

Armstrong et al. on inner sense**1: Recap: infallibility, self-intimation, and inner sense***Infallibility:*

In^A Necessarily, if S avows, with sincerity and understanding, ‘I am in phenomenal state M’, then she is in M.

Everyday counterexamples. The fearful ex-tinnitus-sufferer; the hypochondriac complaining of sore feet.

Pathological cases. Blindness denial, alien hand syndrome, Cotard delusion. There appear to be very few limits on the absurd things people can believe, given the right sort of neurological damage.

Burge counterexamples.

People sometimes make mistakes about color ranges. They may correctly apply a color term to a certain color, but also mistakenly apply it to shades of a neighboring color...they give in when other speakers confidently correct them in unison. (Burge 1979: 100)

Imagine someone, Scarlett, who misapplies ‘red’ as Burge describes. Scarlett says ‘That is red’, looking at and demonstrating a reddish orange carrot in good light. Her utterance expresses her belief that the carrot is red; the carrot is not red, so she speaks and believes falsely. She also says ‘That looks red to me’, looking at and demonstrating the carrot. Her utterance expresses her belief that the carrot looks red to her; the carrot does not look red to her, but rather reddish orange, so she speaks and believes falsely. Since ‘That looks red to me’ should evidently be included on Wright’s list of phenomenal avowals, this is a counterexample to this instance of In^A:

In^{A(RED)} Necessarily, if S avows, sincerely and with understanding, ‘x looks red to me’, then x does look red to her.

Scarlett avows, sincerely and with understanding, that the carrot looks red to her, but it doesn’t.

Exercise: evaluate the reply that this is not a counterexample, on the grounds that Scarlett does not avow ‘That looks red to me’ with “understanding”. After all, Burge himself comments that this style of thought experiment crucially relies on the possibility of “attribut[ing] a mental state or event whose content involves a notion that the subject incompletely understands” (107).

Self-intimation (positive version):

S-I^A Necessarily, if S is in phenomenal state M, then S believes/knows that she is in M (and so, assuming the appropriate linguistic capacities, is disposed to avow ‘I am in M’).

Everyday counterexamples. Inattention to ringing in ears; exercise: try to find a counterexample involving dreaming.

Pathological cases. Arguably, something may look red to a blindsighter, despite his refusal to avow that it does.

Luminosity. The knowledge version of S-I^A (obtained by deleting ‘believes’ from ‘believes/knows’) is tantamount to the claim that phenomenal states (and their absences)

are (in the terminology of Williamson 2000: ch. 4) “luminous”, against which Williamson mounts some serious arguments. Williamson’s criticisms depend on a feature of knowledge that is not shared by belief, so a retreat to the belief version of S-I^A is formally on the cards. But it is not very well motivated. To the extent that S-I^A is tempting, it is in its stronger knowledge version (which is the one Wright himself endorses). To see this, note that the initially tempting thought can be put this way. If I am in phenomenal state M then my avowal ‘I am in M’ is not merely true: rather, it is also *permissible* for me to avow ‘I am in M’, thereby *asserting* that I am in M. But, given the widely accepted thesis that it is permissible to assert P only if one knows P, the initially tempting thought amounts to the knowledge version of S-I^A.

2: Recap: groundlessness and baselessness

One of McDowell’s main complaints is that Wright has conflated avowals being *groundless* (non-inferential) with their being *baseless*:

As [Wright] says, ‘ “How can you tell?”—is always inappropriate’; and ‘there is nothing upon which such claims are based’ (p. 14). Now Wright takes it that the essence of the ‘Cartesian’ conception attacked by Wittgenstein is the idea that the authority of avowals can be understood on the model of observational authority. And the authority of observations is indeed non-inferential. But it is precisely *not* baseless. (McDowell 2000: 48)

So the inner observation model does not respond to the difficulty at all:

Suppose someone claims to have a philosophical problem that finds expression in asking: ‘How is it possible that our knowledge of our own inner lives is baseless?’ I am going to urge (section III below) that such a form of words fails to present us with any determinate philosophical difficulty; but for now the mere claim to have a difficulty that can be expressed like this will serve my purpose. If someone claims to have such a difficulty, it is *obviously* unhelpful to respond by giving a picture that merely leaves the baselessness out. But that is what the observational picture does. (48)

But what *is* baselessness? Distinguish two ways of taking ‘How can you tell?’ (or ‘How did you know?’): (a) By what *means* or *method* did you know? (b) By what *evidence* did you know? Example: how did you know that Bob was in his office? (a) by looking; (b) by the fact that his light was on. Baselessness corresponds to the first way, and groundlessness to the second.

Baselessness, first attempt:

The claim that p is *baseless* iff ‘By what means or method did you know that p?’ is “always inappropriate”.

But what does “inappropriate” mean? Obviously not *impolite*, but neither is the question odd in the manner of ‘Do colorless green ideas sleep furiously?’ Rather, “inappropriateness” seems simply amount to the fact that the question usually prompts ‘I don’t know’. (If you ask Churchland, he will be more forthcoming.) This gives us two versions of baselessness:

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McDowell, John. *Response to Crispin Wright*. Knowing Our Own Minds. Oxford University Press, 2000.
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The claim that *p* is *weakly-baseless* iff ‘By what means or method did you know that *p*?’ can’t be (positively, knowingly(?),...) answered.

Note ‘baselessness’ is poor terminology, because the idea that it is *not known* what the “base” is, not that there isn’t one. The terminology is a better fit for:

The claim that *p* is *strongly-baseless* iff it is known that *p* and there is no means or method by which it is known.

Granting that avowals are weakly-baseless, this would hardly seem to be a problem. On the other hand, if avowals are strongly-baseless, surely *something* should be said to make this palatable. But we have been given no reason to think that they are strongly-baseless.

Q: what kind of baselessness does McDowell have in mind?

Aren’t the other two marks obviously puzzling? McDowell seems to accept that they *are* marks, yet does not discuss them. Q: why?

3: Armstrong: some quotes from ch. 15

Kant’s description of introspection as “inner sense” is perfectly justified.

Perception is not logically dependent on language for its existence, as is shown by the fact that animals and young children can perceive although they cannot speak. In the same way, there seems no reason to think that introspection is logically dependent on language.

In the case of perception, we must distinguish between the perceiving, which is a mental event, and the thing perceived, which is something physical. In the case of introspection we must similarly distinguish between the introspecting and the thing introspected. Confusion is all the more easy in the latter case because *both* are mental states of the same mind.

If we make the materialist identification of mental states with material states of the brain, we can say that introspection is a self-scanning process in the brain.

In the case of most forms of sense-perception we say that we perceive *with* certain parts of the body. These parts of the body we call sense-organs....The so-called proprioceptors, stimulation of which gives rise to bodily perception, are not *organs* in the fullest sense because their operation is not under the direct control of the will. In bodily perception there is nothing we perceive *with*.

Bodily perception has the further peculiarity that its object—our own body—is private to each perceiver. If each of us were confined to bodily sense, there would be no overlap between our sense-fields, in the way that there is overlap in the case of the other senses. This privacy is purely empirical, and we can imagine having the same direct perceptual access to states of other people’s bodies that we now have to our own.

These two features of bodily perception make it an appropriate model for introspection conceived of as “inner sense.” In the first place, when we are aware of happenings in our own minds, there is nothing that we are aware *with*. (If there were an organ involved it would be something whose operation was under the direct control of our will. This, in turn, would demand a power of gaining direct

awareness of the different states of this “introspective organ.” At some point there would have to be a direct awareness that did not involve the use of an organ.) In the second place, our introspective awareness is confined to our own minds.

It was argued elsewhere that it is only an empirical fact that our direct awareness of mental states is confined to our own mind. We could conceive of a power of acquiring non-verbal non-inferential knowledge of current states of the minds of others. This would be a direct awareness, or perception, of the minds of others. Indeed, when people speak of “telepathy” it often seems to be this they have in mind.

Perception may be erroneous. Contrary to what might be called the Cartesian tradition, it is equally possible for introspection to be erroneous. This does not mean that introspective awareness may not *in fact* regularly satisfy the conditions for *knowledge*.

The only further topic to be recapitulated is that concerning the biological value of introspection...If there are to be purposive trains of mental activity, then there must equally be some means by which we become apprised of our current mental state. Only so can we adjust mental behaviour to mental circumstances. For instance, if we are doing a calculation “in our head” we will need to become aware of the current stage in the mental calculation that we have reached. Only if we do become so aware will we know what to do next. So there must be a way of becoming aware of our current mental state, which means that there must be introspection. The biological value of purposive mental activity is, of course, obvious. It permits of a far more sophisticated response to stimuli if we can “think before we act.” But such thinking must be purposive thinking to be of real value.

What, then, does constitute the unity of the group of happenings that constitute a single mind? We are back at the problem that proved Hume’s downfall...

I do not see any way to solve the problem except to say that the group of happenings constitute a single mind because they are all states of, processes in or events in, a single *substance*...In taking the mind to be a substance, then, the Cartesian Dualists show a true understanding of the formal features of the concept of mind. Their view that the mind is a *spiritual* substance is, however, a further theory about the nature of this substance, and, while it is an intelligible theory, it is a singularly empty one...Modern materialism is able to put forward a much more plausible (and much more easily falsified) theory: the view that the mind is the brain.

But we must however grant Hume that the existence of the mind is not something that is given to unaided introspection. All that “inner sense” reveals is the occurrence of individual mental happenings.¹ This is the difficulty from which this section started. I suggest that the solution is that the notion of “a mind” is a *theoretical* concept: something that is *postulated* to link together all the individual happenings of which introspection makes us aware. In speaking of minds, perhaps even in using the word “I” in the course of introspective reports, we go beyond

¹ Odd. Why does Armstrong think this? Cf. Nichols and Stich on handout 5.

what is introspectively observed. Ordinary language here embodies a certain theory. The particular *nature* of this substance is a *further* theoretical question, but when ordinary language speaks of “minds” it postulates *some* sort of substance.

4: Telepathy

In introspection we have direct, non-inferential, awareness of our own mental states....It is...perfectly conceivable that we should have direct awareness of the mental states of others. In Materialist terms, we have scanners that can scan some of our own inner states, but [as a matter of contingent fact] no scanners that can scan the inner states of others. (Armstrong 1968: 124)

The inner-sense theory offers “a picture of self-knowledge as a kind of mind-reading applied to oneself, a faculty that happens to be aimed in one direction rather than another”. However, “our ordinary self-knowledge [is] different from this sort of self-telepathy”; if someone’s self-knowledge were produced by a reliable self-scanner, “there is still a sense in which such a person would remain opaque to himself” (Moran 2001: 91).

[N]othing short of full-blown Cartesianism can explain the asymmetries in *anything like the same way*—there can be no scaled-down observational model of self-knowledge which preserves the advantages of the Cartesian account while direct witness of another’s mental states. avoiding its unaffordable costs. The problem is that the kind of authority I have over the avowable aspects of my mental life is not transferable to others: there is no contingency—or, none of which we have any remotely satisfactory concept*—whose suspension would put other ordinary people in a position to avow away on my behalf, as it were. (Wright 2000: 24)

*In particular, I do not think that we have any satisfactory concept of what it would be to be in touch with others’ mental states *telepathically*. I do not mean, of course, to rule it out that someone might prove, by dint of *his own* occurrent suspicions and afflictions, to be a reliable guide to the states of mind of another. But that possibility falls conspicuously short of the idea that a subject might share direct witness of another’s mental states.

Consider again my pronouncement that my legs are crossed. Here it does seem that, although I may rely on no evidence or inference or observation, so there is an epistemic third-person/first-person contrast in terms of the *basis* on which the pronouncement is made, still, my word is no better than that of an observer. On a given occasion, my body could clearly be in a state that my proprioceptive mechanism cannot distinguish from the state of my legs being crossed. I could also prove to be very unreliable in reporting my limb positions or bodily movements with my eyes closed. Furthermore, in addition to the possibility of an observer simply *looking* to see whether my legs are crossed (a possibility that is already in place), we can easily conceive of someone else gaining knowledge of my limb position proprioceptively (say, if her brain was so hooked up to my limbs as to receive direct information about their position). Such a person could have a non-observational facility for telling where my limbs are that is equal to mine. Under the circumstances, it seems that there would be no residual difference between the status of my pronouncements on my limb positions and hers.

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Wright, Crispin. *Self-knowledge: the Wittgensteinian legacy*. *Knowing Our Own Minds*. ed. C. Wright, B. C. Smith and C. Macdonald. Oxford University Press, 2000. © Oxford University Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <http://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

But now suppose that someone else became able to ascribe to me reliably and correctly present mental states without relying on any observation or evidence. It does not seem as though this would suffice for her pronouncements to inherit the status of my avowals. For one thing, establishing her reliability in ascribing occurrent mental states to me would at least partly depend on finding a regular match between her ascriptions and my avowals. But, more importantly, so long as there was no question about my grasp of the language or my sincerity, it seems that my avowals would continue to have a much stronger *prima facie* claim to being correct. If disagreement broke out between us over what is now going on in my mind, her consistent past success in reading my mind would not be sufficient ground for taking her word over mine. It seems, rather, that we would take the disagreement as signaling the waning of her mind-reading powers. Similar remarks would apply to the imaginary scenario in which an external brain-scanner is set up to replace one's own self-scanning mechanism and render verdicts on one's present mental states. Suppose our subject persistently denies feeling hunger, and there is no behavioral evidence that goes against her denials. That is to say, the subject's behavior and her no-hunger avowals line up. It seems that we would sooner question the reliability of the brain-scanner that appeared to register hunger sensation than reject the subject's denial. If so, then the special status normally assigned to avowals would seem to survive even as we envisage a brain science allowing observers to 'look inside and see'. (Bar-On 2004: 100-1)

Let *telepathy* be a way of non-inferentially knowing about others' mental states. (We should add a restriction to rule out ordinary cases of "seeing that she is angry" to count as telepathy, because that might be non-inferential too. Exercise: what?) Then one could argue against the inner sense theory in either Wright's style or Moran's and Bar-On's.

Wright

- P1. If the inner-sense theory is true, telepathy is possible.
- P2. Telepathy is not possible.
- C. The inner-sense theory is not true.

Moran/Bar-On

- P1. If the inner-sense theory is true, self-knowledge has feature F (because it's the result of self-telepathy).
- P2. Self-knowledge does not have feature F.
- C. The inner-sense theory is not true.

Exercise: what is the most plausible filling for 'F'?

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