

The Inner Sense Theory

Secondly, the other fountain from which experience furnisheth the understanding with ideas is the perception of the operations of our own mind within us, as it is employed about the ideas it has got;- which operations, when the soul comes to reflect on and consider, do furnish the understanding with another set of ideas, which could not be had from things without. And such are perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and all the different actings of our own minds;- which we being conscious of, and observing in ourselves, do from these receive into our understandings as distinct ideas as we do from bodies affecting our senses. This source of ideas every man has wholly in himself; and though it be not sense, as having nothing to do with external objects, yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be called internal sense. But as I call the other SENSATION, so I call this REFLECTION, the ideas it affords being such only as the mind gets by reflecting on its own operations within itself. By reflection then, in the following part of this discourse, I would be understood to mean, that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them, by reason whereof there come to be ideas of these operations in the understanding.

- John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Prometheus Books, 1995.
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To have beliefs about one's own beliefs, all that is required is that there be a Monitoring Mechanism (MM), that, when activated, takes the representation p in the Belief Box as input and produces the representation *I believe that P* as output. This mechanism would be trivial to implement. To produce representations of one's own beliefs, the MM merely has to copy representations from the Belief Box, embed the copies in a representation schema of the form: I believe that _____, and then place the new representations back in the Belief Box. The proposed mechanism (or perhaps a distinct but entirely parallel mechanism) would work in much the same way to produce representations of one's own desires, intentions, and imaginings.

Shaun Nichols and Steve Stich, *Mindreading*, 2003

Nichols, Shaun and Stephen P. Stich. *Mindreading*. Oxford University Press, 2003.
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Sydney Shoemaker, "Self-Knowledge and 'Inner Sense': Lecture I" (1994)

Object perception model: the perceiver obtains whatever factual information she does by perceiving objects.

Broad perceptual model: there are no perceived objects, but in perception we have access to facts or states of affairs that exist independently of their being perceived and independently of there being any means of perceiving them.

Stereotypical features of perception:

- (1) Involves the operation of a perceptual organ that is to some extent under the voluntary control of the subject.
- (2) Involves the occurrence of sense-experiences that are distinct from the object perceived and the perceptual belief (if any) formed.
- (3) Awareness of facts is mediated by awareness of objects involved in those facts.
- (4) Affords "identification information" of both intrinsic and nonrelational properties.
- (5) Perception of relational properties depends on perception of intrinsic, nonrelational properties.
- (6) One can alter one's ability to gain information through perception by way of attention, without changing what one perceives.
- (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.
- (8) The objects and/or states of affairs with which perception puts us in contact exist independently of their being perceived and independently of there being any means of perceiving them.

I. Content Externalism:

1. We have introspective knowledge not only of our states, but also of the content of those states.
2. Facts about content are (often) determined in part by relations to environmental and social facts (Content Externalism).
3. According to (5), perceptual knowledge of relational facts fundamentally depends on perceiving intrinsic properties.
4. It is implausible that these states have intrinsic properties that tell us of their relational properties (cf. Wittgenstein/Wright).
5. Therefore, the perceptual model cannot explain introspective knowledge of content-bearing states.

II. Mistakes

SS: It is not possible to become aware of e.g. a belief, but misidentify it as something other than a belief, or as a belief with a content other than the one it has.

Is that true? Can't I mistake dependence for love, or a belief about Utrecht with a belief about Leiden?

III. Sense-data

SS: Disjunctivism is false: if we appeal to purely mental objects to explain illusory experiences, we must also posit them in the case of veridical experiences (sense-data). This is BAD! Therefore, to avoid the slide into sense-data, we should avoid reifying sensations as objects altogether, even in the illusory case. We should say that having an orange after-image is having the experience as of seeing an orange, round object. (How plausible is this?)

The Transparency (Diaphanousness) of Perception: in sensory experience, there are no distinctively 'mental' properties of the experience; we are aware only of the intentional objects of experience.

“... that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact seems to escape us: it seems, if I may use a metaphor, to be transparent -- we look through it and see nothing but the blue ...”

- G.E. Moore, “The Refutation of Idealism,” 1906

Moore, G. E. *Philosophical Studies*. Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1922.
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“When you see a tree, you do not experience any features as intrinsic features of your experience. Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your visual experience. I predict you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree, including relational features of the tree "from here.”

- Gilbert Harman, “The Intrinsic Quality of Experience,” 1990

Harman, Gilbert. The intrinsic quality of experience. *Philosophical Perspectives* 4:31-52.
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IV. Attention

SS claims that attention plays little or no role in modifying the information we get through introspection.

SP. What about, say, shifting one's attention from the world to one's mind, e.g. from thinking about Yeltsin to thinking about one's thoughts about Yeltsin (mindfulness)?

SS: That's not *attention*, it's just a change in the subject matter of your thought.

SP: So what counts as attention?

SS: It enhances the information you get about some part of your total mental state while the other part remains present.

SP: How about what a painter does when she shifts from seeing the table as she normally would to attending to its appearance of having a multiplicity of differently colored patches?

SS: She's still just attending to *the table*.

Nichols and Stich

Possible empirical evidence (as against the Theory Theory):

1. If kids achieve proficiency at self-ascribing mental states earlier than they do at ascribing them to others, this might be evidence of a self-monitoring mechanism that does not rely on a Theory of Mind.
2. Suppose autism involves an impairment in Theory of Mind. If those with autism also show an impairment in self-knowledge, this would indicate that the two capacities are subserved by the same mechanism.
3. Schizophrenia seems to impair self-detection without impairing the mindreading of others.

Worry: does the Inner Sense Theory really predict the possibility of self-detection being noticeably impaired while one's ability to mindread remains intact? Why wouldn't one just start using mindreading on oneself and keep on making self-ascriptions? And if Wright is correct, we will tend to accept such ascriptions as authoritative whether they're true or not. (Roche)

References

Michael Roche, "A Difficulty for Testing the Inner Sense Theory of Introspection," *Philosophy of Science* 8(5), 2013.

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