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The Self Shows Up in Experience

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Abstract I can be aware of myself, and thereby come to know things about myself, in a variety of different ways. But is there some *special* way in which I—and *only* I—can learn about myself? Can I become aware of myself by *introspecting*? Do I somehow *show up* in my own conscious experiences? David Hume and most contemporary philosophers say no. They deny that the self shows up in experience. However, in this paper I appeal to research on schizophrenia—on thought insertion, in particular—to argue that Hume and his follows are wrong: The self does, in fact, show up in experience.

I can be aware of myself, and thereby come to know things about myself, in a variety of different ways. For instance, I can look into a mirror, see myself, and in doing so find out what I look like, what I am wearing, or whether my hair is sticking up in the back. I can be aware of myself in other ways too. I can look down at my feet. I can go to therapy. I can get an MRI. I can listen to myself talking. I can observe my behavior. And so on. There are many different ways in which I can be aware of myself.

But is there some *special* way in which I—and *only* I—can be aware of myself? Is there a path to self-awareness that I alone can take? Can I be aware of myself just by *introspecting*? Do I somehow *show up* in my own conscious experiences?

Here's what David Hume (1739/1975) says:

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception (I.iv.6).

When Hume introspects, he only finds various mental states. He doesn't find any extra subject of experience that we might call "the self". A lot of philosophers agree with Hume on this point. For example, Gilbert Ryle (1949/2002) says:

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> Self-consciousness, if the word is to be used at all, must not be described on the hallowed para-optical model, as a torch that illuminates itself by beams of its own light reflected from a mirror in its own insides (p. 194–195).

David Armstrong (1968) similarly says, "All that inner sense reveals is the occurrence of individual mental happenings," and so he concludes that Hume was right—the self can't be found through introspection (p. 337).

Even some philosophers who think that we *can* be introspectively aware of the self agree with Hume's claim about the contents of experience. Robert Howell (2006), for example, says:

> The problem is that upon introspection, and upon performing the cogito, there does not appear to be anything salient corresponding to a self—the I of "I exists" … There is no acquaintance with the self or with any sort of conceptual/representational stand-in for the self. There are many ways to finesse the notion of self-acquaintance, but the basic phenomenological data adduced by Hume must be respected (p. 44, 46).

Brie Gertler (2011) says, "Most philosophers find Hume's claim phenomenologically plausible" (p. 210), and Sydney Shoemaker (1994) agrees that Hume's view on this matter has "commanded the assent of the majority of subsequent philosophers who have addressed the issue" (p. 188).[1] So there appears to be fairly widespread agreement that the self cannot be found in experience. All there is to experience is mental states such as sensations, perceptions, emotions, and thoughts. There is nothing *further* that is (or that represents) the self. In short, experience is self-free. The self does not show up in experience.

That's the received view, and I mean to challenge it. In what follows I will argue that the self *does* show up in experience. To make my case, I will appeal to recent research on schizophrenia. This research is becoming more widely appreciated in the literature on self-awareness. And some philosophers have even suggested (though more often they have simply *assumed*) that this research indicates that we have self-experiences. But what I'll do here—and what no one has done before—is offer a sustained argument showing just how this supports the claim that the self shows up in experience.

1 Self-Experience

Here is my claim:

> SELF-EXPERIENCE: The self shows up in experience.

Before defending SELF-EXPERIENCE, let me explain it. First, you are your self, and I am my self. I my*self* am the subject of experiences, and have various other traits at

[1] To be fair, while it's true that few contemporary philosophers argue directly against Hume's position, more than a few philosophers at least register their disagreement with it, including Strawson (2000, 2009), Bayne (2008), Kriegel (2004), Madell (2015), Graham (2002), Musholt (2013), Guillot (2013), and Billon (2014).

various times. Philosophers and psychologists talk about "the self" in many different ways. My claim—SELF-EXPERIENCE—only applies to those senses of 'the self' according to which everyone is identical to his or her own self.[2] Furthermore, as I have indicated, I understand selves to be *subjects* of experience (rather than, say, bundles of experiences). This is precisely what Hume denies finding via introspection. So when I say that my self shows up in my experiences, I mean *I*—MD, *this* conscious subject—show up in my own experiences.

By 'experience' I mean *phenomenal consciousness*; I mean that aspect of mentality that has a *what-it's-likeness*. There is something that it's like for me to feel a dull aching pain in my knee, or to hear the chirping of a bird, or to smell the aroma of freshly brewed coffee. These are conscious experiences. And so, if SELF-EXPERIENCE is true, then there is an experience of the self that has a certain phenomenal character or what-it's-likeness.

What it means to *show up in* experience is a bit more complicated. Very roughly, when I say that the self shows up in experience, I mean the self enters into one's own private conscious experiences. I mean that Hume is wrong: The self *can* be found in experience. More precisely, I mean that an *inner* experience of the self, with its own *proprietary* phenomenology, normally forms a *distinctive* component of one's total experience.

I say that this experience is *inner* to indicate that SELF-EXPERIENCE is a claim about a particular way the self shows up in experience. It's different from the way I experience myself by looking in a mirror, or you experience me by talking to me. According to SELF-EXPERIENCE, I experience myself *from the inside*, so to speak, in roughly the same way that I experience my pains, thoughts, or emotions. The self is among those items that I can be aware of through introspection. Which is not to say that we normally introspectively *focus on* or *attend to* ourselves. We don't. In fact, as we shall see (§3, 4), some argue that we can only ever be *peripherally* aware of ourselves in experience. That's consistent with SELF-EXPERIENCE. Peripheral self-experience is still self-experience. And it's still an aspect of our inner experiential lives of which we can be aware in that distinctively first-personal way characteristic of introspection. So the claim that we are only ever peripherally self-aware is consistent with SELF-EXPERIENCE, which, again, is a claim about a particular, *inner* way in which the self shows up in experience.

I say that self-experience has its own *proprietary* phenomenology to indicate that it makes its own *sui generis* contribution to one's total phenomenology; it *adds* something to experience. And I say that self-experience is *distinctive* to indicate that its phenomenal character is unique—it is different from that of other kinds of experiences. This does not mean that each of us has self-experiences with a phenomenal character different from that of everyone else's self-experiences (though it doesn't rule this out either). It just means that, as pain has a distinctive character that can be tokened in various entities, so too self-experience has a distinctive character that can be tokened in various entities.

I believe that the self *always* shows up in *every* human experience. But I will not insist on it here. At this point I don't want to rule out the possibility of rare cases in which one's self is absent from one's experiences (cf. Lane 2015). So my admittedly vague claim will be that one's self *normally* shows up in one's experience. That's the

[2] I assume that there are selves at least in sense that there are things like you and me who think thoughts. Some—in certain Buddhist traditions, for example—deny that there are such things as selves. But I will not address such views here. I assume that we exist, and that we think.

claim that I will defend. And so, with that, SELF-EXPERIENCE can be restated in this expanded form:

> **SELF-EXPERIENCE**: The self shows up in experience; that is, an inner experience of one's self has its own proprietary phenomenology that normally constitutes a distinctive component of one's total phenomenal experience.

There's a lot more that could be said here. For instance, notice that SELF-EXPERIENCE doesn't specify the underlying mechanisms (neural or otherwise) responsible for self-experience.[3] I will remain silent on these matters. For it is not my goal to provide a full-blown account of self-experience. My goal is just to show that we do, in fact, experience ourselves. So what I've said should suffice for understanding SELF-EXPERIENCE. And it should also suffice for understanding what it takes to *deny* SELF-EXPERIENCE. Various philosophers deny SELF-EXPERIENCE in various different ways for various different reasons. At one point Hume (1739/1975) even denies that substantial selves *exist*. Others are more cautious. Many allow that selves exist, but deny that there is any sense in which we have inner experiences of ourselves. Some grant that we experience ourselves in the very limited sense that we experience our own mental properties; but they still deny SELF-EXPERIENCE, because they deny that our experiences contain any *extra* component, over and above our (non-self-implicating) mental states, that would count as an experience of the self.[4] Some go as far as to assert that all of our experiences have some extra *subjectivity* or "for-me-ness", but then attempt to reduce this subjectivity to some form of higher-order awareness of our mental states, or to some other self-less representational feature that they believe all conscious states have.[5] This isn't enough for SELF-EXPERIENCE. Unless these philosophers also accept that the self actually shows up in experience in the way described above, they deny SELF-EXPERIENCE. So there are several ways to deny SELF-EXPERIENCE. But anyone who denies SELF-EXPERIENCE at least agrees that our experiences are self-free in the sense that there are no inner experiences of the self over and above our various sensations, emotions, thoughts, etc. And that, in the end, is what it takes to deny SELF-EXPERIENCE.

2 In Defense of Self-Experience

I will argue for SELF-EXPERIENCE by arguing that the self normally shows up in experience *in a certain way* (or in a particular role). Specifically, I will argue that the self normally

[3] For discussions of these issues, see Gallagher and Shear (1999), and Zahavi (2000).

[4] See, e.g., Howell (2010). Howell grants that we experience ourselves in the minimal sense described above, but then he claims that, "… a subject's mental properties do not present themselves as properties of the subject. While he is aware of them in some sense, they are not in fact salient to the subject *as his properties*: they are phenomenologically exhausted in their presentation of the world" (p. 476).

[5] Here I especially have in mind those who subscribe to higher-order thought (or perception) theories of consciousness (e.g., Rosenthal 2005; Carruthers 2005), or to self-representational theories of consciousness (where 'self' refers to mental states, not the self. See Kriegel and Williford 2006, for a collection of essays on this view). Some philosophers who accept one of these theories also accept SELF-EXPERIENCE (e.g., Kriegel 2009; Rosenthal 2004, 2012). But most higher-order or self-representational theories of consciousness do not entail this result.

shows up in experience as the *author* or *agent* of one's thoughts. I do not mean to suggest that this is the *only* way, or even the most *basic* way, in which the self shows up in experience. I only claim that it is one such way. In what follows, I will make my case for this claim by appealing to a phenomenon found among those with schizophrenia called 'thought insertion'. I will argue that this phenomenon gives us reason to believe that people normally experience themselves as the authors/agents of their thoughts.

2.1 Thought Insertion

Here are two standard descriptions of thought insertion:

> Thinking, like all conscious activities, is experienced as an activity which is being carried on by the subject … There is a quality of "my-ness" connected with the thought. In schizophrenia this sense of the possession of one's thoughts may be impaired and the patient may suffer from alienation of thought … [The patient] is certain that alien thoughts have been inserted in his mind (Fish 1984, p. 48; cited in Stephens and Graham 2000, p. 119).[6]

> In thought-alienation [i.e., thought insertion] the patient has the experience that … others are participating in his thinking. He feels that thoughts are being inserted into his mind and he recognizes them as foreign and coming from without (Fish 1985, p. 49; in Stephens and Graham 2000, p. 121).

People who suffer from thought insertion believe that they experience the thoughts of others. It's not just that they believe others are controlling or influencing their thoughts; they believe that others are actually *thinking* some of the thoughts they experience (see Wing 1978, p. 105; Fulford 1989, p. 221; Stephens and Graham 2000, p. 121). They believe that external agents are literally inserting thoughts into their minds.

These alarming details are illustrated by patients' vivid descriptions of their experiences. One patient is reported as saying, "Thoughts are put into my mind like 'Kill God.' It is just like my mind working, but it isn't. They come from this chap, Chris. They are his thoughts" (Frith 1992, p. 66). And another patient is reported as saying:

> I look out the window and I think that the garden looks nice and the grass looks cool, but the thoughts of Eamonn Andrews come into my mind. There are no other thoughts there, only his … He treats my mind like a screen and flashes thoughts onto it like you flash a picture (Mellor 1970, p. 17).

Clearly something is amiss here. But how are we to understand this bizarre phenomenon? Why would a person claim that someone else is thinking her thoughts? What could lead to such dramatic misattributions?

[6] I recognize that this passage may seem tendentious in the present context. First, one might think that whether experiences have a "my-ness" is precisely what's at issue in this paper. So I won't just assume that thoughts have a "my-ness". Second, some philosophers (e.g., Carruthers and Veillet 2011; Prinz 2011) deny that thinking is a conscious activity. These philosophers are likely to interpret thought insertion as a disorder having to do with *inner speech* rather than thought. I think this interpretation is wrong, but I won't insist on it. For my arguments don't hang on this issue.

Many details concerning the underlying causes of thought insertion remain unknown. However, psychologists and philosophers who study schizophrenia generally agree that thought insertion essentially involves a breakdown in one's experience of *ownership* of one's thoughts.[7] It's not that inserted thoughts are experienced as *un*-owned. They're experienced as owned all right—as owned *by someone else*. So the experience of ownership is there.[8] And the thoughts are also experienced. What appears to be missing for those who suffer from thought insertion is the experience of *oneself* as the owner of one's thoughts.

It's worth stressing that this disruption in the experience of ownership is generally considered to be an experiential *deficit*. Something is *missing* from experience.[9] Part of the rationale for this claim has to do with underlying causal mechanisms that are sometimes associated with schizophrenia.[10] But the main rationale for positing a deficit here derives from the contents of patients' reports and from ties to other experiential deficits found among those with schizophrenia.[11] I'll return to this issue later (see §2.2). For now my point is just that the consensus among those who study schizophrenia is that thought insertion is to be understood as involving a certain *lack* of self-ownership experiences.

So what does it mean to experience oneself as the owner of one's thoughts? Some nuance is needed here. Lynn Stephens and George Graham (1994, 2000) draw an important distinction between the experience of oneself as the *subject* of one's thoughts and the experience of oneself as the *agent* (or *author*) of one's thoughts. The experience of subjectivity is, according to Stephens and Graham (2000), "[The] sense that something occurs in me, within my ego boundary or psychological history, rather than outside me" (p. 7). To experience oneself as the subject of one's thoughts is to experience oneself as the individual who is experiencing or undergoing one's thoughts. The experience of agency is distinct. To experience oneself as the agent of one's thoughts is to experience oneself as the individual who is bringing about, producing, or *thinking* one's thoughts. That we experience ourselves as the authors/agents of our thoughts in this way does not imply that we really are authors or agents in any very metaphysically loaded sense. Rather, it just implies that we experience ourselves as

[7] See, for example, Gibbs (2000, p. 196), Marcel (2003, p. 80), Sass (2000, p. 154), Radden (1999, p. 351), Stephens and Graham (2000), Campbell (2002), Carruthers (2007, p. 537), and Coliva (2002). Eilan (2000, p. 106–107), Parnas (2000, p. 139), and Sass (2000, p. 157) especially emphasize that thought insertion is a disorder of *experience*. In what follows, I will assume that thought insertion is a real phenomenon, and that the reports of those who suffer from thought insertion reflect genuine disturbances in their experiences.

[8] This is not to say that the feeling of ownership is the same across normal cases and cases of thought insertion. It is only to say that those suffering from inserted thoughts are clearly not inclined, on the basis of their experiences, to describe their thoughts as *un*owned. There is something about their experiences that leads them to attribute their thoughts to *another*. So thought insertion cannot be explained *just* by saying that there is a breakdown in some brute non-individual-specific feeling of ownership. I'll take up this issue again in §2.3.

[9] Sass (2000) describes the symptoms associated with thought insertion as "self withdrawal" (p. 169), and he says that these symptoms, "necessarily imply the … *absence* of something that is normally present—the sense of ownership of intentional control" (p. 154). Blakemore (2000) and Gallagher (2000) say thought insertion involves a "breakdown" or "lack" in experience. Frith (1992) suggests that inserted thoughts are a "disruption" and a "deprivation" that implies that in normal circumstances "we have some way of recognizing our own thoughts" (p. 80). See also Stephens and Graham (2000, ch. 7), Gibbs (2000, p. 196), and Zubin (1985, p. 462). Here I do not deny that inserted thoughts come with additions to experience. My only point is that the breakdown of the sense of ownership in thought insertion includes an experiential *absence* or *deficit*.

[10] Frith (1992) and Blakemore (2000), for example, argue that some symptoms in schizophrenia are at least partially caused by a breakdown in a cognitive system responsible for self-monitoring.

[11] For more on experiments revealing some of the related experiential deficits found in schizophrenia, see Frith and Done (1989), Malenka et al. (1982), and Blakemore (2000).

bearing a certain active relation to our thoughts—we have a "feeling of doing"—that gives us the sense that we are our thoughts' authors/agents.

According to Stephens and Graham, patients suffering from thought insertion experience themselves as the subjects, but not the agents, of their thoughts. Stephens and Graham (2000) write:

> In the examples of thought insertion discussed in the clinical literature, patients are well aware of the subjectivity of their thoughts: of where they occur. They regard them as occurring within their ego boundaries. The patient quoted by Frith says "Thoughts are put into my mind." Mellor's patient doesn't speak of perceiving thoughts occurring outside her mind; rather, she accuses Eamonn Andrews of putting his thoughts into *her* mind: "He treats my mind like a screen and flashes thoughts onto it like you flash a picture" … The subject regards the thoughts as alien not because she supposes they occur outside her mind, but in spite of her awareness that they occur within her (p. 126–127).

What's missing for these patients, according to Stephens and Graham, is the experience of themselves as the *agents* (or authors) of their thoughts. Thus, Stephens and Graham (2000) interpret thought-insertion patients as follows:

> When she denies that the thought is her thought, she does not contradict the claim that it occurs in her. Rather, she may be interpreted as saying that, although the thought occurs in her, she does not regard herself as its agent or author. She admits to being the subject in whom the thought occurs, but denies that she *thinks* the thought (p. 153).

We can now put a finer point on the idea that thought insertion essentially involves a breakdown in one's experience of ownership. People who suffer from thought insertion fail to experience themselves as the *authors/agents* of their thoughts. As a result, they fail to attribute their own thoughts to themselves. They attribute them to other agents instead. Hence, they deny ownership of their thoughts.

Now, it bears repeating that those who undergo thought insertion do not deny ownership of their thoughts *in every possible sense*. For example, they do not deny that they are the *subjects* of their thoughts. Thus, when I say that those who undergo inserted thoughts deny ownership of their thoughts, I mean 'ownership' only in the authorial/agential sense.[12]

2.2 Thought Insertion and Self-Experience

Earlier I mentioned that some philosophers have suggested (and, more often, simply assumed) that research on schizophrenia supports something like SELF-EXPERIENCE. And

[12] Stephens and Graham's (2000) application of the subject/agent distinction to thought insertion is commonly accepted among philosophers and psychologists who study schizophrenia (see, e.g., Coliva 2002; Radden 1999, p. 355; Gallagher 2000, 2015; Bayne 2004; Kriegel 2004, p. 189). So I will proceed with this aspect of Stephens and Graham's account. But keep in mind that my arguments do not depend on these particular details. If it turns out that the experience of ownership should be understood as the experience of oneself in some role other than that of agent/author of one's thoughts, then my argument can be amended to account for that.

there's little wonder why. The leading descriptions and accounts of thought insertion clearly hint at, perhaps even presuppose, something along the lines of SELF-EXPERIENCE. However, much more needs to be said that has yet to be said in the literature in order for SELF-EXPERIENCE to be truly vindicated. So in this section I will spell out my initial thought-insertion based argument for SELF-EXPERIENCE. Then, in the ensuing sections, I will develop the argument further, addressing various challenges and objections to it.

My argument for SELF-EXPERIENCE turns on the claim that the self normally shows up in experience in the role of author/agent of one's thoughts. Here is my initial support for this claim. In certain *abnormal* cases—i.e., in cases of thought insertion—the self fails to show up in experience in the role of author/agent of one's thoughts, resulting in a significant experiential deficit. This suggests that, in *normal* cases, the self shows up in experience in the role of author/agent of one's thoughts.

Think of it this way. The best explanation for the difference between normal experiences and inserted-thought experiences is that the self shows up as the author/agent of one's thoughts in the former but not in the latter. So the best explanation for thought insertion implies that the self normally shows up in experience as the author/agent of one's thoughts. Or think of it this way. Something's missing. It's not the thought. And it's not the sense of authorship, since inserted thoughts are experienced as authored—just by someone else. What's missing is the sense of *oneself* as the agent/author of one's thoughts. And what's missing is missed only because it's normally not missing.[13]

This argument relies on the claim that something's *missing* from inserted thought experiences. Again, the rationale for this claim—a claim that is the consensus among those who work on the topic—derives from (i) details concerning underlying causal mechanisms associated with schizophrenia, (ii) ties to other experiential deficits found among those with schizophrenia, and (iii) the contents of patient reports (see §2.1). These points are well canvassed in the literature (see fn. 10–12). So I won't belabor them here.

But I do want to add one more point. It's this: To deny that something's missing from inserted thought experiences—to say, for example, that inserted thoughts are explained via an *extra* experiential component that isn't normally there—is not only at odds with what is currently known about thought insertion, it also renders a more complex and puzzling picture of the thought attributions of those with schizophrenia. To see this, suppose that our experiences are normally self-free, and thus, that our normal thought self-attributions don't in any way rely on the presence of self-experiences. And also suppose that it's an *extra* experiential component that leads thought insertion patients to attribute their thoughts to others. Now notice what this implies. It implies that thought insertion patients are suddenly and dramatically shifting their method or rationale for attributing thoughts. While they had been, at every point in the past, attributing their thoughts to themselves for one reason—a reason having nothing to do with self-experience—they are then coming to attribute their thoughts to others for a very different reason having to do with an extra experiential component. Furthermore, they are only doing this *intermittently*, since they are only attributing *some* of their thoughts to others. What this shows is that the supposition that it's an

[13] Or as Frank Ocean puts it, "You can't miss what you ain't had" ("There Will Be Tears"). I recognize that Ocean's claim conflicts with Carly Rae Jepsen's confession: "Before you came into my life I missed you so bad" ("Call Me Maybe"). But I'm with Ocean on this one.

experiential excess, not deficit, that is driving patients' thought attributions yields a decidedly more complex and puzzling account of patients' thought attributions than the received alternative. On the received account of thought insertion, the attribution of one's thoughts (when experienced from the first-person perspective) is, in every case, determined by how one experiences oneself in relation to one's thoughts. If one experiences oneself as the author of one's thoughts, then one attributes them to oneself in that way; otherwise, one may attribute them to others. But, on the above account, things are decidedly more complex. And they are more puzzling. For we might ask: Why would an entirely new experience, which previously had no role whatsoever in thought insertion patients' thought attributions (after all, they hadn't experienced it before), suddenly come to guide their thought attributions? If they always had attributed their thoughts to themselves for reasons independent of, and unrelated to, self-experience, then why wouldn't they just stick with that method? This is a puzzle. And it is a puzzle generated by the supposition that an experiential excess, not deficit, is what explains thought insertion.

This point gains even more force when we consider that while thought insertion patients say that their thoughts have external *authors*, they still maintain that they are their thoughts' *subject*. To account for this, a defender of the above account would have to say that the shift in patients' method or rationale for thought attribution is not only sudden, dramatic, and intermittent, but it's also only *partial*—that is, at any given time, patients with schizophrenia shift their method or rationale for some, but not all, kinds of thought attribution. This would mean that they attribute their thoughts in different ways to different people in different circumstances for completely different reasons. Perhaps one could devise such an account of thought insertion. But surely the simpler account, which happens to be favored by our best science, ought to be preferred. So, although there may be room in logical space for dissent, I conclude on the basis of the evidence that thought insertion involves a *breakdown* in experience.

Now return to my initial argument for SELF-EXPERIENCE, which is: The best explanation for the difference between normal experiences and inserted-thought experiences is that the self shows up as the author/agent of one's thoughts in the former but not in the latter; thus, the best explanation of thought insertion implies that the self normally shows up in experience as the author/agent of one's thoughts. This result entails that the self normally shows up in experience. Thus, it entails SELF-EXPERIENCE.

2.3 Another Explanation?

A denier of SELF-EXPERIENCE might respond by coming up with a different explanation for thought insertion. This would be one strategy for explaining the data while still denying that the self shows up in experience. So let's look at some options.

Let's start with Hume. Hume denies that the self shows up in experience, but he doesn't deny that most people are led to believe otherwise. What Hume suggests is that people *infer* the internal presence of a self on the basis of their experience of certain *relations* obtaining between mental states.[14] So maybe Hume would explain thought

[14] Hume (1739/1975) specifically cites the relations of *resemblance* and *causation* (I.iv.6). But later, in the Appendix to *A Treatise of Human Nature*, he expresses doubts as to whether this account succeeds.

insertion by claiming that the failure to experience these relations causes the experience of thought insertion, and causes some people to infer that they are not the authors of their thoughts.

But this explanation of thought insertion doesn't cut it. To see why, suppose I am the subject of two mental states, P and Q. And suppose that Q is a thought. On the basis of what experiential relation between P and Q might I infer that Q is *mine* in the sense that I am its author/agent? Do P and Q resemble each other? Are they about the same thing? Did P appear to cause Q? Maybe. But these experiential relations alone don't in any way support the inference that Q is my thought. After all, P and Q could resemble each other or be about the same thing and yet both be experienced as inserted. It seems that the only way I could (or indeed would) infer that Q is my thought on the basis of its experiential relation to P is if I already experienced P as mine. Then I could reason like this: P is mine; Q is related to P in the relevant way; therefore, Q is also mine. But if I experience P as mine, then my self shows up in my experience after all. That is, unless I infer that P is mine on the basis of its relation to other mental states. But then it would have to be that I already experience *those* mental states as mine.

Perhaps this problem could be overcome if people normally infer that they are their thoughts' authors on the basis of their thoughts' relations to their *overall* view of themselves, or to their long-term goals, intentions, and desires, rather than to individual mental states. Perhaps the appearance of inserted thoughts is the result of a perceived inconsistency between the content of a thought and the contents of one's overall self-conception.

This explanation of thought insertion still fails. For inconsistency with one's overall self-conception is neither necessary nor sufficient for a thought's being experienced as inserted. It's not *sufficient* for thought insertion because some people—including those suffering from other mental disorders—experience thoughts that are inconsistent with their overall view of themselves and their attitudes without experiencing those thoughts as inserted. Those suffering from obsessive compulsive thought disorder, for example, often report having thoughts that they find aversive, contrary to their will, and indeed, inconsistent with their overall self-conception (see Stephens and Graham 2000, 167–168; Fish 1985, p. 37). Yet these individuals do not experience their thoughts as inserted. Inconsistency with one's overall self-conception isn't *necessary* for thought insertion either. For although some inserted thoughts are odd or out of place (e.g., "Kill God"), other inserted thoughts cohere perfectly with their subjects' overall self-conception (e.g., "The garden looks nice and the grass cool"). Thus, inconsistency with one's overall self-conception is neither necessary nor sufficient for a thought's being experienced as inserted. So inconsistency of this sort doesn't explain thought insertion.

Jesse Prinz (2012), who denies SELF-EXPERIENCE, suggests that inconsistency of another sort may explain experiences of alienated authorship. Prinz suggests that we have a mechanism that unconsciously compares anticipated and perceived actions, and that any inconsistency between the two "sets off a kind of alarm signal that tells the body it has come under external influence," which yields an experience that may lead one to attribute one's actions to another (p. 147). Prinz does not specifically discuss thought insertion when making this suggestion. But his suggestion is meant to be a *general* account of alienated authorship experiences. So presumably it should cover thought insertion.

But it doesn't. First of all, there is no evidence (at least that I know of) in patient reports or other clinical assessments for Prinz's (2012) "alarm signal".[15] Second, this account only posits an *addition* to experience—i.e., an alarm experience (p. 148). So it can't explain the experiential *deficit* found in thought insertion. Third, detecting inconsistency of the sort in question isn't enough *by itself* to explain thought insertion. After all, we detect such inconsistencies all the time in *others'* actions—e.g., when you don't do what I thought you'd do—yet this does not set off any alarms or yield experiences akin to thought insertion.[16] So it can't be that detecting such inconsistency in just *anyone's* action sets off the alarm. It must be that what we are really talking about is an inconsistency between an anticipated and perceived action *of mine*, followed by an experience of an alarm telling me that the action is not *mine*. But such an account would affirm rather than deny SELF-EXPERIENCE. So even if a version of Prinz's account could explain thought insertion, it still would not relieve the need for SELF-EXPERIENCE.

In a different vein, Jordi Fernandez (2010) argues that thought insertion results from a breakdown in one's experience of commitment to one's beliefs (also see Bortolotti and Broome 2009). One immediate problem with this approach is that it wrongly assumes that all inserted thoughts are *beliefs*. In fact, some inserted thoughts take the form of merely entertained propositions or commands. This is important. For often we don't feel committed to contents we merely entertain. Right now I'm entertaining the proposition that aliens will invade Earth, but I don't feel committed to it. So such a feeling (or lack thereof) cannot explain the difference between normal and inserted thoughts.

I doubt this problem can be overcome. But suppose it can. Then do we have a self-free alternative? Fernandez does not explicitly deny SELF-EXPERIENCE. But perhaps his account of thought insertion can do without it.

It can't. An appeal to an experience of commitment *by itself*—without an appeal to self-experience—cannot explain thought insertion. For those suffering from inserted thoughts may very well experience their beliefs as committed to—that is, committed to *by someone else* (i.e., the person to whom the thoughts are attributed). So only if the account posits a breakdown in the experience of *oneself* as committed to a belief can we hope for an explanation here.[17] But, again, such an account would affirm SELF-EXPERIENCE.

Are there other options? Well, there are other historically prominent views about what makes a mental state mine versus yours that might at first seem to offer a way to explain thought insertion. But, in the end, they all fail to do so. For example, Armstrong (1968) supposes that the content of a thought could seem so *bizarre* to a subject that she

[15] Specifically, there is no evidence (that I know of, or indeed, that Prinz (2012) cites) in patient reports or other clinical assessments for inserted thoughts involving anything *relevantly like* an alarm signal. One could relax one's use of 'alarm signal' so that it ends up just meaning something like 'an abnormal experience' or even 'whatever it is in patients' experiences that causes them to report that their thoughts are inserted'. But then positing an "alarm signal" in one of these senses would be explanatorily inert—it wouldn't contribute to an informative explanation of the nature of thought insertion or the reasons for patient reports.

[16] Of course, what it's like to detect inconsistencies in others' actions may be different in various ways from what it's like to detect inconsistencies in one's own actions. But the point here is just that *merely* detecting an inconsistency in action, *by itself*, is not enough to bring about alarm signals or cause inserted thoughts. For I can detect inconsistencies in action (e.g., your action) without bringing about alarm signals or inserted thoughts. So there has to be more to the story here.

[17] Though that's even doubtful. For it's implausible that inserted thoughts never bear a feeling of commitment (consider: "The grass looks cool"), or that all non-inserted thoughts do bear a feeling of commitment (consider: obsessive compulsive thought disorder).

experiences it as alien (p. 337). But this doesn't explain thought insertion. For bizarreness is neither necessary nor sufficient for thought insertion. The contents of some inserted thoughts are not bizarre, and the contents of some non-inserted thoughts are bizarre. Derek Parfit (1984) suggests that the only difference between one's own experiences and the experiences of others is that one's experiences happen *here*, in *this* mental life, whereas others' experiences happen *there*, in *those* mental lives (p. 252; n., 36; also Siewert 2013). But nothing along these lines can explain thought insertion. Patients suffering from thought insertion experience their thoughts as *here*, in *this* mental life; and yet, they experience some of their thoughts as inserted. Some philosophers argue that all self-awareness is sensory or bodily awareness (e.g., Bermudez 2011; cf. Vignemont 2007, 2013). But such an approach is ill suited to handle thought insertion, since inserted *thoughts* don't necessarily involve awareness of sensory or bodily states. Other philosophers attempt to explain the "for-me-ness" of thoughts in terms of some kind of higher-order consciousness or awareness of those thoughts.[18] But the breakdown present in thought insertion does not appear to be a breakdown of consciousness or awareness of the thoughts themselves. Thought insertion patients are introspectively aware of their thoughts—they experience them and thus acknowledge that they are their subjects. But they nonetheless deny that they are their authors.

Could it be that inserted thoughts are unique in that they are experienced as unintended, or unwanted, or sinister? No. For some inserted thoughts are experienced as intended, wanted, and innocuous; and some non-inserted thoughts are experienced as unintended, unwanted, and sinister.[19] Could there just be a *brute feeling of authorship* that normal thoughts have but inserted thoughts lack? Could this explain thought insertion without implying SELF-EXPERIENCE? It doesn't seem so. For, again, inserted thoughts are experienced as authored—just *by someone else*. Now, the sense in which inserted thoughts are experienced as authored by others might be different from the sense in which we experience our thoughts as authored. After all, it's not as if those suffering from thought insertion actually experience others' brute authorship feelings. But my point is just that an appeal to a brute feeling of authorship could not, by itself, explain why one would attribute one's thoughts to one person rather than another. For it's not enough that a thought is experienced as *authored*, since the thought could be experienced as authored *by someone else*. So it seems that explaining thought insertion in terms of a breakdown in a brute feeling of authorship would, in the end, require understanding thought insertion as a breakdown in *my* (*this* person's) brute feeling of

[18] See, for example, Rosenthal (2005, 2012) and Carruthers (2005). The same point also applies to self-representational theories of consciousness (see Kriegel and Williford 2006). Alexandre Billon and Uriah Kriegel (2015) defend an interesting proposal according to which thought insertion is partially explained as the result of patients being aware of their thoughts, but not phenomenally conscious of them. I have some of the same worries about this proposal as above—patients do not report or otherwise suggest that they are unaware of inserted thoughts in any relevant way. In fact, quite the opposite (e.g., "It is just like my mind working, but it isn't. They come from this chap, Chris."). But, at any rate, Billon and Kriegel admit that theirs is only a partial explanation of thought insertion. In fact, they both accept SELF-EXPERIENCE.

[19] For a discussion of *unintended* thoughts and actions see Blakemore (2000, p. 188), Gallagher and Marcel (1999, p. 292), Marcel (2003), and Stephens and Graham (2000, p. 141–142); for *unwanted* thoughts see Bleuler (1950, p. 96) and Stephens and Graham (2000, p. 168); for *aversive* or *sinister* thoughts see Snyder (1974, p. 119), Modell (1960), Linn (1977), Gunn (2016), and Stephens and Graham (2000, p. 169). Stephens and Graham (2000) also discuss and reject the idea that inserted thoughts are unique in that they are experienced as *uncontrolled* (p. 159; see also Fish 1985, p. 43; Hoffman 1986, p. 536).

authorship. And then we are back to square one, appealing to self-experience in order to make sense of thought insertion.[20]

What if the idea was rather that the normal brute feeling of authorship, which is non-self-implicating, is, in cases of thought insertion, replaced by a distinct brute feeling—a feeling of *alienness*, say—that is also non-self-implicating? Perhaps that could explain why thought insertion patients change who they attribute their thoughts to. Might that help? No. For this suggestion still fails to explain why we (including those with schizophrenia) attribute our thoughts to certain *particular* people rather than others. It fails to explain why we normally attribute our thoughts to *ourselves* rather than other potential authors, and it fails to explain why those who experience inserted thoughts attribute their thoughts to other individuals—Eamonn Andrews, for example, or "this chap, Chris." So this "brute feeling" alternative still fails.[21]

I know of no semi-plausible Humean view of thought authorship that fares any better here. There doesn't appear to be any non-self-implicating feature of all and only inserted thoughts that can explain the distinctive experience of thought insertion. So there is no satisfactory explanation of thought insertion that doesn't imply that the self shows up in experience.

3 Further Objections and Concerns

At this point, a denier of SELF-EXPERIENCE might admit that it *seems* like the self shows up in experience. But then she might deny that what shows up in experience *really is* the self. She might say that my self-experience is a misimpression, misconception, or something like an *illusion*—an experience that isn't really of the self.[22]

But I think we know better. We've learned from thought insertion that a *thinker*—a subject and agent/author of thoughts—normally shows up in experience. And *we* think our thoughts. I, MD, am the thinker of my thoughts. Nothing else thinks my thoughts.[23] Those who suffer from inserted thoughts disagree, of course; they believe that others think their thoughts. But they're wrong. I, on the other hand, am right when I self-attribute my thoughts. So the thinker of my thoughts that I experience must be me.

Here we don't need to make any weighty metaphysical assumptions such as that I am a *free* agent or that I am in ultimate control of my thoughts. The point is just that *I* am the one in question—it is I who bears the relation to my thoughts that underlies my

[20] One might say that the brute sense of ownership is *implicit* or *non-conscious* (cf. Musholt 2013). But, remember, at this point we are assuming that what needs to be explained in thought insertion cases is an *experiential deficit* (see §2.1, 2.2). So appealing to a non-conscious sense of ownership will not help explain how a breakdown *in experience* causes patients to report that their thoughts are inserted.

[21] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

[22] Some (e.g., certain Buddhists) might say that self-experience is an illusion simply because *there is no self*. I think the nature of self-experience gives us an excellent reason to believe that there is a self. But, again, I do not have the space to adequately address no-self views here (see fn. 2). So I will simply assume that there are selves at least in the minimal sense that there are thinkers of thoughts (which even Humeans can accept). The present objection is that, although there is a self in this sense, what shows up in experience isn't really the self.

[23] This point naturally brings to mind "Too Many Thinkers" arguments of the sort discussed by Olson (2007) and Merricks (2001). Whether or not these arguments are sound, I do believe that we should, if at all possible, avoid the conclusion that there is more than one thinker thinking my thoughts right now.

(successful) thought self-attributions. We can set aside whether I know the precise nature of this relation or its metaphysical implications.

Think of it this way. My experiences give me the sense that my thoughts are *mine*. And that's right. My thoughts *are* mine. They aren't the thoughts of some illusory self-like entity. This suggests that my experiences of myself aren't always an illusion, at least not in the sense of being experiences as of something other than me. For if my self-experiences were an illusion—if I experienced something else as my thoughts' agent, subject, thinker, or whatever—then I wouldn't so regularly and so accurately attribute my thoughts to myself. I, like those who undergo thought insertion, would sometimes attribute my thoughts to something else. But I don't. So it's got to be me who shows up in my experiences.

What if the self turns out to be different, ontologically speaking, from what we (or I) thought? For example, Dan Zahavi (2005) and Wolfgang Fasching (2009) suggest that the self is not an object, as many (including me) believe; rather, it is a "dimension of experience" (also see Zahavi and Kriegel 2015). Zahavi (2005) describes this dimension as the "first-personal givenness of experience" (p. 122). Fasching (2009) calls it the "first-personal manifestation" of experiences (p. 132). Both of these authors insist that their view can explain the *subjectivity* of the self and experience. So their view may be consistent with SELF-EXPERIENCE and the denial of Hume's claim. Still, might such a view, which offers us a very different picture of the self, give us pause with respect to SELF-EXPERIENCE?

I am skeptical that Zahavi and Fasching's view of the self really is consistent with SELF-EXPERIENCE, and I am doubtful that it fits with what we know about thought insertion.[24] I also have other misgivings about their view that go beyond the scope of this paper. So I think their view ought to be rejected. But the point I want to make here is different. It's that, supposing Zahavi and Fasching's view *is* consistent with SELF-EXPERIENCE, it's not the aim of this paper to rule it out. SELF-EXPERIENCE is neutral on many ontological matters. It leaves us open for further discussion and theorizing about the fundamental nature of the self. So some disagreement about the nature of the self is perfectly all right as far as SELF-EXPERIENCE goes. In fact, at this stage of inquiry into self-experience, it is to be welcomed.

Another way one might question SELF-EXPERIENCE is to allow that the self shows up in experience when one is *active*—when one is (or at least seems to be) an *agent* of one's thoughts or other actions—but then deny that the self shows up in experience otherwise. Hume won't like this strategy, since he denies that the self *ever* shows up in experience. Nonetheless, this might seem like a promising way to attack SELF-EXPERIENCE.

But it's not. First of all, self-experience isn't limited to experiences of oneself as an agent. Thought-insertion patients fail to experience themselves as the agents of their thoughts. But they still experience themselves as the *subjects* of their thoughts. So there are non-agential self-experiences. And even if we suppose that we only experience ourselves when we are active, this suits SELF-EXPERIENCE just fine. For, as experiencers, we are normally active. We are rarely if ever *completely* experientially passive. There

[24] After all, as I've said, the breakdown in experience found in thought insertion does not appear to have anything to do with the "givenness" of experience or the way in which they are "manifest". Thought insertion patients experience their thoughts first-personally and thus acknowledge that they are their subjects. But they nonetheless deny that those thoughts are theirs. Though see Zahavi (2005, p. 142–144) and Sass et al. (2011) for Zahavi's approach to thought insertion (and related phenomena).

may be *aspects* of our experiences that we are passive with respect to (e.g., some sensations). But these aspects rarely if ever completely dominate our experiences at any given time. Or, at least, they don't do so often enough to cast doubt on the claim that the (active) self *normally* shows up in experience. So the present strategy is not a promising way to attack SELF-EXPERIENCE.

A related but more general way to attack SELF-EXPERIENCE is to say that although thought insertion does involve a breakdown in self-experience that is responsible for patients' thought misattributions, this does not imply that the self *normally* shows up in experience. For it could be that the self *sometimes*, but not normally, shows up in experience, and what causes thought insertion patients to attribute their thoughts to others is not a lack in something that is normally there, but is rather a lack in something that is merely *sometimes* there.

Again, Hume won't like this strategy, since he denies that the self *ever* shows up in experience. But set that aside. For this strategy has another problem: It does not explain why a breakdown in self-experience would cause thought insertion patients to attribute their thoughts to others. For if the self only shows up in experience *some of the time*, but not normally, then why would an instance where self-experience is lacking draw any notice? Indeed, why would it lead to something so dramatic as attributing one's thoughts to another? If the self does not normally show up in experience, then patients should *expect* there to be instances where self-experience is lacking. Thus, the present strategy does not explain why thought insertion patients would so much as take note of such instances, let alone attribute their thoughts to others.

What if one believes that the self only ever shows up in the *periphery* of experience (cf., Kriegel 2009; Peacocke 2014)? Is this a problem for SELF-EXPERIENCE? Not at all. In fact, as I'll suggest in a bit (§4), this view may help relieve some intuitions against SELF-EXPERIENCE. But, at any rate, it is completely consistent with SELF-EXPERIENCE. For peripheral self-experience is still self-experience (§1).

But suppose that one *also* points out that normally when we are peripherally aware of items of experience (e.g., thoughts, sensations, emotions), we can turn our introspective attention to those items, thus making ourselves *focally* aware of them and thereby replacing (and eliminating) our peripheral awareness of them (cf. Kriegel 2009, Ch. 4). Then a fan of the periphery-only view of self-experience might be left with a puzzle as to why we can't introspectively attend to ourselves in the same way that we can attend to our thoughts, sensations, emotions, etc. Or, to avoid this puzzle, she might suggest that strictly speaking it's not accurate to say that we ever *introspect* ourselves, since we never introspectively attend to ourselves.

I have been using 'introspection' in a somewhat broader sense to refer to any first-personal awareness—whether it's peripheral or focal—of our inner mental lives (see §1). This is the only sense of 'introspection' whereby SELF-EXPERIENCE, by itself, could be taken to imply that the self is normally introspectible.[25] So the claim that the self only ever

[25] One might think that if it's true that we are only ever peripherally aware of ourselves in experience, this offers some vindication to Hume, since he just said that he could not "catch himself" in experience. But I think the most natural way to interpret Hume, and certainly the way to interpret others who followed in his footsteps, is as saying not just that it's hard to *attend to* oneself in experience, but that we simply don't find ourselves *anywhere* in experience—even in the periphery. So the periphery-only view of self-experience does not vindicate Hume et al., at least not as I interpret them. However, as I will suggest below, this view may go some way toward explaining away their introspective intuitions about the elusiveness of the self.

shows up in the periphery of experience is not at odds with SELF-EXPERIENCE. The periphery-only view may indeed generate some puzzles about the elusiveness of the self, to which I'll return (§4). But the key point here is, again, that this view is consistent with SELF-EXPERIENCE.[26]

One final potential objection is that SELF-EXPERIENCE implies a problematic view of self-awareness—one whereby our normal procedure for self-attributing mental states involves our *introspectively identifying* ourselves. Shoemaker (1994), among others, criticizes this view, saying that our basic self-awareness—the kind of self-awareness that governs mental self-attribution—does not involve self-identification. He says this in part because he believes both that identification always goes hand-in-hand with the possibility of *mis*identification, and that we are immune from misidentifying ourselves when we self-attribute mental states. So Shoemaker insists that our mental self-attributions do not rely on introspective self-identification. And so if SELF-EXPERIENCE entails the opposite, SELF-EXPERIENCE might be in trouble.

But SELF-EXPERIENCE does not entail the opposite. I have not offered, and SELF-EXPERIENCE does not entail, any particular view of self-awareness. SELF-EXPERIENCE is not a claim about self-awareness or self-attribution. So SELF-EXPERIENCE is not threatened (at least not directly) by the above concern.

And yet, there is clearly a connection between self-experience, self-awareness, and self-attribution. So it's worth saying something about Shoemaker's argument.[27] One thing one might say is that introspective self-identification is a special case. After all, there's never anyone else who shows up in my experience as the subject of my experience. So there's no one else who I experience experiencing things for whom I could mistake myself. Thus, if I judge that I am experiencing something, and my self-identification is based on introspection, then there is no way I could misidentify myself.[28] That's one response. Another response is to grant that in general mental self-attributions do not involve introspective self-identification. Perhaps we normally take self-

[26] What if one claims that merely *attempting* to become focally aware of oneself annihilates peripheral self-experience? Might that cause trouble for SELF-EXPERIENCE? I don't think so. For we don't often try to become focally aware of ourselves. So this is unlikely to cast doubt on the claim that the self *normally* shows up in experience. But I also think that anyone who believes that we can only be peripherally aware of ourselves should deny that merely attempting to become focally self-aware annihilates peripheral self-experience. The reason focal awareness of x is supposed to annihilate peripheral awareness of x is because the former *supplants* or *replaces* the latter (see Kriegel 2009, p. 184). But if there is no focal self-experience, then it cannot supplant peripheral self-experience, and so there is no reason to think that peripheral self-experience would thus be annihilated.

[27] One response that I will not consider here is to say that thought insertion proves the falsity of Shoemaker's claim that we are immune to self-misidentification. This line is suggested by Campbell (2002) and Lane and Liang (2011), but criticized (rightly, I think) by Coliva (2002) and Stephens and Graham (2000). Although those who suffer from thought insertion misidentify themselves as the *agents* of their thoughts, they do not misidentify themselves as the *subjects* of their thoughts, which is what Shoemaker's claim is about.

[28] Shoemaker (1994) anticipates this response with another argument. He says that in order to introspectively match my mental states to myself I would have to first know which mental states are *mine*. But if I already know which mental states are mine, then there is no reason to think that my self-attributions rely on a *further* step of matching those mental states to an individual that I have identified as myself. One response to this argument is to grant that introspective self-identification does not require matching oneself to one's mental states. One might say that it is part of the concept of 'I' that it refers to *this* person who shows up in *this* experience and who experiences things from *this* perspective. So the *single* fact that I identify when I introspect is something like *this-person-experiencing-P* (or *this-person-experienced-P*). This suggestion requires much more development, however.

experience, and the experiential tie between ourselves and our mental states, for granted. Perhaps it is simply assumed as a feature of our everyday experiences, and only questioned when significantly altered or impaired (as in the case of thought insertion). Perhaps one does not need to introspectively attend to and identify oneself in order to have the experiential sense that one is the subject and author of one's mental states.[29] This second response grants Shoemaker's point about self-identification without denying SELF-EXPERIENCE.

Each of the above responses deserves further attention. But the point I want to make here is just that there's room to maneuver. SELF-EXPERIENCE can accommodate various views about self-awareness. So, although there is plenty of room for further debate about the relationship between self-experience and self-attribution, this is no reason to shrink from SELF-EXPERIENCE. Indeed, there is no reason at all to shrink from SELF-EXPERIENCE.

4 Conclusion

So then why *do* Hume, Ryle, Armstrong, and a host of other philosophers shrink from SELF-EXPERIENCE? If the self shows up in experience, then why do some honest introspective efforts yield strong convictions to the contrary?

Having never been privileged to observe the minds of Hume, Ryle, and Armstrong, it's difficult for me to say why they deny SELF-EXPERIENCE. But here are some tentative suggestions. First, self-experience is *ubiquitous*. It's always there (at least for most people).[30] And because self-experience is ubiquitous, it's less noticeable (introspectively). It fades into the background like the continuous hum of an air conditioner. Second, self-experience is typically in the *periphery* of our consciousness (cf. Kriegel 2004; Ford and Smith 2006). We don't usually focus on or attend to it. Perhaps we *never* really focus on the self or self-experience. Perhaps we can't! (cf. Peacocke 2014, ch. 3). Third, self-experience doesn't reveal much about the self. I normally experience myself as the subject and agent of my experiences, but that's about it. So self-experience isn't as comprehensive as one might expect. Finally, self-experience isn't very attention grabbing. A sharp pain in my knee is very attention grabbing. The feel of glasses on my face and the faint sound of traffic in the distance are less attention grabbing, and thus, less noticeable. Perhaps self-experience is the same way. It just isn't that attention grabbing.

So, for these reasons, it may be difficult to latch onto self-experience. However, thinking about thought insertion does help. It allows us to get a better grip on self-experience. For it allows us to imagine what it would be like if we didn't experience ourselves as the authors of our own thoughts. Imagining undergoing thought insertion allows us to attend to what it's like for us to experience ourselves as the authors of our thoughts. It allows us to notice ourselves. It allows us to see that SELF-EXPERIENCE is true.

[29] Uriah Kriegel (2004) and Ford and Smith (2006) discuss a helpful distinction between *focal* self-awareness and *peripheral* self-awareness. Focal awareness of something (including the self) requires attention, but peripheral awareness does not. Also see Peacocke (2014, ch. 3).

[30] Indeed, even those who suffer from inserted thoughts experience themselves (just not *as* agents of their thoughts).

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