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# Self-Knowledge and "Inner Sense"\*

## Lecture I: The Object Perception Model

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### I

The general topic of these lectures is the nature of our "introspective" knowledge of our own mental states, and, in particular, the question of whether this knowledge should be thought of as involving a kind of perception, an "inner sense"—whether it is appropriately conceived on a perceptual or observational model. The knowledge I have in mind is not, as you perhaps hoped, the difficult-to-get knowledge that arises from successfully following the Socratic injunction "Know thyself"; it is the humdrum kind of knowledge that is expressed in such remarks as "It itches," "I'm hungry," "I don't want to," and "I'm bored." In calling this knowledge "introspective" I of course do not mean to be prejudging the question of whether it is perceptual or quasi-perceptual in nature; as will become apparent, my own view is at odds with the answer to that question which the etymology of that term rather naturally suggests.

Faced with the question of how someone knows something, the most satisfying answer we can be given is "She saw it." Seeing is believing, the expression goes, and seeing is the paradigmatic explanation of knowing. No wonder, then, that many have been attracted by the idea that something like

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seeing explains the knowledge we have of our own minds. But while many philosophers have embraced an inner-sense model of self-knowledge, many others have found such a model profoundly misleading or mistaken.

Let me try to evoke some of the intuitions on which the issue turns. First, focus on some current sensation of yours—an itch or tingle or pain. Or, better still, generate a visual after-image and focus on it. Putting aside, if you can, any theoretical commitments you may have on such matters, does it seem natural to regard your access to the sensation or image as similar to the access you have to objects in your environment in sense perception? Second, consider whether you believe that Sacramento is the capital of California, and, assuming that you find that you do, consider the epistemological access you have to that belief and to the fact that you have it. Still putting aside theoretical commitments, do you find it natural to compare *this* access to your perceptual access to things and states of affairs in your environment? Finally, take note of the fact that in each of these cases one what one knows is something about *oneself*, and consider the epistemological access one thereby has to the “self” about which we know these various things. Continuing to bracket any theoretical commitments, do you find it natural to think of *this* access as like your perceptual access to things you observe in your environment?

I have just been inviting you to consult your pretheoretical intuitions about whether your epistemic access to certain things is like the access you have to things in your environment when perceiving them. I have my suspicions, which for now I will keep to myself, about how you may be inclined to answer my questions. But you may well be suspicious of the questions. Everything is similar to everything else, in one way or another, so it is far from clear what these intuitions are supposed to be about. For similar reasons you may be suspicious of the question “Is introspection perception?” The words “perceive” and “perception” cover a variety of things. We can put aside the use of “perceive” in which one can perceive, or “see,” anything one can come to know, even including truths of logic—our issue is whether introspection is appropriately thought of as a kind of, or as revealingly analogous to, *sense-perception*. But the kinds of sense-perception are themselves a diverse lot. It is not obvious that the modes of knowledge acquisition that have been classified as kinds of perception have any one feature or set of features in virtue of which they all count as kinds of perception; maybe the concept of sense-perception is a “family resemblance concept,” or a “cluster concept,” and there is no “real essence” of sense perception. And it could be that our concept of perception is vague in ways that leave it indeterminate whether introspection should count as perception.

Here a glance back into the history of philosophy may be instructive. David Armstrong, a recent champion of the inner sense view, cites John Locke as one of the classical proponents of this view (see Armstrong, 1984).

Now when Locke uses the term “perceive,” what he usually has us perceiving are either “ideas” or the operations of our minds. But I assume that it was true in his time, as it is in ours, that one can be said to perceive whatever one sees, hears, feels, etc., and it was certainly true that one can be said to see, feel, etc., items in one’s environment—trees, mountains, buildings, etc. So was Locke, in speaking of perception of ideas and operations of the mind, embracing the perceptual model? Was he thinking of our epistemic access to these mental entities as like our epistemic access to the standard objects of sense perception, i.e., trees and the like? Well, he certainly wasn’t thinking of it as being like that access as he took it actually to be. For, of course, he thought that in fact our perceptual access to external bodies is a rather complex affair which involves these bodies producing, via their effects on our sense organs, ideas in our minds which are representations of those bodies. And he certainly didn’t think of our perception of our own ideas as like *that*. So if Locke embraced the perceptual model, his stereotype of perception was not sense-perception as he took it actually to be. Perhaps it was instead sense-perception as we naively think of it as being. This would involve, at least, thinking of it as an immediate access to its objects. And for Locke, as for Berkeley and Hume, immediacy was taken to involve not only lack of inference but also the lack of any distinction between appearance and reality—the objects of immediate perception necessarily are as they appear and appear as they are.

Now it is clear that *this* is not part of the stereotype of perception that is operating in recent advocacy of the perceptual model. In claiming that introspection is perception, philosophers like David Armstrong are not claiming that the access we have to our own minds in introspection is like the access we naively but mistakenly think of ourselves as having to external objects in sense-perception; they are claiming that it is like the access we *actually do have* to external objects in sense perception. And, like Locke, they think of the latter as mediated, causally if not inferentially, and as fallible.

There are, then, different versions of the perceptual model. We can think of each of these as associated with a “stereotype” of perception. I suggested earlier that in Locke’s case the stereotype was not sense-perception as he took it actually to be but sense-perception as we naively take it to be. And I think that we can finesse the issue of whether there is a defining essence of perception, something that all and only cases of perception have in common. Even if there is not, there are certain widespread stereotypes of perception, based on actual or presumed features of certain central cases of sense perception, and it can be a genuine issue whether our introspective access to our own mental states conforms to one or another of these. Of course, to the extent that advocates and opponents of “the perceptual model” have different stereotypes in mind, they will be talking past one another.

In what follows I will be discussing two versions of the perceptual model. The first of these is what I think is most often the target of those who inveigh against the notion of introspection as inner sense. Its stereotype of perception is based on cases of perception, primarily cases of visual perception, in which one or more particular things are *objects* of the perception, and in which it can be said that it is *by* perceiving these objects that the perceiver obtains whatever factual information she does from the perceiving. I will call this the *object perception model*. Here the word “object” covers only particular things, and excludes facts. If I perceive that the book is on the table, the book and the table will be objects of my perception, but the fact that the book is on the table will not be. The second model differs from the first in allowing for cases of perception in which there are no objects in this sense—in which the only “objects” are facts or states of affairs. But in common with the first model it ascribes to perception the following feature: in perception we have access to things or states of affairs that exist independently of their being perceived and independently of there being any means of perceiving them. I will call this the *broad perceptual model*. I believe that both of these versions of the perceptual model are open to serious objections. But they are open to different objections.

## II

I am now going to list and briefly characterize some features of certain ordinary cases of sense perception—or, as I shall sometimes speak of them, conditions satisfied by ordinary kinds of sense perception. These are not offered as features that all genuine cases of sense perception have in common. Rather, they collectively constitute the stereotype of sense-perception underlying what I am calling the “object perception model”; and a subset of them constitute the stereotype of sense-perception underlying what I am calling the “broad perceptual model.”

(1) Sense perception involves the operation of an organ of perception whose disposition is to some extent under the voluntary control of the subject. Acquiring perceptual knowledge involves getting the appropriate organs into an appropriate relation to the object of perception.

(2) Sense perception involves the occurrence of sense-experiences, or sense-impressions, that are distinct from the object of perception, and also distinct from the perceptual belief (if any) that is formed. The occurrence of these constitutes the subject’s being “appeared to” in some way—a way that may or may not correspond to the way the object actually is.

(3) While sense perception provides one with awareness of facts, i.e., awareness *that* so and so is the case, it does this by means of awareness of objects. One’s awareness of the facts is explained by one’s awareness of the objects involved in these facts. So, for example, I am aware (I perceive) that there is a book before me *by* perceiving the book—here the book is the (non-

factual) object. In such a case there is always the potentiality of a factual awareness whose propositional content involves *demonstrative* reference to the object or objects of which one is perceptually aware—e.g., that *this* book is to the right of *that* one.

(4) Sense perception affords “identification information” about the object of perception. When one perceives one is able to pick out one object from others, distinguishing it from the others by information, provided by the perception, about both its relational and its nonrelational properties. The provision of such information is involved in the “tracking” of the object over time, and its reidentification from one time to another.

(5) The perception of objects standardly involves perception of their intrinsic, nonrelational properties. We can perceive relations between things we perceive; but we wouldn’t perceive these things at all, and so couldn’t perceive relations between them, if they didn’t present themselves as having intrinsic, nonrelational properties. To perceive that this book is to the right of that one I must perceive, or at least seem to perceive, intrinsic properties of the two books, e.g., their colors and shapes.<sup>1</sup>

(6) Objects of perception are potential objects of attention. Without changing what one perceives, one can shift one’s attention from one perceived object to another, thereby enhancing one’s ability to gain information about it.

(7) Perceptual beliefs are causally produced by the objects or states of affairs perceived, via a causal mechanism that normally produces beliefs that are true. Given (2) above, this process involves the production of sense-experiences, which together with background beliefs give rise to the perceptual beliefs. Given (1), the specification of the causal mechanism makes reference

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase “or at least seem to perceive” was added in response to a comment by Ernest Sosa, who pointed out that there are possible cases in which one is sure that one sees something, and is in a position to perceive relations between that thing and other things, even though the color, shape, etc. of the object are somewhat other than one perceives them as being. Here one does not actually perceive (veridically) intrinsic properties of the thing; but one does at least seem to perceive them. Sosa also pointed out that the salient property of an object perceived by touch might be its “heft,” which on reflection turns out to be a relational property. And it is one of my own central contentions in Lecture III that the perceived properties of things include what I call “phenomenal properties,” which I take to be properties that in fact involve a relation to the perceiver, although they are not perceived as doing so. It may be that many properties we naturally think of as intrinsic are in fact relational in this way (e.g., color is, on many views). Should this turn out to be true of all or most perceived properties classified as intrinsic, the stereotype of perception I am describing would be wrong at this point—which is compatible with its being a stereotype that does figure prominently in ordinary thinking. But I cannot believe that it is wrong in this way. I doubt, for example, whether one can feel the heft of an object without feeling *something* about its shape (e.g., the curvature or lack thereof of the part of its surface one is touching), and **shape is an intrinsic property if anything is**. The minimal claim I want to make here is that an object of perception must be the sort of thing that one can perceive, and normally would perceive, by perceiving intrinsic properties of it.

to the organ of perception, and the reliability of the mechanism consists in there being a correspondence between the contents of the beliefs and what the sense-organs are directed towards.

Finally, (8) the objects and states of affairs which the perception is of, and which it provides knowledge about, exist independently of the perceiving of them, and, with certain exceptions,<sup>2</sup> independently of there being things with the capacity for perceiving them or being aware of them. Thus trees, mountains, etc. can exist without there being creatures with the capacity to perceive them, and it is in principle possible for houses, automobiles and human bodies to exist in this way.

While all of these features belong to the stereotype that constitutes the object-perception model, the distinctive features of it are (3)–(6). And I think that it is the appropriateness of a model for introspection based on cases having these features that is often at issue when philosophers discuss whether introspection should be thought of as inner sense. In the remainder of this lecture I shall be considering whether, or to what extent, our introspective access to ourselves fits this model.

### III

The candidates for being (non-factual) objects of inner perception are, first of all, the self itself, that which it calls “I,” and then mental entities of various kinds—sensations, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, desires, and so on. These will be discussed separately in the sections that follow. But it will be convenient to treat them together in discussing conditions (1) and (2).

It is generally conceded that our introspective access does not satisfy condition (1). There is no organ of introspection which the self directs either to itself or to mental entities of any kind. David Armstrong thinks that this is not damaging to the perceptual model because there is a *bona fide* kind of sense perception, our “proprioceptive” awareness of states of our own bodies, that also does not involve the operation of an organ. Since the satisfaction of (1) clearly is essential to vision, which is the object-perception model’s paradigm of sense perception, Armstrong’s point works better as a defense of the broad perceptual model than as a defense of the object-perception model. But nothing in my subsequent discussion will turn on the failure of introspective access to satisfy (1).

Let’s move on to (2), the point that perceiving something involves there being a sense-experience, an appearance, of it. It seems widely agreed that introspection does not have this feature, and this is perhaps the most commonly given reason for denying that it should count as perception. No one

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<sup>2</sup> The things we perceive include perceivers, i.e., other people or animals. Even here one might say that what “in the first instance” one perceives, namely a body of a certain shape and coloration, is something that could exist in a world devoid of perceivers.



thinks that in being aware of a sensation or sensory experience one has yet another sensation or experience that is “of” the first one, and constitutes its appearing to one in a particular way. No one thinks that one is aware of beliefs and thoughts by having sensations or quasi-sense-experiences of them. And no one thinks that there is such a thing as an introspective sense-experience of oneself, an introspective appearance of oneself that relates to one’s beliefs about oneself as the visual experiences of things one sees relate to one’s beliefs about those things. Certainly this is an important difference between introspection and sense-perception as it actually is. But I shall refrain from declaring it fatal to the perceptual model.<sup>3</sup>

#### IV

It is when we come to condition (3), and the closely related conditions (4)–(6), that it is useful to separate the question whether the *self* is the object of quasi-perceptual introspective awareness, and the question of whether mental entities of various kinds are. I begin with the question about the self.

This is of course the subject of a famous episode in the history of philosophy: Hume’s denial that when he enters into what he calls himself he finds anything other than individual perceptions, and, in particular, that he finds any *self* that is the subject of these perceptions (Hume, *Treatise*, I,iv,6). This denial (for short, the Humean denial) has won the assent of most subsequent

<sup>3</sup> After these lectures were delivered I came to think that the point here can be deepened by bringing to bear points about the content of perceptual experience that have figured in recent discussions. It has been persuasively argued that the contents of perceptual experiences, as contrasted with the contents of the perceptual judgments to which these experiences give rise, are “analog” rather than “digital” (see Dretske, 1981, and Peacocke, 1989), and at least in part nonconceptual (see Evans, 1982, and Peacocke, 1989 and 1991). My denial that there are “introspective experiences” is in part the denial that our introspective judgments are grounded on states having this sort of content, in the way perceptual judgments are based on perceptual experiences. Of course, since our introspective judgments include ones about our perceptual experiences, the content of these will partake of the analog and nonconceptual character of the experiences they are about. I know that things look *this way*, and an adequate representation of *this way* would be analog and partly nonconceptual. But introspective contents will have this character only in virtue of embedding perceptual contents that are not introspective, i.e., are about the environment rather than the subject’s mind. And in such cases it is the introspective judgments themselves that have this character, and these judgments do not arise from yet other introspective states, quasi-sensory ones, whose content is analog and partly nonconceptual. Typically the introspective judgments will arise from states whose contents are analog and partly nonconceptual; but these will be perceptual experiences whose contents concern the environment.

Another feature of the contents of perceptual experiences is their perspectival character. But there are not different introspective perspectives on the same mental entities, in the way there are different perceptual perspectives on the same physical ones. This is a further reason for denying that introspective awareness satisfies condition (2). And perhaps a reason for denying that it satisfies condition (3); for it seems plausible that a nonfactual object of a perception-like epistemic access should be something on which different perspectives are possible.



philosophers who have addressed the issue. Nor is the denial original with Hume: Berkeley explicitly, and Locke implicitly, denied that there is any perception of the “spirit” or immaterial substance they took a self to be. But it was left to Hume to make vivid that what is denied is the introspective perceivability of anything that could be called the referent of the word “I.”

What lies behind this denial? A bad reason for making it would be the muddled, though common, way of thinking about substance which represents a substance as something behind or beneath the properties it “has,” and so as something we don’t perceive in perceiving its properties. This of course would be as good a reason for denying the perceivability of a cup, *qua* material substance, as it is for denying the perceivability of the self. I have suggested elsewhere that a somewhat less disreputable version of this way of thinking may have been at work in Hume (see Shoemaker, 1986). There are indications that Hume took it for granted that if there were a self, *qua* mental subject, all mental states of affairs would have to be *relational*—each would amount to a self perceiving a “perception” of one sort or another. This comes from assuming an “act-object” conception of sensation, imagination, thought, etc. In Hume’s terminology the object would be a perception, an idea or impression, and the act would be an apprehension of it by the self. Given the act-object conception, and given Hume’s dualist assumptions, the idea that if there is a self then all mental states of affairs are relational is a natural one; it is hard to see, on those assumptions, what an *intrinsic* property of a self would be—given dualism, it would have no physical properties, and all of its mental properties would be relational. But it seems a direct consequence of this way of thinking that a self, devoid of intrinsic properties, would be unperceivable. It would in fact fail one of the tests of perceivability that is central to the object perception model; condition (5) says that perception of a thing involves perception of *intrinsic* properties of the thing. Hume, of course, concluded that there is no self, over and above the individual perceptions.

But even if we put aside the act-object conception and the commitment to dualism, it seems clear that our introspective awareness of ourselves lacks a number of the features that make up the object perception model. I begin with (3), the requirement that awareness of facts is by means of awareness of objects. Selves are certainly objects in the required sense, and it is easy enough to define a notion of object awareness that takes selves as objects and would have introspective awareness as a special case. One is aware of an object, in this sense (call it the broad sense), just in case one is so related to it that, for some range of properties, its having a property in that range is apt to result in one’s having the belief that it has that property. In the case of selves, the relation can be just identity, and the range of properties can be certain mental ones; if one *is* a certain self, its having certain mental proper-

ties will normally go with one's believing that it, i.e., oneself, has them.<sup>4</sup> But compare this with the case of visual perception. There the relation to the objects of perception involves the eyes being directed towards them under appropriate lighting conditions. This, call it the "in view relation," is a relation one can have to any of an indefinitely large number of different objects. And there is a straightforward sense in which someone's having knowledge about a particular object is *explained* by her standing in this relation to it. One can come to know facts about an object *by* getting oneself into this relation to it. By contrast, one obviously cannot come to know facts about a self by getting oneself into the relation of identity with it. And one's being in that relation to a self does not enter into a causal explanation of one's having knowledge of it in anything like the way that having the "in view" relation to a tree enters into a causal explanation of one's having knowledge of it. If we expand condition (3) by saying that perception involves "object-awareness" and that object-awareness of a thing involves having to it a kind of relation such that, first, it is possible for one to have this relation to any of a range of different objects, and, second, having this relation to an object enters into the causal explanation of one's knowing facts of a certain kind about it, then it is clear that introspective awareness of the self does not satisfy it.

The failure of introspective awareness to satisfy this condition goes with its failure to satisfy several of the others, in particular (1) and (4). The obvious fact that there is no organ of introspection is in part the fact that there is no such thing as getting oneself in a position—a position one might not have been in—for making oneself the object of one's awareness. So the failure of introspective self-awareness to satisfy condition (1) is in part its failure to satisfy condition (3).

As for (4), the requirement that perception yield identification information, one case in which awareness of an object enters into the explanation of awareness of a fact is where the fact is about the object, perhaps among other things, and where one comes to know the fact by perceiving the object, perceiving it to have certain properties or stand in certain relations, and *identifying* it as the object it is. For example, I become aware that George has shaved his beard by seeing George, seeing that he is beardless, and identifying the man I see as George, the man I know to have previously been bearded. So the provision of identification information is an important part of the role played by awareness of objects in giving us awareness of facts. But in introspective self-knowledge there is no room for an identification of oneself, and no need for information on which to base such an identification (see Shoemaker, 1968 and 1986). There are indeed cases of genuine perceptual

<sup>4</sup> Or perhaps the relation should be *is identical to and conscious*. It is when I stand in this relation to myself that I acquire true beliefs about its (my) properties.

immunity to error  
through  
misidentification

knowledge in which awareness of oneself provides identification information, as when noting the features of the man I see in the mirror or on the television monitor tells me that he is myself. But there is no such role for awareness of oneself as an object to play in explaining my introspective knowledge that I am hungry, angry, or alarmed. This comes out in the fact that there is no possibility here of a *misidentification*; if I have my usual access to my hunger, there is no room for the thought “Someone is hungry all right, but is it me?”

There must be  
non-  
identification-  
based 1st  
person  
knowledge

Perhaps the most decisive point here is that where the use of “I” *does* involve an identification, the making of the identification will always presuppose the prior possession of other first-person information. Recall the episode in the Marx Brothers movie “Duck Soup” in which Groucho begins to suspect, correctly as it turns out, that instead of seeing himself in a mirror he is seeing, through an empty mirror frame, a double (Harpo, in fact) who is agilely aping his actions. Groucho goes through all sorts of antics in an attempt to fake out and expose the suspected double. Suppose, contrary to the film script, that it really was himself Groucho was seeing in the mirror, and that he become satisfied of this by seeing that the man in the mirror was performing the very same shenanigans that he himself was performing. Plainly, in order to identify the man in the mirror as himself in this way, Groucho had to know that *he himself* was performing those movements, i.e., had to know what he could express by saying “*I* am moving in the ways I see that man moving.” To avoid an infinite regress we must allow that at some point Groucho had first-person knowledge that did not rest on an identification. In general, identification-based first-person knowledge must be grounded in first-person knowledge that is not identification-based; and the making of introspective judgments is one of the main cases in which this occurs.

It also seem apparent that the fact that our introspective access to ourselves lacks feature (2), i.e., does not involve an introspective sense-experience of oneself, goes with the fact that this access lacks features (3) and (4). For it is one’s sense experiences of a thing that, when veridical, provide one with the identification information which, as just noted, helps make possible knowledge of facts about that thing.

At the beginning of this lecture I said that it is natural to suppose that we need something like vision to *explain* our introspective self-knowledge. But we now see that the knowledge one has of oneself requires an access to facts about oneself that does not conform to the object perception model, in particular to the requirement having to do with the provision of identification information. So, far from its being the case that in order to explain our self-knowledge we have to assume that we have a vision-like access to ourselves, it appears that in order to explain it we have to have an episte-

mological access to ourselves that in very fundamental ways is *not* like vision.

## V

I turn now to the other candidates for being the nonfactual objects of introspective perception, namely the various sort of mental entities of which we have knowledge in introspection—sensations, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, desires, and so on. I begin with intentional states such as beliefs, desires, intentions, hopes, suspicions, etc.

I will start with a consideration reason that has only recently come to the fore. Condition (5) says that the information about objects we get in perception crucially involves their intrinsic, nonrelational properties. But intentional states are standardly individuated by their contents, and when one knows about one's intentional states introspectively what one knows is, standardly, just that one has a state of a certain kind with a certain intentional content, i.e., that one has a belief that so and so, a desire for such and such, or the like. And recent discussion of mental content seems to have established that a person's having a state with a certain content consists in part in "external" facts about the person's environment—in the person's standing, or having stood, in perceptual relations to external objects of certain kinds, in his belonging to a linguistic community in which certain practices exist, and so on. I have in mind the arguments of Hilary Putnam and Tyler Burge.<sup>5</sup> So having a state with a certain intentional content is not an intrinsic feature of a person, and having a certain content will not be an intrinsic feature of a belief or desire.<sup>6</sup> As Paul Boghossian puts the difficulty, "how could anyone be in a position to know his thoughts merely by observing them, if facts about their content are-determined by their relational properties" (Boghossian, 1989, p. 11).

Further, it does not seem promising to suppose that for each belief or desire we can isolate something that is "inside the head," such that it is *by* being introspectively aware of that thing's intrinsic, non-intentional proper-

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<sup>5</sup> See Putnam, 1975 and 1981, and Burge 1979.

<sup>6</sup> When I delivered these lectures at Brown, a member of the audience suggested that it is open to an externalist about content to hold that having a certain content can count as an intrinsic feature of a belief or desire. For instead of thinking of a belief as something internal to the person, and its content as constituted by its relations to other things, one could think of it as "reaching out into the world," and having as constituents whatever entities enter into the determination of content. I do not think that this version of externalism makes it more intelligible to suppose that we know the contents of our belief by "inner sense"—for how could inner sense reach out into the environment? I also think that the causal role of beliefs, their influence on behavior and other mental states, is better accounted for by taking them to be entities that are internal to the person, and whose content properties are relational, than by taking them to reach out into the world. But I think we should be wary of assuming that there must be a fact of the matter about which view is right.

ties that one is aware of the belief or the desire. For example, it does not seem plausible to model one's introspective awareness of such intentional states on one's perceptual awareness of drawings, maps, and sentences, where one perceives something having representational content by perceiving its non-intentional features—colors, shapes, etc. There simply are no promising candidates for the non-intentional features of beliefs, etc., that this would require.<sup>7</sup>

But there are other reasons for denying that beliefs and such can be the nonfactual objects of a kind of perception. I am aware that I believe that Boris Yeltsin is President of Russia. It seems clear that it would be utterly wrong to characterize this awareness by saying that at some point I became aware of an entity and identified it, that entity, as a belief that Boris Yeltsin holds that office. To say that would suggest that it ought to be possible for someone to become aware of a belief and misidentify it as something other than a belief, or as a belief with a content other than the one it has; or that it ought to be possible for someone to become aware of something that is not a belief, say a wish that Adlai Stevenson had been elected President of the United States, and misidentify it as a belief that Boris Yeltsin is President of Russia on the basis of the intrinsic features one observes it to have. And while mistakes about one's propositional attitudes are no doubt possible, *these* kinds of mistakes seem clearly not to be. Closely related to this is the point that our access to our own beliefs does not issue in judgments involving anything that could be called demonstrative reference to beliefs—one is not aware of any “this” which one can go on to identify as a belief with a certain content.

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<sup>7</sup> It may seem that the claim that the content of mental states is fixed in part by states of affairs outside the head of the subject of the mental states poses a problem for *any* theory of introspective self-knowledge, and not only for those that invoke the inner sense model. If what makes it the case that my thought are about *water*, and not about the different stuff *twater* that abounds on Putnam's Twin Earth, is the fact that it is water rather than twater that abounds in my environment, then how can I know that I am thinking about water without investigating my environment? The short answer to this is that the contents of mental states are fixed holistically, and that whatever fixes the content of the first-order belief I express by saying “There is water in the glass” also fixes in the same way the embedded content in the second-order belief I express by saying “I believe there is water in the glass”—assuming that “water” would be used by me univocally in those reports. Given that the first is about water rather than twater, the second will ascribe a belief about water rather than a belief about twater. So to explain how I can know what I believe without investigating my environment, all we need to suppose is that I am such that having a first-order belief with a certain content typically gives rise to a second-order belief that one has a belief with that content. In such an account the inner sense model has not so far been invoked, and so far there is no mystery. The mystery arises when we say that the first-order belief gives rise to the second-order belief by means of a process involving a perception of intrinsic, nonrelational features of the first-order belief—for we have no idea what such features could be.

There seem, then, to be good reasons for denying that introspective awareness of intentional states satisfies conditions (3) and (5)—i.e., denying that it is an awareness of facts mediated by awareness of nonfactual objects and their intrinsic features. It goes with this that it does not satisfy condition (4); that it is not a relation to objects that supplies identification information about them.

## VI

Let us move to the case of sensations and sense experiences. I think that it is here that the perceptual model of introspective self knowledge has its greatest intuitive plausibility. In particular, it is here that we meet the mental entities that seem most “object-like,” and **it is here that it is most plausible to say that we are introspectively aware of mental facts *by* being aware of nonfactual entities that are constituents of those facts.**

In part, at least, this is due to the intuitive attractiveness of something alluded to earlier, the “act-object conception” of sensations and sensory states. Accepting this conception amounts to taking the surface grammar of sensation statements at face value—which is no doubt one source of its intuitive attractiveness. So, for example, the statement “I see a red, round after-image” is construed as asserting a relation between the subject and a particular thing, an image, that is in some sense red and round, and the statement “I feel a sharp pain in the elbow” is construed as asserting a relation between the subject and a particular thing, a pain, that is in some sense sharp and in the elbow. After-images and pains are perhaps the mental entities that seem most robustly object-like. And if we take our ordinary talk about such entities at face value, our awareness of them clearly satisfies my condition (4). I am aware that my red after-image is to the right of my yellow one by being aware of these and seeing the relation between them. And I am aware that the pain in my foot is more intense than the pain in my elbow by being aware of these two pains and their intrinsic features. It also seems natural to suppose that one’s introspective access to such entities puts one in a position to designate them demonstratively—that an apt expression of my knowledge of the two after-images is “That after-image is to the right of that one.” It also seems that our introspective awareness of such entities satisfies conditions (3) and (5). The awareness provides identification information, which enables one to pick out such objects, discriminate them from one another, and track them over time. And it is natural to think of the properties by which one does this picking out, etc., as being, in the first instance, intrinsic features of the objects. It remains true that our awareness of such entities does not satisfy conditions (1) and (2). There is no organ of introspection. And we are not aware of such entities by having sense-experiences of them; we don’t have sensations of our sensations. But if we have introspective awareness of

such entities that satisfies conditions (3)–(5), that may seem enough to justify the use of an object-perception model of such awareness.

Traditional sense datum theory, and the theory of ideas of classical empiricism, applies the act-object conception more widely. Every case in which a person has any sort of sensory experience is construed as a case in which the person is presented with an object whose ontological status is thought of as being the same as that of after-images and pains, and of which the subject is supposed to have the same sort of awareness as we have, according to the act-object conception, of our after-images and pains. So, for example, when it looks to me as if there were an orange and a lemon on the table, the first to the right of the second, this is supposed to involve there *actually being* before my mind a round orange image and an oval yellow one, the first of which I see to be to the right of the second.

**Sense-data theory** Sense-datum theory has been out of favor for thirty or forty years, for reasons I cannot undertake to rehearse here. But I think that it is not sufficiently appreciated that the reasons for rejecting the sense-datum theory are at the same time reasons for rejecting the act-object conception as applied to pains and after-images. Conversely, if one does continue to accept the act-object conception for pains and after-images, one ought in consistency to be a sense-datum theorist across the board. The traditional “argument from illusion” is surely right to this extent: if one thinks that in a case where one is “appeared to redly” and there is no red physical object in front of one, one must be seeing a purely mental object that is red, then one ought to think that in a case where one is “appeared to redly” and there *is* a red physical object in front of one, one must be seeing a purely mental object that is red. The account of what is involved in being appeared to redly, i.e., having the sort of experience that constitutes its looking to one as if one were seeing something red, should be the same for the case in which the experience is veridical as for the case in which it is illusory. Consider the case of double vision. It is natural to say that when my finger is near my nose I see two finger-shaped and finger-colored images. Suppose we take this literally, and hold that in such cases I am perceiving two mental entities, call them images, having the properties in question. What happens when I move my finger away, or focus my eyes, so that, as one might say, the two images coalesce into one? Surely it is intolerable to say that in this case two *mental images* coalesced into one *flesh and blood finger*. If we say that when seeing double I saw two finger-shaped mental images, then we had better say that what these coalesced into is one finger-shaped mental image, and that, as the sense-datum theory says, veridically perceiving a physical thing always involves “immediately” perceiving a mental image. And if we find the latter view unacceptable, as most recent philosophers do, then one should resist the temptation, which I think is considerable, to reify double images. And I think we should also resist the



temptation, which is almost irresistible, to reify after-images. In other words, we should reject the act-object conception as applied to these.

A classic statement of the rejection of the act-object conception as applied to after-images was J. J. C. Smart's claim, in "Sensations and Brain Processes," that "There is, in a sense, no such thing as an after-image, or sense-datum, though there is such a thing as the experience of having an image" (Smart, 1962). One way of playing this out is by saying that the act-object conception depends on taking the *intentional* object of a sensory state to be an actually existing object. So, e.g., my statement that I have an experience of an orange, round object, which is true if interpreted as meaning that I have an experience which represents there being an orange, round object, is misconstrued as asserting that I have an experience that puts me into a relation to an object that is actually orange and round. Thus David Armstrong says that "To have an after-image is to seem to see a physical phenomenon of a certain sort: the after-image itself, I maintain, is a purely intentional object, like the thing believed in the case of a false belief" (Armstrong, 1984). That Armstrong says this in a section headed "In Defense of Inner Sense" is evidence that *his* version of the inner sense model is not the object-perception version.

At the beginning of this lecture I invited you to focus on a current sensation or after-image of yours and consider whether it seems natural to you to regard your access to it as similar to the perceptual access you have to objects in your environment. This does seem natural to me, and I suspect that it seemed natural to you. If I am right, this may be because you share with me the deplorable tendency to think in terms of the act-object conception—and of course I framed my invitation in terms that might be said to presuppose that conception.

But there is another possible reason for this response. Having a red after-image *is* like seeing something red. That is, the experience of having a red after-image is phenomenally like (*somewhat* like) the experience one has when one sees something red in one's environment. Likewise, the experience of having a pain in one's foot is somewhat like the experience one has when one perceives, tactually, that one has a stone in one's shoe, or a cut in one's foot.<sup>8</sup> To a much lesser extent, having a visual image ("seeing in the mind's eye") is phenomenally like the experience one would have if one were actually seeing the thing imaged. And, at the opposite extreme, having a completely realistic hallucination is phenomenally very like, perhaps exactly like, the experience one would have if one were actually seeing a situation of the sort hallucinated. It is of course one thing to say that there is a similarity be-

<sup>8</sup> There are those, indeed, who hold that pains are simply sense perceptions of certain bodily conditions, so that in having a pain one normally is perceiving something (though not a pain). See Armstrong, 1968 and Pitcher, 1970.

tween certain mental states (imagings, etc.) and the experiences involved in veridical sense-perception, and quite another to say that there is a similarity between our access to those mental states and our access to the objects we perceive in cases of veridical sense-perception. But it is all too easy to make an unnoticed slide from the one similarity claim to the other.<sup>9</sup>

If, as my recent discussion suggests, what we are aware of in being aware of sensory states are their intentional objects, or intentional contents, then the first of my reasons for rejecting the application of the object-perception model to the case of awareness of beliefs is also a reason for rejecting its application to the case of awareness of sensory states. It would seem that the intentional content of sensory states, like that of beliefs and other intentional states, is determined in part by factors “outside the head” of the subject of such states. So what we are aware of in being aware of such states will not be “intrinsic” features of them, and this awareness will not satisfy condition (5) of the stereotype underlying the object-perception model.

But this raises a major issue. There are philosophers who hold that the only features of sensory states of which we are introspectively aware are intentional or representational ones (see Harman, 1990). It would simplify my case against the object-perception model if I could accept this. But I am a champion of “qualia,” features of sensations or other sensory phenomena that give them their qualitative or phenomenal character, or determine “what it is like” to have them; and on the face of it these are not intentional properties, although they do in some way ground the intentional properties of perceptual experiences. The usual way of thinking about our awareness of qualia can easily seem to imply a perceptual model. I will return to this in my third lecture, where I will discuss the status of the “phenomenal character” of experience and our knowledge of it.

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<sup>9</sup> This will be especially easy if one construes the first similarity as amounting to there being a similarity between something presented to one in the having of the mental state—say an image—and the object of the veridical perceiving. If indeed one thinks that having an orange image involves being presented with something like what one sees when one sees an orange on the table, it will be natural to think that one’s access to that something must somehow be like one’s perceptual access to the orange one sees on the table. This yields a version of the view, which seems to me incoherent, which conceives of imaging and the like in terms of the act-object conception (requiring that these have actual objects, and not merely intentional objects) but refuses to give an act-object account of veridical experience, and so rejects sense-data. It may be objected that this view does give an act-object conception of veridical experience—the external thing that is veridically perceived can serve as the object. But the objects posited by the act-object conception are supposed to be constitutive of, and internal to, experiences (or imagings, or whatever) in a way an external object cannot be. In any case, it is apparent that while there is a straightforward sense in which one sensory or experiential state can be phenomenally similar to another, there is none in which a sensory or experiential state can be phenomenally similar to, say, an orange on a table.

## VII

Qualia aside, there remains one consideration which makes it more natural to think of our awareness of sensory states in perceptual terms than it is to think of our awareness of beliefs, desires, etc., in such terms. That is the role of *attention* in the two domains. It would seem that one can shift one's attention from one sensation to another, or from one sensory experience to another, in the same way one can shift one's attention from one object of perception to another. But the notion of attention is not really at home in the domain of the nonsensory intentional states such as belief. If it means anything to speak of my attending to my belief that Boris Yeltsin is President of Russia, it means either to think about the proposition and presumed fact that is the content of my belief, i.e., to think about Boris Yeltsin's being President of Russia, or to think about the fact that I have that belief. So all that answers to talk of shifting one's attention from one belief to another is shifting from thinking of one thing to thinking of another thing. It seems different in the case of sensations. Just as I put myself in a better position to get information about a perceived object by attending to it, I seem to put myself in a better position to get information about a pain by attending to it.<sup>10</sup> Thus our introspective access to introspective states, unlike that to intentional states, seems to satisfy condition (6).

But I think that there is less to this than there seems. If we put aside for a moment the case of bodily sensations, and put aside the rather special case of afterimagining, it becomes doubtful whether anything answers to talk of attending to sensory experiences, as opposed to attending to the objects of those experiences. Here is a little experiment to conduct. Raise both of your hands before you, about a foot apart and a foot in front of your face. Now perform the following two attention shifts. First, shift your attention from one hand to the other. Second, shift your attention from your *visual experience* of the one hand to your *visual experience* of the other. Do you do anything different in the second case than in the first? Perhaps you are more likely in the first case than in the second to change the *focus* of your vision—to fixate first on one hand and then on the other. But since we are talking about shift of attention, not shift of focus, we should make it part of the instructions that throughout the experiment your focus is on some point midway between the two hands. That may make the instructions hard to follow. But I suspect that insofar as one does anything different in performing

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Boghossian cites as a reason for rejecting the view that self-knowledge is “cognitively insubstantial,” which he seems to see as the only alternative to the observational model of self-knowledge, that “self-knowledge can be directed: one can decide how much attention to direct to one's thoughts or images, just as one can decide how much attention to pay to objects in one's visual field” (Boghossian, 1989, p. 19), and cites D. M. Mellor as having made the same point. Notice that Boghossian does not restrict this to the case of sensations and the like, where I have said that it seems most plausible.

the second attention shift than in performing the first, it will consist in your first *thinking about* your experience of the one hand and then *thinking about* your experience of the other. In other words, it will be like what happens in a “shift of attention” from one belief to another.

The case of after-images is trickier. If I simultaneously see two after-images, I can shift my attention from one to the other. It doesn't seem right to say that this is merely a matter of shifting from thinking about the one to thinking about the other. And, so one might suppose, it also cannot be just a matter of shifting one's attention from one *external* object of perception to another, i.e., from one object of *vision* (as opposed to introspection) to another, since here, unlike the case of the hands, there are no external objects. Or take the case of double vision—if I hold up one finger which I “see double,” I can apparently shift my attention from the finger image on the right to the one on the left, and this won't be shifting my attention from one finger to another, since there is only one finger being seen. Notice, however, that to get objects of introspective attention I have slipped back into the act-object conception, and acquiesced in the reification of images. The attendings here were not attendings to experiencings. And if we reject the act-object conception, why shouldn't we say that the attendings are, not to existent objects of “inner sense,” but to nonexistent *intentional* objects of outer sense? In the after-image case both of these objects are non-existent, and in the double vision case at least one of them is. Where, as in the two hands case, things are as they appear, we can say that the intentional objects actually exist—and then attending to these is just attending to actual objects of vision. Nowhere in this, I think, do we find an attending to mental entities that is a distinctively perceptual attending—i.e., that is over and above the thinking about which we can have in the case of purely intentional mental states such as belief.

Similar remarks apply in to the case of bodily sensations, such as pains. If, as some have suggested, these should be thought of sense-experiences of bodily conditions, the attendings to these can be thought of as proprioceptive attendings to their intentional objects, which may or may not exist, and not as introspective attendings to mental entities. If, as others have suggested, pains are themselves bodily conditions that are nonmental, then perceptual attending to pains does not require *inner* sense. And the attending to sensations that cannot be handled in either of these ways can be held to consist simply in thinking about, and so not to be perceptual at all.

I have suggested that what advocates of the object-perception model take to be attending to mental objects is really attending to the possibly non-existent intentional objects of perceptual states. I think it is likewise true that what passes for demonstrative reference to mental states is typically demonstrative reference—or rather ostensible demonstrative reference—to intentional objects of mental states. When Macbeth asks “Is this a dagger

which I see before me?”), the ostensible reference is to something seen, not something introspected—and the actual reference is to nothing. Demonstratives can be used in this way even when one knows that the experience is illusory or hallucinatory. It is, in such cases, *as if* one were referring demonstratively to perceived objects, but in fact one is referring demonstratively to nothing.

## VIII

I have been arguing that introspective awareness does not conform to the object-perception model. But why does it matter whether it does?

One reason for this should be already apparent. **To the extent that this model incorporates the act-object conception of sensation and sensory states, it populates the realm of the mental with what many, myself included, regard as philosophically objectionable entities—sense-data, reified images, etc. Among other things, these *entia non grata*—to use Quine’s phrase—are difficult if not impossible to incorporate into a naturalist account of the mind.**

But there is another way in which how one thinks of the nature of mental phenomena can be influenced by whether one accepts the object-perception model. For acceptance of this model encourages one to think of mental concepts, or at least those that can be self-ascribed introspectively, as analogous to such observational concepts as those of particular colors, i.e., those that have traditionally been regarded as simple and undefinable. This seems incompatible with any view according to which it is constitutive of mental concepts that the states, events, etc. they are of occupy certain causal or functional roles, i.e., are causally or counterfactually related in certain ways to other mental states and to behavior. For we have been “taught by Hume” (I do not say that we have been *correctly* taught this) that any report that carries causal implications goes beyond what we can strictly speaking perceive to be the case.

Suppose that it were true that all introspective reports were grounded on observations of “intrinsic” features of mental entities, where in the first instance these features are conceived under “simple” observational concepts. There would then be at least some mental concepts, namely these simple observational ones, that are not functionally definable. Further, the judgment that the states introspectably observed in fact occupy certain causal or functional roles, and so fall under functionally defined mental concepts, would be inferential judgments. And it is not easy to see what the basis of the inference could be, especially if these judgments are to have the kind of authority that introspective judgments about many kinds of mental states appear to have. How is one supposed to know, and know with a high degree of certainty, that when one is in a certain introspectively observable state one is in a state that plays a highly complex causal role or has a number of causal and

No need for  
causal or  
functional  
investigation

counterfactual features? At best it seems that one could know this only after having made an extensive investigation, in which one correlates what one knows by direct introspective observation with causal information gotten in other ways. But it seems clear that the authoritative introspective self-ascription of the various sorts of sensory and intentional states does not have to be preceded by such an investigation. The natural conclusion is that if the self-ascription of such mental states is grounded on inner sense, *à la* the object-perception model, then the concepts of those mental states cannot be causal or functional concepts. By the same token, if one thinks that these concepts *are* causal or functional concepts, one has a reason for denying that the self-ascription of mental states under these concepts is grounded on inner sense, *à la* the object-perception model, and has a reason for welcoming independent reasons for opposing that model.<sup>11</sup>

Sketch of an  
alternative  
view

Of course, saying that self-ascription of functionally defined mental states is not grounded on object-perception does not explain how it is grounded. How can we make, noninferentially, judgments that have complex causal implications? Here is a sketch of an answer. Our minds are so constituted, or our brains are so wired, that, for a wide range of mental states, one's being in a certain mental state produces in one, under certain conditions, the belief that one is in that mental state. This is what our introspective access to our own mental states consists in. The "certain conditions" may include one's considering whether one is in that mental state, and will certainly include what is a precondition of this, namely that one has the concept of oneself and the concept of the mental state. The beliefs thus produced will count as knowledge, not because of the quantity or quality of the evidence on which they are based (for they are based on no evidence), but because of the reliability of the mechanism by which they are produced. And now we add that the concepts under which these states are conceived in these beliefs are causal or functional ones.

The account just sketched is very close to what I believe. But it also close to what has been maintained by philosophers—here I particularly have in mind David Armstrong—who are enthusiastic supporters of the idea that introspection is a kind of perception. Certainly the view sketched does not involve the object-perception model that I have been criticizing. But it is important to see that much of what we call perception does not conform to that model. The sense of smell, for example, does not ordinarily put one in an epistemic relation to particular objects about which it gives identification information. Smelling a skunk does not put one in a position to make demonstrative reference to a particular skunk, and there is no good sense in which it

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<sup>11</sup> See Goldman, 1993, and Shoemaker, 1993. In the latter, I suggest that Goldman's criticism of functionalism assumes a perceptual model of self-knowledge; but Goldman indicates in his "Author's Response" that he is not persuaded that this is so.

is *by* smelling a particular skunk that one gets the information that there is, or has been, a skunk around (for one thing, nothing in what one smells tells one that one skunk rather than several is responsible for the smell). Even in the case of normal human vision, my conditions (3)–(6), those that are distinctive of the object perception model, do not always hold. I may see motion in the periphery of my field of vision without perceiving any of the intrinsic features of the moving object, and without gaining any “identification information” about it. Moreover, in applying the notion of perception to animals of other species we seem willing to count as perception a means of obtaining information about the environment that is not keyed to particular items in the environment—e.g., a detector in fish that is sensitive to the oxygen level in the water, or the ability to sense that there are predators of some sort about.<sup>12</sup>

So there is room for a conception of perception that does not incorporate the object-perception model, and allows for perception of facts that is not based on perception of objects. It is this I have called the “broad perceptual model,” and it is the conformance of introspective self-knowledge to this that I take David Armstrong to be maintaining in his defense of “inner sense.” Its central features are items (7) and (8) on my list—the causal condition and the independence condition. The view that introspection conforms to these, and so is in that minimal sense analogous to sense-perception, can seem a truism. But my next lecture will be devoted to arguing that this view is mistaken, largely because introspectable mental states and our awarenesses of them are not independent in the way they would have to be if this view were correct.

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<sup>12</sup> Some of these points were forcibly presented to me by Daniel Dennett and Ulrich Neisser when I read a precursor of this lecture at a conference at Emory University in October of 1991.