

# Lowell Friesen

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## Areas of Specialization

Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Psychology

## Areas of Competence

Metaphysics, Logic, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Religion

## Education

Ph.D. (Philosophy) · University of Massachusetts Amherst · 2013

Dissertation: The Structure of Consciousness

Committee: Joseph Levine (Chair), Louise Antony, Hilary Kornblith, Erik W. Cheries (Psychology)

M.A. (Philosophy) · University of Manitoba · 2005

Thesis: A Defence of Natural Class Trope Nominalism

Committee Chair: Ben Caplan

B.Mus. (Vocal Performance) · University of Manitoba · 2002

B.F.A. (Music) · Providence College · 1997

## Publications

### Articles

“Higher-Order Thoughts and the Unity of Consciousness,” *The Journal of Mind and Behavior* (Autumn 2014) 35:201–224.

“Natural Classes of Universals: Why Armstrong’s Analysis Fails,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (2006) 84:285–296.

“Armstrong on Aliens,” *Aufbau: The Canadian Graduate Journal of Philosophical Analysis* (2005) 1:47–68.

### Reviews

*The Significance of Religious Experience* by Howard Wettstein, *Religious Studies Review* (forthcoming)

## Works in Progress

“Split-brains and the Switch Model”

“James on Habits and Instincts”

“Counter-intuitive Concepts and the Evolution of Religion”

## Presentations

“Split Brains and the Unity of Consciousness” · Graduate Conference in Philosophy of Mind, Language, and Cognitive Science · University of Western Ontario · May 2012

## Teaching Experience

Instructor · Booth University College (2012–)

University Writing  
Introduction to Philosophy\*  
Religious Ethics†  
Comparative Worldviews†

Instructor · University of Winnipeg (2011–12, 2013–14)

Logic

Instructor · Providence University College (2012–13)

Chamber Singers

Instructor · University of Manitoba (2007, 2011)

Critical Thinking\*

Instructor · University of Massachusetts Amherst (2008–11)

Introduction to Philosophy†  
Introduction to Logic†  
Philosophical Approaches to Religion  
Introduction to Ethics  
Medical Ethics

Teaching Assistant · University of Massachusetts Amherst (2006–08)

Introduction to Philosophy · Hilary Kornblith  
Introduction to Ethics · Pete Graham  
Introduction to Philosophy · Louise Antony

‘†’ the course has been taught in an alternative format, e.g., online-only, blended (i.e., face-to-face and online), or condensed term

‘\*’ the course has been taught in both conventional *and* alternative formats

## Awards

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship · 2005

These fellowships are awarded annually by SSHRC to winners of a national competition open to students entering a program of doctoral studies in either the social sciences or the humanities.

## Graduate Work

- Area Exam      Topic: Indexical Belief  
Committee: Joseph Levine, Lynne Rudder Baker, Phillip Bricker
- Starred Papers    “Indexical Belief: The Belief State Theory Defended”  
“Composition as Identity”
- Coursework      Propositional Attitudes (audit) · Gary Ostertag  
Philosophy of Mind: Demonstrative Thought (audit) · Joseph Levine  
First-Person Perspective · Lynne Rudder Baker & Gary Matthews  
Moral Obligation · Pete Graham  
Metaphysics: Causation and Conditionals (audit) · Phillip Bricker & Jonathan Schaffer  
Ethics: Metaethics · Fred Feldman  
Math Logic I · Phillip Bricker  
Philosophy of Religion · Lynne Rudder Baker  
Descartes and Mind-Body Interaction · Eileen O’Neill  
Metaphysics: Monism · Jonathan Schaffer  
Aristotle · Casey Perin  
Math Logic II · Kevin Klement  
Philosophy of Mathematics · Phillip Bricker  
Philosophy of Space and Time · Bradford Skow  
Modal Logic · Gary Hardegree

## Academic and Professional Service

Referee · *dialectica*, *Philosophical Psychology*

Faculty-Graduate Student Liaison · University of Massachusetts Amherst · 2009/10

## Community Outreach

Guest Lecture · “Introduction to Logic” · Garden City Collegiate · March 2012

Presentation · “Morris and the Reduplication Analysis of the Incarnation” · Faith and Philosophy Reading Group · St. Margaret’s Anglican Church, Winnipeg · 2004

## References

Joseph Levine · UMass · (413) 545-1846 · jle@philos.umass.edu

Louise Antony · UMass · (413) 545-2316 · lantony@philos.umass.edu

Hilary Kornblith · UMass · (413) 545-5787 · kornblith@philos.umass.edu

Pete Graham (Teaching Reference) · UMass · (413) 577-2785 · pgraham@philos.umass.edu

Jack Zupko (Teaching Reference) · (former department chair) University of Winnipeg · (780) 492-0616 · zupko@ualberta.ca

## Dissertation Abstract

### The Structure of Consciousness

In my dissertation, I examine the nature and structure of consciousness. Conscious experience is often said to be phenomenally unified, and subjects of consciousness are often self-conscious. I ask whether these features necessarily accompany conscious experience. Is it necessarily the case, for instance, that all of a conscious subject's experiences at a time are phenomenally unified? And is it necessarily the case that subjects of consciousness are self-conscious whenever they are conscious? I argue that the answer to the former is affirmative and the latter negative.

In the first chapter, I set the stage by distinguishing phenomenal unity from other species of conscious unity. A pair of conscious states is phenomenally unified if they are experienced together as part of a single experience that encompasses them both. In this and the next two chapters I defend the thesis that, necessarily, for any subject at any time, all of that subject's conscious mental states at that time are part of a single, maximal state of consciousness. I call this thesis the "Unity Thesis." I proceed by considering some preliminary questions that might be raised about the Unity Thesis. For instance, the thesis presupposes that there are such things as parts of mental states. Tye and Searle object to the notion of an experiential part. I consider and rebut their arguments. In the remaining pages of the chapter, I present the biggest challenge to the Unity Thesis: split-brain syndrome.

The Unity Thesis is formulated using the notion of a maximal state of consciousness. In the second chapter, I attempt to precisify this notion in a way that does not pre-emptively decide the debate over the Unity Thesis. I settle on a view I call the "Consensus View," according to which a maximal state of consciousness is a sum of conscious states that are i) simultaneous, ii) have the same subject, and iii) all have a conjoint phenomenology. I point out that, because it is formulated so as not to beg any questions against those who deny the Unity Thesis, there are two unorthodox possibilities that the Consensus View does not rule out. I refer to these unorthodox possibilities as that of a "collective subject" and a "spread subject" respectively. A collective subject is one that can enjoy the experiences of an indeterminate number of "lesser" subjects by sharing those experiences together with them. A spread subject is one that can enjoy the experiences of an indeterminate number of lesser subjects, not by sharing their experiences, but by being constituted by them; a spread subject has lesser subjects as parts. I argue that these unorthodox structures of consciousness stretch the bounds of coherence. The defender of the Unity Thesis can reject these structures by adding conditions to the Consensus View, but it is not clear that those who deny the Unity Thesis can do the same. Having presented an account of what a maximal state of consciousness is, I define a stream of consciousness in terms of a maximal states of consciousness. In the rest of chapter two, I consider and argue against a number of different ways of interpreting split-brain syndrome that are either inconsistent with the Unity Thesis or attribute more than one subject of consciousness to split-brain subjects. Among the views I consider are

Lockwood's partial-unity view and the view, defended by theorists such as Sperry, Koch, Puccetti, Marks, and Tye, that split-brain subjects have two non-overlapping streams of consciousness.

In chapter three, I consider a recent attempt by Bayne to account for the split-brain data in a way that does not attribute two streams of consciousness to them. According to Bayne's Switch Model, the consciousness of split-brain subjects can be likened to that of a ball that is passed back and forth between the two hemispheres of the upper-brain. The hemispheres take turns supporting a single stream of consciousness. I consider the empirical data in some detail and argue that the data is not as compatible with the Switch Model as Bayne claims. I close the chapter by presenting a rough outline of an interpretation of the split-brain data that is consistent with both the Unity Thesis.

In chapter four, I turn from defending the Unity Thesis to examining an attempt to account for conscious unity. Rosenthal has offered a theory of conscious unity as an extension of his higher-order theory of consciousness. I consider his account of conscious unity in light of a well-known objection to his theory: the (Representational) Mismatch Objection. When there is representation, there is the possibility of misrepresentation. This prompts a question: what it is like for the subject when one of its higher-order states misrepresents its target first-order state? Does the phenomenal character of the experience correspond to the content of the target first-order state or to the content of the higher-order state? Many have argued that no matter which answer is given, it appears as though higher-order representation is unnecessary for conscious experience. I consider two recent defences of Rosenthal's higher-order theory from the Mismatch Objection and argue that they both fail. Then I turn to Rosenthal's account of conscious unity. Rosenthal's account posits two mental mechanisms. I refer to the ways of accounting for conscious unity via these two mechanisms as the "gathering strategy" and the "common-ascription strategy" respectively. Both of these strategies, I argue, appear to locate the basis for certain phenomenal facts in higher-order representational facts. This raises a question. Does Rosenthal's account of conscious unity land him square within the sights of the Mismatch Objection? Although the gathering strategy may ultimately be understood in a way that does not make it subject to the Mismatch Objection, Rosenthal has certain commitments that bar this strategy from serving as a complete account of conscious unity. This is problematic for Rosenthal, I argue, because his common-ascription strategy faces some difficult questions. Whenever one engages in active introspection, an explicit sense of conscious unity is generated. But a sense of conscious unity persists outside of contexts of introspection. According to Rosenthal, this abiding and tacit sense of unity is to be identified with the implicit expectation we have that we can engage in active introspection, and enjoy the explicit sense of unity that accompanies it, whenever we want. I argue that it is very difficult to see how such an implicit sense could both avoid the Mismatch Objection and do the work it needs to do in order to account for conscious unity.

In chapter five, the discussion turns from the unity of consciousness to self-consciousness. The question that is considered in this and the last chapter is the question whether conscious experience is necessarily accompanied by self-consciousness. The affirmative answer to this question I call the Ubiquity Thesis. I canvass some of the literature in developmental psychology and spend some time distinguishing robust conceptions of self-consciousness from minimal conceptions of self-consciousness. The notion of self-consciousness invoked by the Ubiquity Thesis is a minimal one. In spite of the fact that the Ubiquity Thesis invokes only a minimal or thin conception of self-consciousness, I believe the thesis to be false and argue against it. In this chapter I take up the views of Husserl. Husserl is often regarded as the progenitor of the phenomenological tradition, a tradition in which many philosophers affirm the Ubiquity Thesis. I examine and argue against an interpretation of Husserl's work, one defended by Zahavi, according to which Husserl could be seen to defend the Ubiquity Thesis. One claim Husserl makes is that, in order for an object to become the intentional target of a conscious state, it must be *given* to consciousness beforehand. It is possible, during acts of deliberate introspection, for consciousness to take itself as its object. On Husserl's view, this requires consciousness to be given to itself beforehand. This self-giveness of consciousness, argues Zahavi, can be seen as a kind of minimal self-consciousness. Husserl offers an account of this self-

givenness of consciousness in his discussion of inner time-consciousness. I attempt to argue, using some of Husserl's other views regarding psychological stances (or standpoints), that consciousness is not given to itself outside of the adoption of a certain psychological standpoint. I also offer an alternative way of accounting for inner time-consciousness, one that does not have, as a built-in feature, that consciousness always has itself as a secondary object.

In the sixth and final chapter, I take up a contemporary defence of the Ubiquity Thesis. Kriegel, a higher-order theorist like Rosenthal, has argued that every conscious state is conscious in virtue of the fact that it represents itself. This self-representation is understood as a kind of self-consciousness and, thus, his theory can be seen as affirming the Ubiquity Thesis. In the first part of the chapter, I take issue with the way in which Kriegel lays out the conceptual terrain. In particular, Kriegel countenances a property he calls "intransitive state self-consciousness." I argue that this way of speaking is confused. I then turn to considering Kriegel's account. Kriegel identifies the species of self-consciousness that pervades all of conscious experience with a peripheral awareness of one's own mental states. I argue that such a peripheral inner awareness does not accompany all of our mental states and, thus, that Kriegel's views do not give us reason to accept the Ubiquity Thesis.