§ Introspection

1. Introspection is a process by which people have focused access to their own mental states.
2. Access to a state is distinctively introspective only when it is deliberate, attentive, and reflective.
3. When we introspect a state, we attend to it in respect of its mental properties, its intentional content and mental attitude in the case of intentional states and its sensory modality and qualitative properties in the case of sensory states.
4. Introspective access to our mental states is subjectively unmediated — nothing seems, from the subjective point of view, to mediate between one’s states and one’s introspective consciousness of it.
5. Introspection need not be infallible. It is not epistemically privileged.
6. When we introspect, we are not only conscious of the state, but also conscious that we are thus conscious.

§ Critique of the Perceptual (Inner-Sense) Mode of Consciousness [Armstrong, Lycan, Prinz]

1. We know of no organ that subserves introspections in the way that eyes or ears do with other information. [Rosenthal concedes that this is inconclusive argument against the Inner Sense theory]
2. Introspection does not involve any distinctive feel or other qualitative property. If we could subtract from perceiving its qualitative properties, we would be left just with our thinking about the states of affairs in question.

3. Directing one’s attention to something need not be a matter of perceiving at all. Attention is often a matter of where one’s conscious thoughts are focused. And this is likely the case when we introspect.

4. When we introspect a mental state, we mentally describe it in terms of those salient distinguishing characteristics. And mentally describing something is a matter of having thoughts about it.

**Conclusion:** The absence of introspective qualities is by itself enough to show that introspection is not a kind of perceptual monitoring. Introspection is not the perceiving of our mental states, but the having of thoughts about them.

§ **Introspective vs. Nonintrospective Consciousness**

A state is *introspectively conscious* only when one is conscious of it in an attentive, deliberate, focused way.

A state is *nonintrospectively conscious* when our awareness of them is relatively casual, fleeting, diffuse, and inattentive.

Mental states do occur that are *not in any way conscious* — such as beliefs, desires, expectations, and the like. There is also compelling evidence that perceptual sensations also occur without being conscious.

A more complicated picture is needed to explain this threefold distinction between states that are introspectively conscious, those which are nonintrospectively conscious, and those which are no conscious at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unconscious mental states</th>
<th>Nonintrospectively conscious mental states</th>
<th>Introspectively conscious mental states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No higher-order thought</td>
<td>HOT</td>
<td>attentive, deliberate HOT OR: a HOT-2 on the HOT-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[HOT]: Higher-order thought theory

___ This is an account of nonintrospective consciousness.

___ On this hypothesis, a state is nonintrospectively conscious just in case it is accompanied by a HOT that is not itself conscious. A state is introspectively conscious if
it is accompanied by a HOT that is conscious. And it fails to be conscious at all if no HOT, conscious or not, accompanies.

Introspection is the special case in which that HOT is conscious, which happens when a yet higher-order thought occurs — a third-order thought about the second-order thought.

* Dretske’s objection:
___ A mental state’s being conscious does not consist in our being conscious of that state and, indeed, that conscious states actually exist of which we are not conscious.

Examples: We often consciously see everything in a scene and then everything in a slightly later version of that scene, altered in some small, unnoticed way.

* Rosenthal’s rebuttal:
___ One can be conscious of something in one respect but not in another. e.g. One might be conscious of the experience of the extra tree as an experience of a tree, but not conscious of it as the thing that makes the difference between the experiences of the two scenes.
___ Dretske’s view differs from [my view] only in its commitment to the idea that mental states are all conscious. But such a commitment cannot be sustained.

§ The Content of Introspection

1. The content of introspection is not merely properties of the things that experience represents; it can also be mental qualities — qualities of the experience itself.
2. Mental qualities are unlike the perceptible qualities of physical objects in several ways:
   (i) they are properties of the states, rather than objects.
   (ii) They are not perceptible and do not resemble perceptual properties of physical objects.
3. One’s attention can shift away from the object (e.g. the tomato) and onto the experience itself.
4. Shifts of attention are often a matter of what one looks at. But shifts of attention are not always strictly perceptual; they are often due to higher cortical processes, including shifts of what one’s thoughts concentrate on.
5. In shifting attention to the experience itself, one reconceptualize the quality one is aware of as a property of the experience. One then becomes conscious of the quality as the qualitative aspect of an experience, in virtue of which that experience represents a red tomato.

Two kinds of vocabulary:
(1) We use our color vocabulary to attribute physical properties to the objects we perceive.
(2) We also use those very same color words to describe the visual experiences we have of those objects.

Two kinds of properties:
(1) In nonintrospectively conscious experience, our conscious thoughts are about the properties we take the perceived objects to have, not about our mental qualities. (2) In introspectively conscious experience, we have conscious thoughts about the mental qualities that are the appearances of the independently occurring physical properties. We attribute the mental qualities we have conscious thoughts about to our qualitative experiences, not to the objects we perceive.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nonintrospectively conscious experience</th>
<th>introspectively conscious experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The food is spicy:</td>
<td>My mouth is burning:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§ Introspection as Self-Interpretation

**Introspection is often, if not always, a process of conscious self-interpretation.**

**Q: How is misinterpretation possible?**

People interpret themselves in ways that fit with how they want to see themselves and the situations they are in; they become convinced of things about themselves that we have independent reason to doubt or disbelieve.

Ordinary self-deception consists of having thoughts that result from one’s desire to see things in a certain light.

Confabulatory introspective awareness is the case in which one has conscious self-deceptive thoughts about one’s own mental states, thoughts whose inferential and motivational antecedents are not themselves conscious.

As long as one remains unaware of whatever inference and motivation leads to these self-interpretations about one’s mental states, the self-interpretation will seem, from a first-person point of view, to be spontaneous and unmediated.

§ Personhood and the Unity of Consciousness

**Q: What distinguishes persons from other creatures with conscious mental states?**

One central condition is the capacity not just to be in mental states that are conscious, but to be introspectively conscious of some of them:
Part of what it is to be a person is having the kind of reflective consciousness that gives one a sense of oneself as a being with a reasonably coherent, unified mental life. This is a crucial necessary condition for a creature to be a person.

Q: Can a creature without introspective consciousness have self-consciousness?

§ Introspection and the Sense of Self

When we consciously reason, we are often conscious of one intentional state leading to another. This sense of unity and coherence in one’s reasoning is part of what it is to be a person.

From HOT to Self:
1. Every HOT represents one as being in some particular mental state, since each is a thought to the effect that one is, oneself, in that target state. So each HOT makes us conscious of its target as belonging to a self.
2. The self that one is noninferentially conscious of mental states as belonging to is no more than a raw bearer of such states; one is not conscious of the self in any other way.
3. Because one is not conscious of that bearer in respect of any other properties, one has a sense that all mental states of which one is noninferentially conscious belong to the same bearer.
4. Since there is nothing that distinguishes the bearer to which one HOT assigns its target from the bearers to which others assign theirs, the HOTs seem to assign their targets all to the same self.
5. Introspective consciousness leads to our being aware of the way our conscious states are represented as belonging to a single self.