

Regulated Multiplicity and the Structural Necessity of Subjectivity

Priority Note / Claim Draft

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Purpose of This Document

This note is intended to **publicly establish priority** for a specific theoretical claim about consciousness and subjectivity within the Regulated Multiplicity (RM) framework. It is a claim draft, not a finished paper. Its purpose is to clearly articulate the core ideas, conceptual moves, and novel inversion of the “hard problem” of consciousness.

Core Claim (One Sentence)

Consciousness is the internal perspective generated by regulated adjudication among multiple competing internal models; subjectivity is not an optional accompaniment to cognition but a structural necessity for systems capable of learning and problem solving.

Regulated Multiplicity: Core Commitments

- Cognitive systems are **inherently plural**, composed of multiple semi-independent representational processes (“voices”).
 - These voices generate **competing interpretations, predictions, evaluations, and action proposals**.
 - Conscious cognition does not eliminate this multiplicity; it **regulates it**.
 - Regulation stabilizes a **single outward-facing agent (“I”)** from internal plurality.
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Consciousness as Internal Question–Answer Dynamics

- **Cognition requires internal uncertainty**: something the system can be wrong about.
- Uncertainty requires **alternatives**: multiple candidate answers or models.
- Alternatives require **evaluation and adjudication** under constraints.
- This triad (uncertainty → alternatives → evaluation) constitutes an **internal question–answer loop**.
- Consciousness is identified with the **ongoing, regulated operation of this loop**.

Consciousness = the ability of a system to ask and answer questions of itself.

Multiplicity Is Not Pathology

- Multiplicity \neq fragmentation.
 - Multiplicity is the **raw material of cognition**.
 - A system with a single model can react.
 - A system with multiple models can reflect.
 - Pathology arises not from multiplicity itself, but from **failures of regulation**.
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Regulation and the Construction of the Self

- The “self” is not a primitive entity but a **regulatory achievement**.
- Regulation:
 - gates which voices participate,
 - binds compatible representations,
 - weights competing evaluations,
 - suppresses or revises losing candidates,

- maintains coherence across time.
 - The system presents as **one agent**, despite internal disagreement.
 - The inside view of this regulated disagreement **just is subjectivity**.
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Subjectivity as Structural, Not Ontological

- Each internal voice applies **different weightings** to inputs, goals, and values.
 - Disagreement is **structural**, not noise.
 - There is no neutral, view-from-nowhere inside the system.
 - Subjectivity is built into the architecture as **parameterized evaluation**.
 - Objectivity is an **ideal limit**, approached through regulated disagreement among subjective processes.
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The Hard Problem: Reframed and Absorbed

Traditional framing:

Why is cognition accompanied by subjective experience rather than “blind processing”?

RM inversion:

- **Blind processing cannot do cognition in the first place.**
- A system that:
 - evaluates alternatives,
 - tracks internal error,
 - revises its own models,
 - represents itself as the locus of evaluation, necessarily instantiates a **standpoint**.

- Subjective experience is **not added** to cognition.
- Subjective experience is **what cognition looks like from the inside**.

Asking “why does it feel like something?” at this level is like asking:

“Why does triangulation produce depth?”

The question misfires below the relevant structural threshold.

Consciousness Is Graded

- Consciousness is not binary.
 - It exists on a spectrum from:
 - reflexive reaction,
 - to limited internal evaluation,
 - to sustained, richly regulated internal dialogue.
 - Consciousness **thickens**, rather than appearing suddenly.
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Time, Development, and Multiplicity Compression

- High multiplicity (novelty, uncertainty, questioning) → slower subjective time.
- Development and aging involve:
 - heuristic compression,
 - reduced internal alternatives,
 - fewer active voices.
- Subjective time accelerates as internal dialogue thins.
- “It silences voices” is a **mechanistic description**, not a metaphor.

Pathology as Deregulated Multiplicity

- Schizophrenia and related disorders reflect:
 - failures of gating,
 - failures of binding,
 - failures of accountability,
 - failures of temporal coherence.
 - Hallucinated “voices” are not foreign intrusions, but **ordinary internal processes released from regulation**.
 - Pathology supports the RM framework rather than undermining it.
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Relation to Existing Theories (Positioning Only)

- RM is compatible with:
 - predictive processing,
 - global workspace architectures,
 - higher-order representation,
 - but makes a **distinctive claim**:
 - subjectivity is not explained *by* cognition,
 - subjectivity is **required for cognition**.
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Scope and Limits

- This framework is **structural and functional**, not eliminativist.

- It does not deny experience or qualia.
 - It does not add non-physical ontology.
 - It explains why subjectivity is unavoidable for systems capable of learning, evaluation, and self-correction.
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Priority Statement

This document constitutes the **first public articulation** of the claim that:

Subjective experience is the internal perspective necessarily generated by regulated adjudication among multiple competing internal models, and that the hard problem of consciousness dissolves once this architectural requirement is made explicit.

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