

HOT Theories

If you are up to some heady philosophizing, read “A Theory of Consciousness” by David M. Rosenthal. This is essay 46 in the anthology, *The Nature of consciousness: Philosophical Debates* Edited by Block, Flanagan, and Guzeldere. It is the seminal article introducing the world of philosophy to so-called HOT theories (Higher Order Thought) of consciousness. First, there are some odd words that I should define for you.

Intension, intensionality: When philosophers use this word it means something completely different from its usual usage. Intensional thinking is thinking *about* something. Intensionality is “aboutness.”

Disposition: A tendency to do something or react in some specified way.

Assertory: Stated positively

Epistemic: Pertaining to knowledge or the obtaining of it

Intrinsic: This is a key idea. Something is intrinsic if it is a fundamental property that cannot be otherwise explained. Mass is an intrinsic property of electrons. Don’t ask me how or why. Rosenthal wants at all costs that nothing about consciousness be intrinsic. If it is then he has failed in his theory. Do you think he has succeeded? Are there any intrinsic things hiding behind the curtains?

Now to guide you through the reading, answer the following questions:

What is creature consciousness?

What is state consciousness?

Explain transitive and intransitive consciousness.

With these terms you should be able to explain in few sentences what the HOT theory is all about. As usual, I invite your own comments and evaluation.