ABSTRACT. It is often assumed that consciousness and intentionality are two mutually independent aspects of mental life. When the assumption is denounced, it usually gives way to the claim that consciousness is somehow dependent upon intentionality. The possibility that intentionality may be dependent upon consciousness is rarely entertained. Recently, however, John Searle and Colin McGinn have argued for just such dependence. In this paper, I reconstruct and evaluate their argumentation. I am in sympathy both with their view and with the lines of argument they employ in its defense. Unlike Searle and McGinn, however, I am quite attached to a naturalist approach to intentionality. It will turn out to be somewhat difficult to reconcile naturalism with the notion that intentionality is dependent upon consciousness, although, perhaps surprisingly, I will argue that McGinn’s case for such dependence is compatible with naturalism.

1. INTRODUCTION: DEPENDENCE RELATIONS BETWEEN CONSCIOUSNESS AND INTENTIONALITY

The mental features two remarkable aspects: intentionality and consciousness. Intentionality is the property in virtue of which a subject’s mental state is directed at, or is about, something other than itself. Consciousness is the property in virtue of which there is something it is like for the subject to be in that mental state. In the short history of the philosophy of mind, intentionality and consciousness have often been treated as mutually independent. Call this the Independence Assumption. One way to formulate the Independence Assumption is in terms of the following pair of theses:

(1) The fact that a mental state M is intentional does not entail any (non-disjunctive, non-necessary) facts regarding consciousness.
(2) The fact that a mental state M is conscious does not entail any (non-disjunctive, non-necessary) facts regarding intentionality.\textsuperscript{2,3,4}

The Independence Assumption can be construed as the conjunction of (1) and (2).

Support for the Independence Assumption has been eroded in recent years. The erosion of (2) has been especially prominent: many philosophers have argued that a subject’s mental state is conscious when, and only when, the subject instantiates a certain intentional structure. Thus, according to the representational theory of consciousness (defended, e.g., by Dretske and Tye), if a mental state M is conscious, then M must have a certain specific kind of intentional content.\textsuperscript{5} The representational theory claims, then, that:

(3) The fact that M is conscious entails the fact that M has intentional content of kind K.

This is incompatible with (2), since the fact that M has intentional content of kind K is a (non-disjunctive, non-necessary) fact regarding intentionality.

Similarly, according to the higher-order monitoring theory of consciousness (defended, e.g., by Armstrong and Rosenthal), if M is conscious, then M must be itself the intentional object of a higher-order intentional state.\textsuperscript{6} This theory claims, then, that:

(4) The fact that subject x’s mental state M is conscious entails the fact that x has another mental state, M*, such that M* is intentionally directed at M.

Which is, again, incompatible with (2), since the fact that x has a mental state M* that is intentionally directed at M is a (non-disjunctive, non-necessary) fact regarding intentionality.

Both the representational and higher-order monitoring theories attempt a reductive account of consciousness in terms of intentionality, and therefore imply the falsity of (2). But a reductive account of consciousness in terms of intentionality is not \textit{required} in order to falsify (2). It is possible to hold, for instance, that even though M’s consciousness is not \textit{exhausted} by M’s intentional content, it nonetheless necessarily \textit{involves} an intentionality.\textsuperscript{7} Such a view is also incompatible with (2).