL WEIGHT

### Abstract

This article aims to evaluate the ontological implications of the thesis that the for-me-ness character is a universal feature of every experience. Kriegel & Zahavi claim that for-me-ness is what makes a mental state conscious, and that for-me-ness is a constitutive aspect of all conscious mentality. Here, I discuss the ontological assumptions implicit in this thesis and argue that while for-me-ness may be a universal feature of all experiences 1) It cannot be what makes a state conscious, given that the difference between the phenomenological and the subjective character ought to be conceptual 2) While the thesis maybe explanatorily vacuous, it is descriptively indispensable 3) For-me-ness does not underline the difference between conscious and unconscious mental states 4) It cannot ground theories about the diachronic unity of the self and, 5) It is non-anonymous. The main idea is that contrary to Kriegel & Zahavi's claims, one can hold that the for-me-ness is a universal aspect of all conscious experiences, without holding that it constitutes and explains first-person ontology. The last section of the paper offers a thought experiment to support these claims.

**Keywords:** Minimal-self, phenomenal character, subjective character, for-me-ness, diachronic unity, unconscious representation

### Introduction

The postulation that there is a *minimal-self, a pre-reflective sense of self and a quality of for-me-ness* embedded in all conscious experiences has gained much attention in philosophy of mind. Zahavi (2005; 2006; 2006a; 2011; 2015; 2017, 2018), Strawson (2009; 2011) and Kriegel (2006; 2009) are the leading proponents of this approach, according to which a minimal sense of self is a characteristic or constituent of every experience. Accordingly, for-me-ness character is directly intertwined with the first-personal and subjective nature of experience. Kriegel and Zahavi (2016) describe their position as a non-deflationary interpretation (Kriegel & Zahavi, 2016). It is not only that the for-me-ness character accompanies certain conscious mental states, but 1) all conscious states have this character and 2) an experience is conscious in virtue of having this character. Zahavi argues elsewhere that we can infer the existence of the minimal-self from the existence of the for-me-ness character, which can be taken as the most fundamental constituent of consciousness (Zahavi, 2006a; 2011). The minimal-self thesis states not only that there exist certain conscious experiences, but that any such conscious experience is “imbued” with the for-me-ness character, and moreover that my experiences are conscious precisely by virtue of having this character.

While I agree that the minimal-self thesis captures and describes the phenomenological reality correctly, and thus constitutes an important

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phenomenological thesis, I will argue that the purported metaphysical implications of the thesis fail unless further argumentation is provided.

The minimal-self thesis fails because it assumes that establishing the for-me-ness as a phenomenological fact is sufficient to anchor further theses about the unity of the self, non-anonymity and the subjective nature of the experiences. In the first section, I aim to make the ontological implications of the for-me-ness thesis explicit and remark that the distinction between a characterization and constituent corresponds to the distinction between description and explanation. My goal here is to establish that the for-me-ness thesis is a characterization of experience that presumes a conceptual distinction between phenomenal and subjective qualities, and for this reason the for-me-ness character should not be confused with a constituent of experience, that is, with something that can account for the difference between conscious and unconscious states in a metaphysical sense. In the second section, I aim for conceptual clarity surrounding the for-me-ness character and argue that the conceptual distinction between phenomenal character and for-me-ness character leaves an important sense of the term “subjectivity” unaccounted for. This kind of subjectivity varies intra-individually rather than being an invariant dimension and does not pertain to the what-is-it-like-for-me-ness of experience but to the what-is-it-like-for-me-ness of representations. The latter is not captured by Kriegel and Zahavi’s (2016) for-me-ness definition as an invariant dimension, and I argue is a more likely candidate for explaining the diachronic unity of consciousness.

In section three, I assert that there is nothing that can be characterized as a “me” in the for-me-ness quality of experiences, but I do so without denying the first-person ontology of experience. The argument is that the phenomenal quality associated with the minimal-self cannot be correctly characterized by an object pronoun if it is a constitutive part of the primitive, pre-reflective consciousness. For-me-ness quality is really for-I-ness quality. It is the phenomenal dimension which consists of the subjective character and provides a point of view that is type identical to itself in different mental states. I argue that this formulation is enough to account for the subjective and the perspectival nature of conscious experiences. Subjective character in this sense is an experience *type*. Therefore, minimal-self does not really constitute a “self” and the for-me-ness quality is not a binding aspect of the diachronic unity. The last section involves a thought experiment to consolidate this view.

### **For-me-ness: Constrains of being a conceptual entity**

Kriegel and Zahavi (2016) assert that the concept of “for-me-ness” is not only important in terms of being a characterization of a crucial dimension of our phenomenally conscious life, but that it is also important inasmuch as it is a constitutive aspect of phenomenal consciousness, which grounds the subjective nature of experiences. In other words, for-me-ness is what imbues representations with their subjective qualities and hence “...to deny the for-me-ness or mineness of experience, is to fail to recognize the very subjectivity of experience.” (Kriegel &

Zahavi, 2016; 38). Kriegel & Zahavi (2016) also suggest that for-me-ness is not only a contingent fact and that we need to resist views which do not consider the phenomenal aspect of for-me-ness because this would lead us to define and accept experiences as unowned and free-floating entities.

Indeed, it seems there can be no phenomenal experiences without a subject and without a first-person ontology<sup>1</sup>. Otherwise, we would have to postulate what I call “dangling experiences<sup>2</sup>” occurring without a first-personal perspective, floating freely without a subject. While they are metaphysically conceivable, dangling experiences are troublesome because they render it impossible to define phenomenally conscious experiential states as having a “something that is like to be in” character (see Nagel, 1974). If phenomenal experiences can occur without a subject, then it is hard to argue that there is something that it is like to be the subject of such experiences. Therefore, one can grant that phenomenal consciousness is always subject consciousness and has first-person ontology.

Nonetheless, it is questionable whether it is “the for-me-ness character” that prevents the experiences from dangling, and it is also questionable whether the concept can explain the first-person ontology of consciousness. Here, I will reject the idea that for-me-ness character is what makes an experience “subjective” and that denying this is somehow the same as “failing to recognize the subjectivity of experience” as Kriegel and Zahavi (2016) suggest. In fact, I argue that one can fully endorse the for-me-ness character as a phenomenological fact that is universal to all conscious states and as a crucial component of synchronic unity of consciousness, while also holding that; 1) it fails to explain the subjectivity of experience in an encompassing way, 2) it is not what renders a state conscious as opposed to unconscious, 3) it is not what makes experiences non-anonymous in any substantial sense, and 4) it is not what grounds the diachronic unity of the self and consciousness. However, first, I will clarify what is meant by the for-me-ness character.

Zahavi’s position on the nature of consciousness is mainly, if not exclusively, grounded in the work of phenomenologists. In various articles Zahavi (see, Zahavi, 2005; 2006; 2006a; 2010; 2015; 2017; Zahavi & Kriegel, 2016) attempts to articulate what he calls a minimal-self. While he admits this concept is vague, he still entertains a definition that distinguishes it from other notions of the “self” as it primarily stems

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<sup>1</sup> One could argue that the seeming importance of the concept is an illusion, even if the phenomenal quality of for-me-ness character is not. See; Schear (2009) for his refrigerator fallacy argument and Howell & Thompson (2017) for a positive formulation where the for-me-ness character is reserved only for reflective states, and Garfield (2016) for arguments against the existence of the for-me-ness character. See; Zahavi (2017; 2018) for his replies.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Feigl (1958) uses the term nomological danglers. The “threat of dangling experiences” in this sense is existence of qualia in the absence of a subject in the vaguest sense.

from the phenomenological constant that is “minimal-self-awareness” (Zahavi, 2005; 2017). In his words, the minimal-self can be defined as follows:

“Roughly speaking the idea is that subjectivity is a built-in feature of experiential life. Experiential episodes are neither unconscious, nor anonymous, rather they necessarily come with first-personal givenness or perspectival ownership. The what-it-is-likeness of experience is essentially a what-it-is-like-for-me-ness. More specifically, this for-me-ness is taken to reside in the basic pre-reflective or reflexive (not reflective!), that is, self-presentational or self-manifesting, character of experience.” (Zahavi, 2017; 194)

At first glance, this definition of for-me-ness seems quite modest in that it only restates facts about phenomenal consciousness that have been discussed extensively by analytical philosophy, such as the subjective and first-personal nature of experience in descriptive terms. An objection to such a definition could be that it can neither explain, nor is sufficient to describe, either the phenomenological or the metaphysical nature of phenomenal consciousness<sup>3</sup>. But let’s not throw the baby out with the bathwater. In my view, Zahavi’s theory is quite substantial, even though here I argue that the concept fails to explain the nature of consciousness. My approach to the argument differs from Schear’s (2009) but I also reject Kriegel and Zahavi’s (2016) argument that if a concept is descriptively indispensable, (i.e. cannot be left out from the correct description of the phenomenon in question), then it necessarily takes on an explanatory function in a theory. In brief, Kriegel and Zahavi’s (2016) claim undermines the difference between *explanans* and *explananda*. One can grant that the minimal-self as a concept is not descriptively dispensable. However, whether this indispensability pertains to the concept being an *explanans* or the *explanandum* is another topic. The minimal-self, so far, does not seem to be capable of playing any role as *explanans*, so, the concept is not one that is apt to be used in explaining how or why a state is conscious. Nonetheless, it is perhaps essential to our description of what a conscious state is. In this sense the concept is explanatorily vacuous, but this does not render the concept descriptively dispensable, as it is crucial in establishing what the *explanandum* is.

Parallel to Zahavi’s (2017) account, Kriegel also provides a definition of the for-me-ness character. Kriegel (2009) makes a distinction between the *qualitative character* and the *subjective character* of experiences and outlines that for the phenomenal experience of greenness, this greenness is composed of two parts: the green or the greenish part, and the for-me part (Kriegel, 2009). The former is the qualitative character in that it represents the external thing that is green, and the latter consists in a point of view in the vaguest sense. Here, the qualitative character

<sup>3</sup> See Schear (2009) for an objection on such grounds and see Kriegel & Zahavi (2016) for their reply.

accounts for the properties of the physical things represented, whereas the subjective character is the manner in which they are represented in one's consciousness<sup>4</sup>.

Can we indeed presume such a distinction between awareness of qualities of experience as opposed to qualities of the representation? Nagel (1974) uses the terminology of subjective character in a unified manner that is inclusive of the phenomenal character and does not acknowledge or mention a potential distinction. Likewise, it is questionable that when defining phenomenal consciousness, it is possible to characterize the "what-is-it-like" and the "to-be-in-for-someone" aspects of phenomenally conscious states separately. Garfield (2016, 75) posits that "*Consciousness is always consciousness of something, and when the object is subtracted, nothing remains to be characterized.*" Against Garfield's position, it can be responded that there would not be anything left that we could call "experience" if one removes the objects of experience from one's consciousness. This is a fact about intentionality of conscious experiences, and not necessarily a fact that refutes the difference between the possible existence of awareness of experience as given to a subject and awareness of the qualities of experiences *simpliciter*. Subjective qualities describe the qualities of experience, and where there is no experience, it is natural to assume that there are no subjective qualities. So, it may not be important whether the subjective character is independent or supervenient.

<sup>4</sup> At this point, it should be noted that there seems to be an important difference between the for-me-ness definitions of Kriegel and Zahavi. Kriegel asserts that the subjective character stems from the self-representational nature of experience itself (Kriegel, 2009; 2). While their positions agree regarding the properties for-me-ness character possess (see, Kriegel & Zahavi 2016), it is at least possible in principle that for-me-ness character, in the sense of Kriegel, may be partially reducible to the representational content. Zahavi's definition of for-me-ness character, on the other hand, can neither be explained nor is compatible with any reductive representational theory. Due to this difference, it can perhaps be argued that the objections made to the implicit ontological commitments of the minimal-self theory in this paper mainly target Zahavi and miss Kriegel for the most part, as Kriegel does provide an ontological context in which to understand the nature of the for-me-ness character. It should be noted, however, that Kriegel's arguments for a self-representational theory hinge on his formulations regarding for-me-ness character, as his main argument for a self-representational theory of consciousness is that such a theory would be compatible with the phenomenology of for-me-ness character as he defines it (see Kriegel, 2009, 114-115; 196-197). So, Kriegel argues backwards, from phenomenal characterizations towards ontology, and does not provide further argumentation for self-representationalism. Therefore, it is not clear to me that his position is immune to arguments against the ontological implications of the for-me-ness character thesis. Nonetheless, it might be the case that his self-representationalism grounds some of the ontological commitments of the for-me-ness thesis, namely the claim of universality and the synchronic unity of the self. On the other hand, self-representationalism need not relate to non-anonymity, the diachronic unity of the self, and the idea that it is for-me-ness that demarcates unconscious mental states from conscious ones. So, at least the arguments laid out in this paper relating to these latter topics, ought to apply to his position.

Perhaps I should stress, however, that such a definition involves only a *characterization*, (i.e. it captures a conceptual distinction in the description of conscious experience); while granting that such a characterization is indeed possible. Granting that there is a for-me-ness aspect of experiences alongside the qualitative aspects of representations seemingly implies that experience itself is made up of these subjective and phenomenal qualities. However subjective and phenomenal qualities are not independently existing properties, one of which may be instantiated without the other. Moreover, characterizations should not be confused with constituents of experiences. One cannot have an experience (i.e. a “partial-experience”) in which only the phenomenal qualities are present for instance. The distinction between being a characterization and a constituent of experiences is important for metaphysical purposes. I can characterize a blank sheet of paper as “white” but that is not to say that the paper is constituted by “whiteness”.

However, I think it is fair to entertain the idea that phenomenally conscious states could be classified as having these two distinct features on a *conceptual level*, given the distinction is useful for characterizing phenomenal consciousness. Indeed, in a joint paper Kriegel and Zahavi (2016) note that:

“...the account of for-me-ness described above, where experiential for-me-ness is not a detachable self quale that one could introspect in isolation from any other content of consciousness, but rather an experiential feature of all phenomenal episodes that remains constant across them and constitutes the subjectivity of experience.” (Kriegel & Zahavi 2016; 39)

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So, for-me-ness character does not constitute a property that is metaphysically separable from phenomenal character; one cannot have an empty consciousness, a point, both Zahavi (2018) and Kriegel (2009) have made and underscored repeatedly.

Based on their definition of for-me-ness character, Zahavi and Kriegel (2016) make a seemingly obvious inference: they state that for-me-ness is what makes a state conscious; it is the very givenness of experiences (*to someone, i.e. a self*) that demarcates conscious and unconscious mental states. Phenomenal character is inseparably linked with the subjective character which constitutes a for-me part of experiences in which a pre-reflective “I” phenomenology is embedded.

This inference seems to be in stark contrast with the appreciation that the for-me-ness of experience is not a stand-alone entity but a characterization of an aspect of phenomenal consciousness. If the subjective-character/phenomenal-character distinction is merely a *conceptual distinction*, then in what sense can for-me-ness be what makes a state conscious? Moreover, the claim that for-me-ness underlines the difference between unconscious and conscious states, or that it forms the basis of the diachronic and synchronic unity of consciousness are ought-to-be claims of a metaphysical nature. As such, it is hard to see how establishing for-me-ness as a phenomenal fact grants it a special place in accounting for metaphysical facts, at least without further argumentation. This point is also expressed by Guillot (2016). She analyses how Zahavi is committed to the idea that the purview of minimal-self

this thesis encompasses the epistemic (self-awareness of experience) the phenomenal (there is a phenomenal aspect to this awareness) and the metaphysical (this self-experience is a form of “the selfhood”) domains. Zahavi seems to assume that establishing the phenomenal and epistemic facts associated with the for-me-ness character automatically grounds the metaphysical thesis as well. But this confuses phenomenological analysis, i.e. the conceptual analysis of the structure of conscious experience, with explaining the ontology of consciousness. Take the conscious perception of blue as an example. In a sense, the experience of “blueness” as a characterization and a phenomenal reality is what theories of phenomenal consciousness aim to explain. The structure of “blueness experience” itself (i.e. that the phenomenal blueness is presented for-me), does not explain the metaphysical nature of consciousness.

The claim that the subjective character – phenomenal character distinction is purely conceptual and not metaphysical (i.e., there is no detachable self-qualia) should ground that one cannot make causal claims regarding either of these concepts in relation to other phenomena, and that these concepts cannot function in ontological explanations if they are, as noted by Kriegel and Zahavi, phenomenological characterizations rather than ontologically distinguishable constituents of experience. This is what I take it to mean when “for-me-ness” character is said to be a conceptual aspect of experience. While it must be acknowledged that the difference between subjective character and phenomenal character cannot be accounted for as only different Fregean senses with the same reference, i.e. the conscious experience – given that they refer to distinct phenomenal aspects of conscious experiences- it is also important to recognize that the referents of these concepts are phenomenal aspects of consciousness and not standalone properties, or constituents of experience. Therefore, they cannot serve as explanatory elements in the theory of consciousness (i.e. in the explanation of what makes a state conscious), as causal roles cannot be assigned to characterizations (i.e. only conceptually separated parts), but to constituents (ontological distinct parts). For instance, desires as mental states can be characterized as having a directedness (content) and an affective component (particular feeling). However, causal roles that explain the behavior of a person who desires milk and therefore drinks milk cannot be based on these characterizations. It would be meaningless to attribute the person's decision to drink milk solely to the directedness quality of desires while disregarding the affective component. The causal role can only be attributed to the entire mental state (given that the directedness and affective components are not independent properties that constitute desires but rather characterizations of desires). Therefore, if the distinction between subjective character and phenomenal character is only conceptual, then it is not clear how they can be the *explanans* of consciousness<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> There is another issue apart from confusing characterizations with constituents, which relate to ontological roles these two concepts can play in explaining consciousness. Simply, if phenomenal character (P) and subjective character (S) can only occur simultaneously, and

### For-me-ness as the demarcation between unconscious and conscious states

Kriegel and Zahavi (2016; 49) note that “*For-me-ness distinguishes conscious experiences that present something to someone from non-conscious representations (e.g., blindsight) of the same objects.*” There are two possible readings of the claim that the lack of for-me-ness character demarcates unconscious states from conscious states and that for-me-ness is what makes a state a conscious state; namely, 1) a descriptive reading and 2) a metaphysical (or theoretical) reading. The first reading concerns the descriptive differences between two things, by which I mean that it utilizes apparent features that can be used to tell two things apart. For instance, we can tell apart a person from his/her twin by the fact they are wearing different headbands, or by the fact that they braid their hair differently. This sort of demarcation may be useful, but should not be confused with the reasons for considering identical twins to be separate individuals. What I mean by a metaphysical difference on the other hand, is a difference that grounds the ontological distinctness of different entities or properties. In the case of identical twins, we consider the facts that they share the same DNA, and that they were born at virtually the same time, and from the same mother as essential to their twinhood. And we consider the fact that they are two separate individuals having numerically different bodies despite their bodies appearing identical, as the primary ground of them not being identical. In differentiating unconscious states from conscious ones, and identifying what makes a state a conscious, the distinction between descriptive (or conceptual) and metaphysical difference<sup>6</sup> corresponds to the difference between describing and explaining.

Let us focus now on the metaphysical reading of the conscious/unconscious demarcation. First, Kriegel and Zahavi defend universalism about for-me-ness, according to which for-me-ness is a necessary element of every conscious experience, hence that 1) no mental states can be conscious without for-me-ness, and that 2) if there exist mental states that lack for-me-ness, they must be phenomenally unconscious<sup>7</sup>. Second, if the having of for-me-ness character is the metaphysical

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they constitute conscious experience (C) only together, then it would still require knowledge of further facts to show that it is indeed S and not P that causes C. If P and S are not properties independent from each other, but they necessarily constitute C together, then one cannot determine which of them is only correlated and which causes C.

<sup>6</sup> This claim does not require one to be essentialist about objects, entities or properties. It just underlines that it is intrinsic to our theoretical and pre-theoretical notions about phenomena that certain properties are indispensable whereas others may be negligible in relation to our conceptualizations.

<sup>7</sup> See, Letheby (2020) for a thorough discussion of universalism about for-me-ness as it relates to phenomenal consciousness/unconsciousness of mental states and counter-arguments against universalism utilizing psychedelic experiences as genuine cases lacking experiential for-me-ness.



criterion of a state's being conscious, then it follows that unconscious mental states, lacking for-me-ness, lack the properties associated with for-me-ness: they would be anonymous, would have no subjectivity, would not be perspectival and would not be given to a subject. In other words, unconscious states would not have any sort of first-person ontology or subjectivity.

Against the latter claim, one may object that there may be reasons to hold that the unconscious perception of an object would still be perspectival – simply because the very nature of perception is perspectival. There can be no perception that lacks a perspective, as all subjects occupy a particular position in space-time and perceive only particular events from their own particular point of view. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that unconscious perceptions may be perspectival; that is, the object perceived unconsciously is nonetheless being perceived from a particular angle, from the particular point of view of the subject. Binocular rivalry can be given as an example of this kind of unconscious perspectival perception. Note, however, that there are objections against identifying unconscious seeing as a case of genuine perception (see; Philips & Block, 2017). On the other hand, non-perceptual unconscious mental states are not necessarily perspectival in the broad sense (see Tye 1995). Therefore, it is possible to hold that unconscious mental states are non-perspectival. It is an option to hold that unconscious perception only induces conceptual representations of objects in the mind, rather than also representing perspectival information associated with the perception of the object.<sup>8</sup>

However, it would be problematic to suggest that unconscious mental objects are represented in an “objective” way given that each individual represents the external world in a unique way, as the representation itself is relative to individual differences between mental organizations. That is not to say that qualitative character of experiences, such as greenness, must necessarily vary from person to person, but the way greenness is incorporated within the holistic conscious episode will be unique to the individual. However, this is not likely to change depending on whether representation is conscious or unconscious. So, it is one thing to say that an unconscious state lacks “what-is-it-likeness quality” of experience and another to say that there is no matter of fact about the manner that unconscious state represents its objects. *First-person ontology* in this sense is a feature of unconscious states, even if *first-personal-givenness* is not. To provide evidence, Pfister et al. (2012) used an experiment to demonstrate that personally relevant stimuli are processed differently even if they are presented unconsciously, by subliminally priming participants with

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<sup>8</sup> It is an interesting question that if so-called “sensational properties” are lacking in unconscious perception, then does it make sense to suggest that the particular object that is unconsciously perceived is actually represented in the unconscious mind as perceived from a perspective? For instance, in unconscious perception of a white horse, it is possible to suggest that information particular to the specific white horse and the related perceptual information (i.e. its location, the way the light shines on it, which side is visible to the perceiver etc.) are lacking and what is activated in the unconscious mind is merely the generic representational concept of a white horse.

their own names in a word-non-word differentiation response time paradigm. This result might not be surprising. It is reasonable to expect that people with different sexual orientations would react differently to the same sexual stimuli regardless of whether it is presented subliminally or supraliminally. Therefore, it can be asserted that unconscious representations of objects are “subjective”, in the sense that they differ along differences concerning the relation of the different subjects to the same object.

Arguably, how my mental faculties represent the object “O” at least partially affects how object “O” is presented in my phenomenal consciousness. Therefore, it is likely that unconscious object representations are not simple reconstructions of environmental stimuli, but they retain the what-it-is-like-for-me aspect of the stimuli to some extent. If effect, the unconscious mind seems capable of representing stimuli under certain aspects, but not others, depending on the context. The capacity to represent water under different aspectual shapes, as either H<sub>2</sub>O or as water in our consciousness is likely to be a capacity shared by the unconscious mind (though see Searle 1992). Furthermore, subjectivity of perception may be understood in other ways as well. For example, it is likely that there would be a difference between my unconscious seeing and representation of a spider and that of an entomologist’s. In other words, there is a personal and subjective aspect of unconscious mentality.

However, Kriegel and Zahavi (2016) would protest that this is not the “subjectivity” in their sense of the term, and therefore my objection misses their claim of for-me-ness as the demarcation between the unconscious and conscious mental states. Indeed, subjective character, according to their definition, is what-is-it-like-for-me-ness of “conscious experience”, not of representations or mental states. But, if we accept this reply, then this renders the metaphysical reading irrelevant out of hand, since unconscious mental states are not experiential states by definition, so it is no surprise that they lack for-me-ness character.

The issue then becomes accounting for how a distinction that is purely conceptual can bear the burden of explaining the metaphysical difference between unconscious and conscious states. Given that the distinction between subjective character and phenomenal character is conceptual, it is pointless to suggest that it is in fact “the subjective character” and not “the phenomenal character” that separate conscious states and unconscious states. One can conceptually differentiate between parts of an experience, given as a whole, while one cannot ascribe separate causal roles to these conceptually distinct parts.

Furthermore, it is also dubious to suggest that “*For-me-ness distinguishes conscious experiences that present something to someone from non-conscious representations (e.g., blindsight) of the same objects.*”, and that “*For-me-ness is a minimum point of self-consciousness*” (Kriegel & Zahavi, 2016; 49), for the reason that it is not at all clear why the sentence *phenomenal character is a minimum point of self-consciousness* or that *phenomenal character is what underlines the difference between non-conscious representation and presenting something to someone* would be false, given that phenomenal character is *also* lacking in non-conscious

representation (since, by definition, non-conscious representations do not have qualitative features, e.g. bluishness). A state which lacks phenomenal character cannot be classified as an *experiential state* and does not constitute an “*experience*”. As said, the difference between phenomenal qualities and subjective qualities correspond to the difference between two aspects of experiences, not between constituents or properties that can change the status of a mental state from unconscious to conscious. Unconscious states lack *both* features simply because they are not experiential states.

So, to sum up what I have been arguing so far: the idea that for-me-ness demarcates unconscious from conscious states is confused. If the distinction is understood in a metaphysical sense, and for-me-ness (i.e. the subjective character) is understood as a constituent of a phenomenally conscious state, as Kriegel and Zahavi claim, then for-me-ness cannot cause an unconscious state to become conscious, since an unconscious state, being not an experiential state, does not have a subjective character. If the distinction is understood as a conceptual distinction between the subjective and the phenomenal character, then separate causal roles cannot be ascribed to these parts, as they are neither ontologically different, nor separate.

As noted above, the definition of subjectivity as personal uniqueness of representations (i.e. that representations of the same object by different subjects differ), is different from Kriegel and Zahavi’s (2016) definition of subjectivity as the first-personal aspect of conscious experiences. Subjectivity is “the manner” in which objects are represented in one’s consciousness and the first-personal character of experiences for Zahavi is best explained as “subjectivity of experience” rather than accounted for by the term “subject of experience” (Zahavi, 2005: 126). The quote below captures Kriegel & Zahavi’s (2016) notion of for-me-ness:

“*On our view, one does not grasp for-me-ness by introspecting a self-standing quale, in the same way one grasps the taste of lemon or smell of mint. Rather, there is lemon-taste-for-me-ness, mint-smell-for-me-ness, and many other types of phenomenal character; one grasps such experiential elements as lemon-qualia and mint-qualia by appreciating what varies across such phenomenal characters, but grasps what for-me-ness is by appreciating what remains constant across them. We can put this by saying that the ‘me’ of for-me-ness is not in the first instance an aspect of what is experienced but of how it is experienced; not an object of experience, but a constitutive manner of experiencing.*” (Kriegel & Zahavi, 2016; 38)

By appreciating that there is something intrinsically distinct between lemon-qualia and mint-qualia, Zahavi and Kriegel also grant that the phenomenal character of representations intrinsically differ between different mental states in which different objects are represented. It is clear that such differences cannot be explained by the for-me-ness character, which is *what remains constant across these two distinct experiences*. They also note that for-me-ness pertains to the “how of experiencing” which is the subjectivity in question.

Here, I want to contest the view, expressed by the quote, that one can assign subjective features of conscious experiences to the subjective character and the qualities associated with the representation of environmental aspects to the qualitative character so neatly, even if the conceptual distinction is granted.

The main reason for doubting the possibility of such a clear-cut separation is my claim about the subjectivity of conscious states in the sense of the personal uniqueness of representations. This sort of subjectivity is not captured by qualitative features of experiences as it cannot simply be reduced to representational aspects of environmental stimuli. It underlines why the lemon qualia is different for you and me. Nonetheless, this sort of subjectivity, i.e. the personal uniqueness of representations, is not captured by the definition of subjective character as what-it-is-like-for-me-ness of “experience”, because for-me-ness is supposed to be an invariant dimension. This sort of subjectivity, the personal uniqueness of representations, emerges from the fact that the state of the organism when perceiving a stimulus depends partly on the context and partly on the past experiences of the individual.

One can suggest that this sort of subjectivity stems from the entire connectome of one’s propositional attitudes (beliefs, desires), past experiences (sum of the outcome of encounters with the stimuli) and the current context. It is the phenomenal quality of subjectivity that stems from the entire mental organization of the individual. Interestingly Crane<sup>9</sup> (2016) characterizes the part of this total structure that relates to beliefs as the “subjects’ worldview”. While the totality of the structure of these interrelated dispositional connections is unconscious, it does not mean that what is conscious is not affected by this structure. In fact, it can be argued that the subject’s worldview manifests itself in the conscious mental states a person has. If one believes that cats are harmless, lovable and cute animals, these background beliefs will affect and shape the manifest phenomenal consciousness the person has when they see a cat.

To illustrate this point, one need look no further than Dennett’s (1988) famous example of two coffee tasters, Chase and Sanborn, one of whom claims that after years of tasting, the coffee still tastes the same, but he has begun to dislike the taste. The other claims that he dislikes the taste now because it tastes different to him now than it used to. Dennett, of course, uses this example to point out issues about our concept of qualia, but it may also show that the simplification of phenomenal character and subjective character leaves out a crucial element of subjectivity of experience, not understood as the what-it-is-like-for-me-ness of experience but as the what-it-is-like-for-me-ness of representations. The overall shape of experience contains not only phenomenal qualities associated with representation and the for-

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<sup>9</sup> While a through treatment of Crane’s theory on the unconscious mind would be beside the aims of this paper, it must be noted that Crane (2016) rejects that the characterization of beliefs as singular states is accurate and argues that the nature of belief is unconscious since (what is conscious is thoughts about beliefs (see Crane,2013)) belief system is an entire network of interrelated connections which forms the entire worldview of the person.

me-ness character of experiences. There is another type of subjectivity that lurks in experiences that vary over time, yet these sorts of subjective qualities are not captured by the for-me-ness character, since the for-me-ness of experience – as Kriegel and Zahavi (2016) define it – constitutes the *invariant dimension* that experiences take place in. The very different character of subjectivity that stems from the entire worldview of the person, on the other hand, is a better candidate to account for the diachronic unity of the self, compared to an invariant feature of experiencing which ought to be the same in every conscious being and every conscious episode. Explanation of the non-anonymity of conscious mental states and the diachronic unity of the self should involve an account of why each representation is imbued with the individual's particular manner of representing. For-me-ness as the invariant dimension, cannot account for the type of subjectivity I mention, which is also imbued, or manifest in conscious mental states of the person. This subjectivity captures those subjective aspects of a person's consciousness which may vary over time. This variable type of subjectivity seems to me essential in understanding why certain conscious states are experienced the way they are by a specific person, at least more so than an invariant dimension. Also, locating the diachronic unity of the self understood as subjectivity stemming from the worldview of the person has the benefit of encompassing unconscious aspects of the self and explaining how and in what sense the unconscious mental states are subjective.

So, the non-anonymity and the diachronic unity of the self arguably relate deeply to unconscious parts of the person's self, what Crane calls a subject's worldview and the type of subjectivity of both conscious and unconscious mentation that I argue goes along with this entire connectome. Suggesting that for-me-ness character and the conscious aspects of the invariant type of subjectivity it pertains is what grounds the non-anonymity and the diachronic unity of the self necessitates one to hold that the unconscious mind has little to do with establishing either. I highly doubt that diachronic unity and non-anonymity can be grounded by a concept that is intrinsic only to conscious mental states and so, leaves the vast unconscious domain of a person's mind out of discussion.

### **From for-me-ness to a minimal-self**

Another problem with the minimal-self thesis, lies elsewhere; namely, in the claim of "selfhood" even in the thin sense Kriegel and Zahavi (2016) intend for it. It is one thing to say that subjectivity is a ubiquitous feature of experiences, and another to say that this subjectivity amounts to ownership<sup>10</sup> of these experiences by a subject. Givenness of experience is not sufficient for the ownership of experiences by a self.

<sup>10</sup> Here, I do not refer to the sense of ownership or authorship that is disturbed in thought-insertion pathologies, which is something that Zahavi and Kriegel explicitly say is not relevant to their minimal-self concept. Rather, I use ownership in a minimal sense which describes that, for any experience, for-me-ness character informs us that there exist a someone for whom these experiences are for.

Here, what I am disputing is that when we say, “the greenness I experience is given to me in a distinct and subjective way, therefore the experience has a for-me-ness quality”, we are capturing the phenomenology of what is going on correctly. The “me” in the for-me-ness character implies the awareness of the subject, and that the experiences are given to the subject, which is obviously not possible on a primitive reflexive level. A better phenomenological description of the subjective quality of experiences would be “the I-ness” character. English grammar, of course, dictates that I use the objective pronoun “me” when I am referring to “my” experiences. So, when I consciously state that certain experiences are given to “me” by referring to those experiences, I am immediately beginning to refer to my-self in the transcendent sense, not in the minimal sense. But when Zahavi uses the term “for-me-ness character”, he uses it to refer to the self-givenness of experiences to themselves and not to the self-consciousness of the transcendent subject. The trouble is that the experience itself cannot refer to itself as an object pronoun in the pre-reflective, first-order state that the minimal awareness occurs in. First-order reflexivity implies that the state represents itself exactly as it is. My image is reflected in a mirror exactly as it is, my knowledge that it is “my” image is additional to that reflection. *For Zahavi, minimal-self is the state’s awareness of itself*; however, this sort of givenness cannot amount to a self (regardless of how minimal) on the pre-reflective level.

What I am endorsing here is that experiences are not imbued with a for-me quality at the first level but there is a subjective “I” phenomenology present from which we deduce that experiences have this for-me-ness quality only when we reflect on it<sup>11</sup>. While capturing the subjectivity by calling it the I-ness of experience might be grammatically odd, it has the benefit of accounting for that subjectivity without endorsing any sort of self that the “for-me-ness quality” suggests. In his defense, Zahavi states that his notion of the self has nothing to do with the notion of the self commonly understood. However, my criticism runs deeper: I do not only deny that for-me-ness does not constitute a basis of the diachronic unity of a minimal self, I also diverge from Strawson (2011) by suggesting that for-me-ness character does not form *anything* that can be called a self at all, not even the short-lived episodic minimal-selves Strawson suggests. A minimal-self does not exist at all, the subjectivity of experience, in the sense that Zahavi uses the term, is not constitutive of anything that forms the supervenience base of a “me” by itself, but only constitutive of an “I”.

There are other problems that stem from the claim that the minimal-self is constitutive of the non-anonymous nature of mental states. If the term “non-

<sup>11</sup> It may be suggested that the claim that the grammar of for-me-ness refers to a reflective state is similar to employing the strategy Schear (2009) used with his refrigerator fallacy argument. However, unlike Schear (2009) I am not arguing that for-me-ness character is an illusion of introspection, nor am I disputing the universality of the subjective character of experiences. What I am pointing to is that from the existence of a subjective character in the primitive level, we cannot infer that there exists something we can conceptualize with the use of an object pronoun.

anonymous” is used here to refer to the fact that experiences have a first-person ontology, and they are necessarily subjective, there is surely not much to debate about experiences being non-anonymous in this sense. However, it is not clear if Zahavi only has in mind this sense of the term because he also holds that the minimal-self is the fundamental foundation on which the diachronic and the synchronic unity of the self is built (2014). Considering this, there might be two readings of the non-anonymity claim. One that implies that for-me-ness character is phenomenologically the same for physically and phenomenologically identical duplicates, and one which implies that a unique minimal-self exists for each individual. The first reading is at best trivial as it is quite clear that for conscious experiences to occur, there needs to be a subject of experience. However, a subject in the metaphysical sense is sufficient to ground that kind of non-anonymity and it is not certain how the phenomenologically derived concept of for-me-ness would do the explanatory work when it comes to consciousness.

While the second reading explains how one can phenomenologically account for the difference between various experiential episodes as one’s own, it paves the way to the problem of accounting for the similarity of experiences between different individuals of the same species. In the perception of green, there must be a subject that experiences this greenness. But to say that greenness has a further for-me part, and that this is what makes experiences non-anonymous would entail that the quality of greenness could be different for different individuals. This may not seem problematic *prima facie*, as surely our associations and our experiences about greenness differ, as well as our physiological make-up that reveals that greenness to our consciousness. But the claim here would not be that this perception of for-me-ness of greenness differs among various individuals because of the particularity of each experience and its relation to further mental contents. The claim would be that the difference is primitively ontological, and that it is realized in the first level of conscious perception. In other words, if there were two identical beings that were only capable of consciously experiencing greenness, we could tell them apart just by the way greenness is present to them because they would have a different for-me-ness quality. However, in such cases physicalism is undermined. This issue was put forth by Howell and Thompson (2017), who objected to a non-anonymous minimal-self by arguing that, assuming physicalism, two physical duplicates cannot differ in the way they experience anything, at least intensionally. The fact that conscious experiences must have a first-person ontology does not seem to entail a non-anonymous for-me-ness character in the phenomenal dimension which accounts for the diachronic or synchronic unity. Zahavi (2011) notes that if there were two clones that were physically and mentally identical, there could be no easy way to tell them apart for a person looking at them from a third-person perspective (except by their spatial location). However, the two clones can tell each other apart simply because their experiential access to their own mental states is given to them first personally. So, Zahavi (2011) here does not suggest that the features of the for-me-ness character are unique to one individual. Qualitative features of the invariant dimension can be

the same for duplicates, perhaps even for different (non-duplicated) individuals. It is the *givenness* that differentiates between selves.

The problem with this idea is, assuming we could switch the consciousnesses of the duplicates in an instant so that they did not realize the switch had been made, the duplicates would continue to believe they were the very same person, looking at the same scene, experiencing the same mental content. In that manner, the duplicates would not be able to tell each other apart just because some experiences were given to them, unless they knew further facts about the situation they found themselves in. First-personal-givenness of experiences then, does not seem like a good candidate to ground the unity of the self, whether it be synchronic or diachronic. It does not provide more information to the person from the first perspective standpoint than the knowledge of location for the person in the third-perspective standpoint does. The minimal-self ought to refer to something more than the first-personal givenness of experiences if it is to provide a basis for the diachronic and synchronic unity of the self on the metaphysical plane.

### **The for-whom-ness problem: Jack & Jill**

So far, my aim has been to analyze certain formulations of Zahavi and Kriegel regarding the for-me-ness character of experiences and the minimal-self. My general claims have been the following. The idea that for-me-ness character is a universal feature of all conscious states is appealing. However, invariance of the for-me-ness character alone is not sufficient to ground the for-me-ness character as a minimal-self. On the other hand, arguments to the point that existence of a minimal-self is not necessary for establishing the diachronic unity of the self and not what demarcates unconscious states from conscious states, do not necessarily weaken the claim of universality of the for-me-ness character.

I have argued that the claim that a minimal-self is responsible for the diachronic unity of the subject is problematic, and I attempted to show that the difference between conscious and unconscious states cannot be based on the phenomenal character – subjective character distinction. But now, for the sake of the argument, let us suppose that the characterization of the minimal self and the for-me-ness character by Kriegel and Zahavi (2016) is correct. My aim is to show a further problem, namely, that even a minimal self as defined by Kriegel and Zahavi cannot account for the non-anonymous nature of experiences, contrary to their claim.

In the following section I present a thought experiment that I have borrowed from Parfit (1971) but modified so as to apply to our case. I must grant that it rests on a physically impossible scenario and also false assumptions about human biology alongside the ridiculous use of some technical jargon. I do not intend this thought experiment as to provide a serious physicalist refutation of the existence of a minimal-self; rather, I use it to highlight the conceptual problems the term involves. In that manner it should be considered as an “intuition pump” by which we can investigate the concept of minimal-self further. So, this is how it goes.



Imagine technology has advanced so much that two people are able to swap bodies. The technique is so well established that there is no need for a surgeon, and it is absolutely painless, so no anesthesia is involved. This allows the subjects to be conscious during the whole body-swapping procedure, and the procedure is so safe that anyone can do it in one's own living room.

After years of diligent work, computational neuroscientists are able to create a schema of every neuron, every connection that these neurons have (at the molecular level), alongside the firing patterns, connection strength (i.e. all there is to the physical properties of the brain) with zero chance of error. They are also able to condense this information and code it biologically, in the form of a super RNA code. One scientist in this group who likes to brag goes to the molecular neuroscience lab next door and tells them of the discovery. The molecular neuroscientists are amazed. But they are also envious, and they also want a Nobel prize for their own. So, they also work very hard and finally discover a serum that can alter the structure of the neurons, making them super-plastic for a brief period, thereby allowing those neurons to be restructured into whatever shape or connection pattern scientists choose. A man with great business acumen (but who was always negligent of philosophy) finds out about both discoveries and combines them into what he calls "the body swap serum". The body swap serum functions as follows. Once the complete information about two persons' brains is collected, it is translated to create two distinct super artificial RNA codes. These RNA codes are then combined with the brain restructuring serums, resulting in the brain swap serums. The brain swap serum, when injected into someone, makes every neuron in their brain have the same properties – down to the molecular structure – with the original brain that was used to produce its respective artificial RNA code. Our businessman finds out that the tools can be produced at very low cost and the process is so safe that he can produce and sell a kit for \$50 and make a profit on it. So, he advertises the kit to anyone who wants to "swap bodies for a day" to see what it is like to have their friend's body. To people who are afraid that something might go wrong or skeptical about the process, he explains: "You and your friend will remain conscious all the time. It does not make a difference than your consciousness is being transferred to your friend's body and hers to yours. When you are done, or if you are bored, you can take another serum and return into your original body. Besides, you will be able to recall everything about the transformation process because your brain will be actively encoding memories. After all, both of you will be conscious. As said, there are no problems because your consciousness will reunite with your body the next day." There is only one catch. The serum, when injected, changes the neural connections one by one. It takes less than a nanosecond to change one synaptic connection, but nonetheless, the process takes a few hours.

So, my question is: if two friends – Jack and Jill – decide to undergo this process, what will happen to their minimal-selves and the for-me-ness character of their conscious states?

Let's focus on Jill's experiences. Jill is given the serum and should emerge in Jack's body in a few hours if the advertisement is correct. Jill, however, immediately realizes that something is wrong. How can she be conscious all the time and still have her consciousness transferred to Jack's body? Consciousness attached to her brain will slowly become like Jack's consciousness in every possible way, but it cannot be that her consciousness is transferred to Jack's body. She realizes that if the memories linked to her actual brain are retained after the whole process is over, then, when she "comes back" to her body, she will not remember *what it is like to be in Jack's body for a day*. She will actually remember *what it is like for Jack to be in her body for a day*. But, in order to establish the continuity of Jill's experiences, she will be given another serum the next day that will reshuffle the brain states in her body so as to make her remember the experiences about what it is like to be in *Jack's body for a day*.

So, when her brain is transformed back, she will not remember *what it is like for Jack to be in her body for a day*, but *what it is like for her to be in Jack's body for a day*. There is nothing to worry about in which body "her consciousness" will be for a day, because the day after her original consciousness will be reunited with her original body and her original brain. In this thought she finds some comfort.

But Jill has a minimal-self, and her consciousness is dependent on the for-me-ness character of her experiences, if her consciousness continues to be the same (in fact, if she continues to be conscious at all). But what happens to Jill's minimal-self during the body-swap process? There are two options: 1) Jill's minimal-self, which is attached to her original brain, is slowly transformed to resemble Jack's minimal-self, or 2) Jill's minimal-self, which is attached to her original brain, remains the same during the entire process. There are several conceivable outcomes for each scenario. If Jill's minimal-self remains the same and in her original body during the entire process, when the transformation is completed, the consciousness that it attached to her original body should have the same for-me-ness character as it did before. Therefore, the subject in Jill's body, while Jack's personhood that is now residing in Jill's body, should say, "I am still me, but things seem so different. My experiences do not feel at all like "my" experiences, I do not feel acquainted with them anymore, they feel like they are not given to me at all". On the other hand, if the minimal-self connected to Jill's body also underlies what is like to be Jill, it is possible that the minimal-self of Jill is enough for the consciousness in Jill's body to think it is still Jill's consciousness. Therefore, these words could be heard coming from the lips of Jill's body: "Oh my god, Jack! It was a scam! My consciousness is still my consciousness because it feels exactly like my consciousness! Every experience that I have are still mine because they have the same for-me-ness quality as they did before, but I am only thinking in "your thoughts" and "perceiving in your percepts." I know the difference, I know these are your experiences, but I feel as if they were mine".

The other scenario is the one in which the minimal-self associated with Jill's brain is transformed to be like the minimal-self of Jack. This leads to even more bizarre

conclusions. Somewhere in the middle of the transformation process, Jack's minimal-self emerges in Jill's body, but it does not at all feel like it suddenly emerged, so this minimal-self cannot refer to its sudden emergence in any verbal sense because it is reflexive and not reflective. The transformation ends and Jack feels totally like Jack, with the added difference that now he is enjoying being in Jill's body. So far so good. But what happens when Jack tries to recall memories of the transformation process? Of course, Jack cannot recall Jill's earlier memories just because he now resides in her body. However, the consciousness and the brain that is attached to Jill's body were continuously encoding memories of the transformation even before it's for-me-ness character has changed. So, what happens when Jack tries to recall any of these memories? There are several scenarios. If for-me-ness character somehow supervenes on the representational content of the memories, it is possible that Jack's minimal-self ceases to exist the moment a memory is recalled, and Jill's is operative. This gives rise to a Jekyll and Hyde kind of situation. Experiences regarding the transformation process will have Jill's minimal-self when recalled, while at other times Jack's minimal-self persists. One could also argue that these memories have a different minimal-self operating on their contents, but nonetheless Jack should be able to remember them. Therefore, one improbable scenario we must mention is that there are two minimal-selves and two consciousnesses simultaneously operative when the memory is recalled.

The most uncontroversial case may be that Jack's minimal-self is operating in the process of remembering. But what are the remembered memories like when seen through Jack's minimal-self? Did Jill's for-me-ness character somehow become a representational content of the experiences, so Jack could recall them? Or, does Jack only recall the representational contents of the memories? Then, can Jack's minimal-self capture the difference between the representational content of the memories and feel these are not his memories? But then, how are they given to him at all? How are these memories conscious? This would conflict with Zahavi's claims, since in this case Jack should be able to recall these memories but feel that they lack this for-me-ness character. But without this for-me-ness character, experiences cannot be conscious, so when recalling, Jack must become a kind of zombie. If not, Jack should feel like there are only representational differences between the time he is remembering and now. In other words, Jack should remember these experiences as if they were his. Thus, Jack should conclude that Jill's minimal-self is just like his and there are no differences between being him or Jill. But then, assuming the existence of a minimal-self, logically, Jack should not be able to account for the difference in the representational content either. In one other case Jack also remembers what it is like to be Jill, but that is also quite impossible because then Jack retains in his memories Jill's minimal-self, not only as a represented feature, but as a point of view.

One objection to this thought experiment could be that during the intermediary steps of the transformation process one should expect widely inconsistent mental states, which is not generally the case with the human mind. While this is true, it

could be ignored in our example because the claim is that the for-me-ness is an invariant dimension. As long as the intermediary person is conscious, it should be unproblematic for our cause that the experienced mental contents are inconsistent or unimaginable because the minimal-self is invariantly present and does not merely stem from representational content. The experiences, even if they are massively disorganized, are still given for someone and should still have a for-me-ness character. Therefore, making this objection paradoxically results in agreeing with the essential point of the thought experiment, namely that for-me-ness does not really amount to an object pronoun, and the distinction between the subjective character as opposed to the representational phenomenal character is quite troublesome.

Another objection could be that there can be no memories encoded during the process of transformation. Assuming that this is in fact true, because of neuroscientific facts regarding the transformation process, we may reply that it is possible to re-run the experiment without memories, and inquire only particular states of consciousness of Jack and Jill at particular times and places, in which case the same problems would arise (e.g. Jack's brain transforming to be Jill's would represent the blue couch in front of him but to whom would this experience be given?) The point again is that phenomenal character and representational content are not easily separable from the subjective character. The manner experiences are presented to us is intertwined with the very representational properties of the objects represented.

Lastly, of course, one could object that the thought experiment itself is faulty, or that body swap experiments in general prove nothing. And surely, that is a reasonable suggestion given that a glimpse at some of the infamous experiments of the sort (see, Williams, 1970; Parfit, 1971) reveals that they cause confusion by boggling our intuitions and the only thing they ever establish with certainty is that there are no clear matters of facts about the unity of the self or consciousness. I would agree with this comment that thought experiments, especially ones pertaining to body swap scenarios "prove" nothing. Why did I go ahead and trouble myself with providing one such experiment then? Simply because if the minimal-self concept grounded both the synchronic and the diachronic unity of the self and the consciousness as Zahavi postulated, then they *ought to* work. The fact that we cannot deduce any further facts about the diachronic unity of the self from this thought experiment helps to show that the minimal-self is not a good candidate for instituting the diachronic unity of self.

As can be seen, taking the minimal-self as a non-anonymous aspect of experiences results in dubious outcomes. Surprisingly, what the case of Jack and Jill shows us is that the for-me-ness character must have an even thinner definition than it is assumed by Zahavi and Kriegel, if one is to maintain that it is a universal feature of consciousness<sup>12</sup>. One must reject even the claim that for-me-ness character

<sup>12</sup> Note that the main conclusion of this thought experiment is that for-me-ness character cannot embody all the properties attributed to it by Zahavi, not that it cannot have any of

constitutes something we can denote by using an object pronoun, that it is responsible for non-anonymity of experiences in any substantive sense, and that it can ground the diachronic unity of consciousness. Therefore, I think it follows that for-me-ness does not amount to something we can call a self regardless of how minimal that self would be. The difference between the grammar of “I” and the grammar of “me” is quite important when it comes to experiences. At the pre-reflective level, there is a for-I-ness quality of experiences, but there is no “me” that follows necessarily. So, it may be unwarranted to hold that the for-me-ness character is responsible for the diachronic unity of the subject in a metaphysical sense. As mentioned, Howell and Thompson (2017) noted that the existence of a singular phenomenal me-ness cannot be held if one adheres to physicalism, as is also the case with Jack and Jill. Therefore, the for-me-ness character would be the same for any given two people as long as their qualitative experiential states were similar. It is an impersonal and universal feature of conscious experiences. The very nature of for-me-ness must be a generic, non-personal indexical I. When for-me-ness character is formulated this way, we could get rid of every single problem associated with the Jack and Jill case, as there would be no conceivable differences between the for-me-ness character of experiences of Jack and Jill. For-me-ness is only type identical in different experience instances.

### Summary

I hope to have established the following claims.

First, for-me-ness or the subjective character of a conscious state cannot be the cause of a mental state’s being conscious, since this would require that subjective character be a metaphysically independent constituent or element of conscious states, while, according to Zahavi and Kriegel, it is not: the distinction between the subjective and the phenomenal character is only conceptual not metaphysical.

Second, the features by which for-me-ness or subjective character is characterized, namely perspectivity, subjectivity, non-anonymity, and being a ground of a minimal-self, cannot be the distinguishing features of conscious states.

Perspectivity may be understood either in a way that can be extended to unconscious states (e.g. unconscious perceptual states that have a perspective in the sense that their representation of the perceived object or state-of-affairs is relative to the subjects point of view as well as to the nature of the sense organs of the

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these properties individually. If we assume that for-me-ness character explains both the diachronic and synchronic unity of consciousness, that it is what makes a mental state conscious and non-anonymous and that it also outlines the difference between unconscious representing from conscious experiencing, we arrive at conflicting results. However, each of these claims can be defended individually. It is expecting too much of a minimal (but very substantial) phenomenological concept that causes these problems, because that blurs the boundaries between the phenomenal and the metaphysical, and different senses of subjectivity that ultimately give shape to experience.

perceiver). Or perspectivalness may be understood as synonymous with phenomenality, i.e. having a first-person aspect, or direct givenness of the mental state's content to the subject. But then the thesis is empty, since unconscious states do not have phenomenal aspects by definition (or at least, this is the dominant view, shared by Zahavi and Kriegel).

Similarly for subjectivity: if subjectivity is understood as being relative to the subject of the mental state, then the contents of some unconscious mental states are subjective in this sense as well, moreover, their content may be relative to the *particular individual subject*, i.e. the subject's other mental states, memories, personal history, etc., also determine them. This subjectivity cannot be grounded or explained by the for-me-ness as the invariant dimension. If, on the other hand, subjectivity is understood as phenomenality, then the claim is tautologous, since unconscious states, by definition, have no phenomenality.

Furthermore, for-me-ness is anonymous. For-me-ness or subjective character is a type of property, tokens of which all conscious states instantiate, hence it is indeed universal. However, subjective character is the same property for all conscious states, it has no individual features, on which a distinction between the different individual subjects of different conscious states could be based, as I argued by relying on the Jack-and Jill thought experiment. In this sense for-me-ness is invariant, not only in terms of mental states a singular subject has in different times or conditions, but invariant between different individuals.

Therefore, for-me-ness does not constitute a self in any sense, not even in a minimal sense, not even in the thinnest sense of Strawson's sort-lived minimal self.

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