

# Against Inner Sense Theories

PHIL 971 Kant Seminar

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## 1 Shoemaker's Two Models of Inner Sense

### 1.1 The Object Perception Model:

1. Organ of perception
2. Occurrence of sense experiences/impressions that are distinct from the object of perception & belief formed on the basis of that perception
3. Immediate awareness of objects (particulars) not facts
4. Affords "identification information" concerning object of perception
5. Perception is normally of intrinsic, nonrelational properties
6. Objects of perception are potential objects of attention
7. Perceptual beliefs are causally produced by the objects or states of affairs perceived, via a causal mechanism that normally produces true beliefs
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 independently of the capacity to so perceive them

#### OBJECTIONS:

- Against (1): There is no organ of introspection
- Against (3): Introspection does not afford object awareness because there is no "in view of" relation which one can enjoy in introspection<sup>1</sup>
- Against (4): Introspection does not depend, as perception does, on the possession of identifying information about oneself<sup>2</sup>
- Against (5): Introspection provides no awareness of intrinsic properties
  - Knowledge of one's thoughts is not knowledge of intrinsic properties since thoughts are relationally individuated
  - There are no intrinsic features that one becomes aware of via introspection on sensations, since these are not themselves colors, shapes, etc.
  - Mental states are not really related to as "particulars" in any case; one cannot just "happen upon" them (Shoemaker 1994, 259-60)
- Against (6): Introspection does not provide opportunities for attentional shifts<sup>3</sup>

### 1.2 The Broad Perceptual Model:

1. *The causal condition*: our beliefs about our mental states are caused by those mental states, via a reliable belief-producing mechanism, thereby qualifying

<sup>1</sup> 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. (Shoemaker 1994a, 257)

<sup>2</sup> 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?"... 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 (Shoemaker 1994a, 258)

<sup>3</sup> 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. (Shoemaker 1994a, 266)

as knowledge of those states and events

2. *The independence condition*: the existence of these states and events is independent of their being known in this way, and even of there existing the mechanisms that make such knowledge possible.
- The inner sense model may seem most appealing with respect to sensory phenomenology, but what about thought? Is the inner sense model applicable to awareness of one's own thoughts as such? Or to the fact that one believes or knows that *P*, etc.?
  - One might object to the broad perceptual model on the basis that, if true, it would allow for the conceptual possibility of "self-blind" creatures—something that is not in fact possible<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Self-Blindness

*Self-blindness*: a lack of introspective access to one's mental states, of which one can otherwise conceive, and without any failure of rationality on one's part<sup>5,6</sup>

### 2.1 Geach's Argument

- Q<sub>1</sub>: Why is there no possibility of error or malfunction in the case of self-knowledge?
    - A<sub>1</sub>: We "have no use" for the term "emotion-blind" (or self-blindness generally)<sup>7</sup>
  - Q<sub>2</sub>: Why do we have "no use" for self-blindness?
    - A<sub>2</sub>: Self-knowledge is not susceptible to error in the relevant sense<sup>8</sup>
1. If self-knowledge were like perception then there must be the possibility of error or malfunction
  2. There is no possibility of error with respect to self-knowledge
  3. ∴ Self-knowledge is not a form of perceptual awareness

### 2.2 Shoemaker's Argument

1. Introspection is a quasi-perceptual faculty only if self-blindness is a conceptual possibility
2. Self-blindness is not a conceptual possibility
3. ∴ Introspection is not a quasi-perceptual faculty, i.e., the inner-sense model (or the "broad" perceptual model) is false.

<sup>4</sup> My aim is to develop a view which rejects the [independence condition], and so rejects the claim that introspection conforms to the broad perceptual model, without falling back into the first [model]. The view I support holds that there is a conceptual, constitutive, connection between the existence of certain sorts of mental entities and their introspective accessibility, while denying the transparency of the mental. (Shoemaker 1994b, 272)

<sup>5</sup> To be self-blind with respect to a certain kind of mental fact or phenomenon, a creature must have the ability to conceive of those facts and phenomena...So lower animals who are precluded by their conceptual poverty from having first-person access do not count as self-blind. And it is only introspective access to those phenomena that the creature is supposed to lack; it is not precluded that she should learn of them in the way others might learn of them (Shoemaker 1994b, 273)

<sup>6</sup> as I have defined self-blindness, it is supposed to be like ordinary blindness in not entailing any cognitive deficiency. The person who lacks sight can in principle be equal in intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity, to any sighted person. (Shoemaker 1994a, 281)

<sup>7</sup> Could a man's introspective 'sense' be unable to discriminate between his being angry and his being afraid, so that his use of the words "anger" and "fear" depended precariously on other people's use of them, in the way that a colour-blind man's use of colour-words does? In regard to colours, we can distinguish between a colour-blind man with a sensory defect and a mentally defective man who is unable to form colour-concepts and learn the use of colour words; could we make a similar distinction about emotions? Could we say of somebody: "He's very intelligent, but he keeps on using words for emotions wrongly; the psychiatrist says he has a congenital defect of the 'inner sense' that discriminates emotions from each other"? (Geach 1957, 109)

<sup>8</sup> Somebody might try saying that the reason why we have no use for the term "emotion-blindness" is that our 'inner sense' is not liable to such defects as our eyesight is; our inner sense represents our emotions just as they occur, even if we are unable to describe them correctly. Now a sense that was in fact not affected by any illusions, any failure to discriminate, etc., is indeed conceivable; but plainly what our present objection is really after is a sense that not merely does not but cannot mislead us. But this "cannot" would be a logical "cannot"; and the inclination to use "cannot" here points to a logical difference between our knowledge of the outer world by our senses and our knowledge of the mind by 'inner sense'. Of bona fide sense-faculties, it is impossible to say that they cannot be defective or inaccurate. (Geach 1957, 110)

- Q: Why is self-blindness not a conceptual possibility?
- Six Arguments:
  1. Pain
  2. Perceptual Experience
  3. Volition/Will (or exercises of agency generally)
  4. Belief/Desire
  5. Redundancy (against inner sense more generally)
  6. Critical reasoning

THE PAIN ARGUMENT (273-5):<sup>9</sup>

1. Pain has a causal-functional role that is constitutively linked to beliefs that one is in pain and desires to avoid being in pain
2. Self-blind creatures lack constitutive connections between their states and their beliefs or desires
3. ∴ Self-blind creatures cannot have pains

THE EXPERIENCE ARGUMENT (276-8):<sup>10</sup>

1. In rational beings, perceptual experience is inferentially integrated with one's other beliefs in "low-level" theorizing about one's environment
2. A self-blind creature would be unable to engage in low-level theorizing
3. ∴ A self-blind perceiver is impossible

THE AGENCY ARGUMENT (279-81):<sup>11</sup>

1. A necessary condition of knowledge of one's own agency is that one have knowledge of one's beliefs and desires
2. A self-blind creature would be ignorant (or agnostic) concerning at least a large number of their beliefs/desires
3. ∴ A self-blind but knowing agent is impossible

THE BELIEF/DESIRE ARGUMENT (281-4):<sup>12</sup>

1. A person with the capacity for self-ascribing mental states using the concepts <belief> or <desire> is never in a position to sincerely utter a Moore-paradoxical statement
2. A self-blind creature would be one that would in principle be capable of sincerely uttering a Moore-paradoxical statement
3. ∴ A self-blind creature cannot self-ascribe mental states using the concepts <belief> or <desire>

<sup>9</sup> if you take away the link with introspective beliefs from the total causal role of pain, you take away a lot else—namely the role of pain in explaining the behavior we take as indicating distress and the desire to feel better. (Shoemaker 1994b, 275)

<sup>10</sup> when [the self-blind person] has no relevant beliefs about perceptual conditions, she is totally unable to say which of these states she is in, and at other times she can do so only by inferring what state she is in from what perceptual judgment she is making and from what she believes about what perceptual conditions she is in. If thrown into a situation in which the sort of low grade theorizing discussed above is called for if one is to know what the perceptual conditions are, she is ... helpless... My question is, would it be reasonable to suppose that the scientists had bestowed on her visual experiences that are phenomenally just like those we have, but to which she lacks introspective access? And it seems to me that the answer is: obviously, no. (Shoemaker 1994b, 278)

<sup>11</sup> whether or not it is necessary simpliciter that one have introspective access to one's beliefs and desires, it is necessary that one have such access if one is to have any access at all, even an inferential access, to one's intentions, volitions, and actions. So it is a necessary condition of one's having knowledge of one's own agency, even inferential knowledge of it, that one not be self-blind with respect to one's beliefs and desires. (Shoemaker 1994b, 281)

<sup>12</sup> Coming to grasp the rules for using 'belief' (or a synonymous expression) is the most obvious way to acquire the concept belief. So it seems that my acquiring this concept will typically dispose me to believe that I believe that p whenever I believe that p and form some judgment about whether or not I have this belief. At the very least, my possessing the concept belief entails that I will display (or be disposed to display) excellent evidence that I believe that I believe that p whenever I exhibit the belief that p and form some judgment about whether or not I have it. (Zimmerman 2008, 330)

THE REDUNDANCY ARGUMENT (285):<sup>13</sup>

1. In rational, intelligent beings, whose capacities are functioning normally, nothing more is needed to explain one's behavior than appeal to such capacities plus whatever first-order states the creature enjoys
2. Inner sense accounts posit an additional mechanism for explaining behavior of such organisms
3. ∴ Inner sense theories appeal to a redundant explanatory mechanism

THE CRITICAL REASONING ARGUMENT (285-6):<sup>14</sup>

1. A necessary condition for being a rational being is that one be able to critically reason—i.e. be able to revise one's beliefs or desires on the basis of one's experience and of logical relationships between the contents of one's attitudes
2. A self-blind creature would be unable to regulate their belief-desire system in a critical way
3. ∴ A self-blind creature could not be genuinely rational and so is impossible

<sup>13</sup> From an evolutionary perspective it would certainly be bizarre to suppose that, having endowed creatures with everything necessary to give them a certain very useful behavioral repertoire—namely that of creatures with normal human intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity, plus the ability to acquire first order beliefs about the environment from sense-perception—Mother Nature went to the trouble of installing in them an *additional* mechanism, a faculty of Inner Sense

<sup>14</sup> What rationalizes the investigation [into what revisions or readjustments to make to one's belief-desire system] are one's higher order beliefs about what one believes and has reason to believe. Creatures without introspective access to their beliefs and desires would lack this resource for rational revision of these beliefs and desires, and would fall short of normal human rationality.

*References & Further Reading*

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