



## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

### Thought insertion and the minimal Self

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*This paper contributes to the debate in the philosophy of psychiatry regarding the relation between thought insertion in schizophrenia and the sense of selfhood. Some scholars have suggested that thought insertion presents a case where the sense of selfhood is lacking. Other scholars have disputed this by proposing that a form of minimal selfhood is a necessary feature of consciousness that is still present in thought insertion, albeit in a disturbed manner. Herein, I argue that the notion of minimal selfhood that is used by these scholars is ambiguous between two meanings. The first is an ontological notion concerning the first-person individuation of consciousness. The second is a phenomenological notion concerning how a conscious experience is experienced as being given to the first-person subject. I argue that the former ontological notion is indeed a necessary feature of conscious experience, but the latter phenomenological notion is only a contingent feature. Therefore, even if it is possible that thought insertion presents a case where the feeling of first-person givenness is lacking or disturbed, the first-person individuation of consciousness remains present and undisturbed. As well as further clarifying the connection between consciousness and selfhood, this philosophical analysis reveals the extent to which schizophrenia can and cannot be said to comprise a disorder of selfhood.*

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Schizophrenia has long been suggested to be a disorder of selfhood. Emil Kraepelin (1919/1971), for example, considered a “loss of inner unity” to be a central feature of *dementia praecox*, which was the historical precursor to schizophrenia. Likewise, Eugen Bleuler (1911/1950) characterised schizophrenia as involving “the most manifold alterations” of the ego. The debate about how schizophrenia relates to selfhood has continued to the present day and has been informed by work in the phenomenological tradition of philosophy on the nature of the self (Henriksen et al., 2019; Lane, 2012; Metzinger, 2003; López-Silva, 2017; Zahavi, 1999). The present paper contributes to this philosophical debate by further clarifying what the phenomenon of thought insertion in schizophrenia can reveal about the connection between consciousness the self.

From the outset, it is worth noting that the “self” is an ambiguous notion that gets used in a variety of ways in the literature on schizophrenia. For example, Joel Krueger (2020) suggests that schizophrenia involves a disturbance of the “scaffolded self”, which concerns how affect is

regulated by one’s dynamic engagement with the world, while James Phillips (2003) suggests that schizophrenia involves a disturbance of the “narrative self”, which concerns how the individual integrates one’s reconstructed past, perceived present, and imagined future into a coherent story. However, the particular notion of the self in which the present paper is specifically interested is what the philosopher Dan Zahavi (1999, 2005, 2009, 2014) calls the “minimal self”. Also known as “ipseity” or “for-me-ness”, this refers to the fact that experience is always given to a first-person subject, which is taken to be the most fundamental form of selfhood.

Louis Sass and Josef Parnas (2003) have suggested that schizophrenia comprises a disorder of ipseity. Other scholars have concurred and have claimed that the symptom of thought insertion in schizophrenia presents a case where the sense of selfhood is lacking (Lane, 2012; Metzinger, 2003; López-Silva, 2017). Accordingly, it has been suggested that the phenomenon of thought insertion demonstrates that conscious experience and the sense of selfhood are not as closely connected

as they are commonly assumed to be. However, some philosophers have disputed this claim and instead have proposed that minimal selfhood is a necessary feature of consciousness (Henriksen et al., 2019; Zahavi, 2005). Accordingly, they argue that the minimal self is still present in thought insertion, although they concede that it is greatly disturbed.

Herein, I argue that the notion of minimal selfhood as it appears in the debate is also ambiguous. First, it could mean an ontological notion concerning the first-person individuation of consciousness. I propose that this is indeed a necessary feature of conscious experience. Second, it could mean a phenomenological notion concerning the way that a conscious experience is experienced as being given to the first-person subject. I suggest that this is only a contingent feature of conscious experience. This distinction is important, because it clarifies the extent to which thought insertion in schizophrenia can be said to be a disorder that affects selfhood. I propose that even if thought insertion presents a case where the latter phenomenological notion of first-person givenness is lacking or disturbed, the former ontological notion of first-person individuation remains present and undisturbed.

The rest of the paper will proceed as follows. In §2, I expand on the notion of minimal selfhood and on the contemporary debate regarding its relation to thought insertion in schizophrenia. In §3, I clarify the two different meanings of minimal selfhood that have hitherto been conflated in the debate. In §4, I examine the philosophical implication of this distinction for how we understand the relation between thought insertion in schizophrenia and selfhood.

## 2. MINIMAL SELFHOOD AND THOUGHT INSERTION

The notion of minimal selfhood, broadly speaking, refers to the first-person subjectivity of consciousness. An experience does not occur in some third-person objective space, but is always experienced from the point of view of a first-person subject. Moreover, that particular subject is acquainted with that particular experience in a manner in which other subjects are not. For example, when I experience pain, the pain

that I experience presents to me in a manner in which it does not present to anyone else. And so, conscious experience has a fundamental first-person mode of presentation.

Zahavi (2014) illustrates this first-person mode of presentation with the following thought experiment. Consider two twins, Mick and Mack, who gaze at a white wall and have white experiences. Although these experiences may be qualitatively indistinguishable, they differ from each other in a nontrivial way. One experience has a first-person mode of presentation particular to Mick, while the other experience has a first-person mode of presentation particular to Mack. They are individuated from each other with respect to the subjective experiencers to which they manifest. If Mick then turns away from the white wall and looks at a red door while Mack continues to look at the white wall, then there would be a red experience and a white experience. However, the red experience and white experience are not impersonal events that occur in some third-person objective space, but rather the red experience has a for-me-ness particular to Mick and the white experience has a for-me-ness particular to Mack.

Some philosophers have argued that minimal selfhood is what makes an experience an experience at all. Michael Blamauer writes:

“I think I am not alone by holding to the claim that consciousness (or experience in the way we are acquainted with in everyday life) necessarily entails a subject of experience for whom it is somehow or other like to have this experience: If there is something it is like to be in a state of pain, then, necessarily, there is something it is like for someone or something to be so [...] its subjective character (or the being-for-a-subject-of-experience of these qualities) is what makes the experience an experience at all” (Blamauer, 2013, p. 304)

Likewise, Zahavi writes:

“This first-personal givenness of experiential phenomena is not something incidental to their being, a mere varnish that the experiences could lack without ceasing to be experiences. On the contrary, this first-personal givenness makes the experiences subjective” (Zahavi, 2005, p. 122)

Therefore, minimal selfhood is accepted by these philosophers to be a necessary and fundamental feature of consciousness.

It is worth noting that Zahavi's thesis of minimal selfhood is not merely claiming that conscious experience involves a sense of self, but is making the stronger analytic claim that conscious experience entails that there is a self, where the self is understood minimally as the first-person subjectivity or for-me-ness of consciousness. He draws on Edmund Husserl, who writes:

"The consciousness in which I am conscious of myself (*meiner*) is my consciousness, and my consciousness of myself and I myself are concretely considered identical. To be a subject is to be in the mode of being aware of oneself" (Husserl, 1973, p. 151)

This passage proposes that consciousness exists and that being a subject is identical with consciousness presenting to itself. Likewise, Zahavi is putting forward "the phenomenological proposal which defines selfhood in terms of subjectivity and argues that subjectivity amounts to selfhood" (Zahavi, 2009, p. 554). Hence, the thesis of minimal selfhood defines the self as the minimal condition of possibility for conscious experience and this is identified as the first-person subjectivity or for-me-ness of consciousness.

Recently, scholars have appealed to the phenomenon of thought insertion in schizophrenia as a putative counterexample to the view that minimal selfhood is a necessary feature of conscious experience (Lane, 2012; Metzinger, 2003; López-Silva, 2017). Thought insertion is a phenomenon in which a person experiences a thought as not belonging to him or her and furthermore ascribes the thought to an external source. It is described in the psychopathology textbook *Sims' Symptoms of the Mind* as follows:

"In *thought insertion*, he experiences thoughts that do not have the feeling of familiarity, of being his own, but he feels that they have been put in his mind, without his volition, from outside himself. As in thought withdrawal, there is clearly a disturbance in the self-image, and especially in the boundary between what is self and what is not self; thoughts that have in fact arisen inside himself are considered to have been inserted into his thinking from outside" (Oyebode, 2008, p. 171)

Along with thought withdrawal and thought broadcasting, thought insertion is listed by Kurt Schneider (1959) as one of the first rank symptoms of schizophrenia.

Thomas Metzinger describes instances of thought insertion as instances "where patients are confronted with conscious, cognitive contents for which they have no sense of agency or ownership" (Metzinger, 2003, p. 445). Accordingly, he suggests that thought insertion presents a case where for-me-ness is lacking. Similarly, Timothy Lane distinguishes "hosting" a thought from "owning" a thought and suggests that the former is present in thought insertion but the latter is absent (Lane, 2012, p. 260). He takes this to indicate that a person can have an experience without this experience being experienced as being the person's own. Pablo López-Silva defends a more moderate view and suggests that instances of thought insertion "make phenomenologically plausible the idea that conscious experiences without a sense of mineness can occur in self-aware subjects" (López-Silva, 2017, p. 326). Importantly, he distinguishes the sense of mineness from for-me-ness and proposes that the former is lacking in thought insertion but the latter is present.

The aforementioned scholars use the example of thought insertion to suggest that conscious experience can occur without minimal selfhood. For example, Metzinger claims that minimal selfhood is "by no means a precondition of conscious experience" (Metzinger, 2003, p. 334). Likewise, Lane suggests that "consciousness does not entail self-awareness; it is not stamped with a *meish* quality; and, for-me-ness does not play a determining role in its constitution" (Lane, 2012, p. 281). Taking a more moderate stance, López-Silva does not deny the centrality of for-me-ness in conscious experience, but argues that the "sense of mineness plays little role explaining the most minimal form of subjectivity entailed by phenomenal consciousness" (López-Silva, 2017, p. 332).

Against the above, Mads Henriksen and colleagues set out to "refute the claim that episodes of thought insertion represent examples of experiences lacking for-me-ness" (Henriksen et al., 2019, p. 1). They aim to defend Zahavi's (2005) thesis that minimal selfhood is a necessary feature of conscious experience. Accordingly, they argue that minimal selfhood remains present in thought insertion. However, as we shall see,

they concede that this sense of minimal selfhood is greatly disturbed.

Henriksen and colleagues consider the following description of a patient's experience, which is transcribed by the psychiatrist Mari Nagai:

"No matter how much absorbed I am in something, there is always an *I* that looks on it from the outside dispassionately. This latter, outer self is always managing and controlling me. Even when I talk with others, the outer self listens to their words and tells them to the inner self" (Nagai, 2016, p. 497)

This describes a felt distance between the experiencer and the thought that is not felt when a thought is experienced in the healthy state. The experience is distorted in such a way that thought and action feel like they are being controlled from afar. Importantly, though, Henriksen and colleagues note that the experience, although distorted, retains a first-person givenness. They write:

"Indeed, regardless of how alienated or distanced the patient feels vis-à-vis the experiences, the experiences never manifest themselves in the public domain. They are never intersubjectively accessible in the same sense as tables and chairs. The experiences are given differently to the patient than to anybody else. The epistemic asymmetry is preserved. This is what most fundamentally make the experiences first-personal, and this is why even these pathological experiences retain their for-me-ness" (Henriksen et al., 2019, p. 7)

Therefore, minimal selfhood is still present in thought insertion, insofar as the experience fundamentally presents to a first-person subject.

Nonetheless, although minimal selfhood is present in thought insertion, Henriksen and colleagues concede that it is greatly disturbed. They write:

"We don't think examples like these support the view that there is something like an innermost core of for-me-ness that remains intact and unchanged. Fruit syrup might consequently be a better analogy than an artichoke. When you mix red fruit syrup with water, the syrup colours all the water red, it doesn't leave a bottom layer untouched and untainted. And contra the first interpretation, even when coloured, the water remains water. It doesn't disappear" (Henriksen et al., 2019, p. 7)

What is suggested here is that the experiential quality of thought insertion is so profoundly distorted at the prereflective level that the

experience presents to the subject in a very different manner from the manner in which the experience of a thought presents to the subject in the healthy state. This is claimed to amount to a disturbance in minimal selfhood.

And so, by showing that minimal selfhood remains present in thought insertion, Henriksen and colleagues maintain that minimal selfhood is a necessary feature of conscious experience. However, in light of the arguments by Metzinger (2003), Lane (2012), and López-Silva (2017), Henriksen and colleagues concede that minimal selfhood, although present, is disturbed in thought insertion. In what is to follow, I argue that Henriksen and colleagues concede too much. I show that the notion of minimal selfhood they use is ambiguous between two meanings and that conflating these two meanings leads them to overstate the extent to which schizophrenia can be said to comprise a disorder of the self. Instead, maintaining a distinction between these two meanings can support a more robust case for the thesis that minimal selfhood is a necessary feature of conscious experience that is undisturbed by thought insertion.

### 3. THE AMBIGUITY OF MINIMAL SELFHOOD

The ambiguous way in which the notion of minimal self gets used is noted by López-Silva (2017 pp. 324-325). He distinguishes five different ways in which a subject can be aware of an experience. These are:

- (i) "for-me-ness", which is the sense of privacy and exclusivity of first-person conscious experience;
- (ii) "my-ness" or the "sense of subjectivity", which is the awareness of being an experiencer undergoing an experience;
- (iii) "ownership" or "mineness", which is the awareness of the type of relation between the experiencer and the experience;
- (iv) "agentive mineness", which is the awareness of the thought as something initiated by the subject;
- (v) the "sense of location" or "whereness", which is the sense that the experience occurs in a certain place.

As noted in the previous section, López-Silva

suggests that thought insertion involves a lack of mineness, but not a lack of for-me-ness.

Similarly, I propose that there are two concepts that get conflated in the debate about minimal selfhood. The first is the ontological notion of first-person individuation. The second is the phenomenological notion of first-person givenness. I argue that the former is more basic than the latter and that the latter is not entailed by the former. Accordingly, the former is a better contender for the most fundamental form of selfhood.

The ontological notion of first-person individuation concerns the basic fact that consciousness necessitates a subject. As noted earlier, an experience does not occur in some third-person objective space, but necessarily presents with a first-person mode of presentation to a subject of experience. That is to say, an experience is experienced by an experiencer. As well as this being a conceptual truth that holds in virtue of its logical form, it is also a substantive truth that corresponds to an essential fact about the ontology of consciousness. Subjectivity is essential to consciousness and is what makes an experience an experience at all.

Here, the notion of subjectivity can be understood as corresponding to the aforementioned notion of for-me-ness described by López-Silva (2017). Nonetheless, some caution is required, as the notion of for-me-ness is also used ambiguously. For example, in one point, López-Silva refers to “the conceptual fact that all experiences necessarily belong to a subject – the fact that without subjects there would be no experiences at all” (López-Silva, 2017, p. 320). This corresponds to the above ontological claim about how an experience always presents to a first-person subject. However, at another point, López-Silva refers to “*a sense of privacy and exclusivity*” (López-Silva, 2017, p. 324). The expression “*sense of*” in this description is suggestive of a phenomenological claim regarding what the quality of being a first-person subject feels like for the subject. While, these are closely related, they can come apart conceptually. It is specifically the former ontological reading of for-me-ness that is relevant to the purpose of this paper. Accordingly, the notion of subjectivity, as

I use it above, can be taken to be synonymous with the ontological reading of for-me-ness. It is also this ontological reading to which the notion of first-person individuation pertains.

First-person individuation can be illustrated by considering how experiences present to different subjects. Saul Kripke notes the following:

“As is well known, Hume regarded the self as a notion constructed by relating various impressions through resemblance, contiguity, or causation. All we really have is a bundle of perceptions, unified by these relations. Many problems beset this idea. Why should my own impression not equally resemble that of someone else, or be equally contiguous with that of someone else? And similarly, couldn't an impression of mine have a causal relation to that of someone else? In fact, all these things do happen. It is not fair to say that only the impressions that I am aware of count” (Kripke, 2011, pp. 307-308)

The point here is that the experiences do not simply manifest in some impersonal “view from nowhere” (Nagel, 1986), but present to different experiencers. My experience and your experience are individuated from each other in virtue of their having different subjects, namely me and you. This individuation is essentially discrete, insofar as subjects are distinct experiential perspectives with distinct identities. I have first-person acquaintance with my experience in a manner that you do not and you have first-person acquaintance with your experience in a manner that I do not. As Sam Coleman notes, “being a subject goes with being an *experiential entity* [...] a point of view annexed to a private qualitative field” (Coleman, 2014, p. 30). Hence, first-person individuation determines the identity of a conscious subject as an experiential entity and essentially distinguishes that conscious subject from the countless plurality of other conscious subjects that exist.

The phenomenological notion of first-person givenness concerns the way in which an experience has the particular quality of being given to the subject. While first-person individuation describes a formal feature about the ontology of conscious experience, first-person givenness describes a feature that appears within the phenomenology of the experience. That is to say, it is about what the quality of the experience is like for the experiencer.

Here, the notion of an experience's being given

to the subject can be taken as corresponding to the aforementioned notion of mineness described by López-Silva (2017). However, it is worth noting that this also admits some ambiguity. It could be taken as a phenomenological claim about the experience having the quality of belonging to the subject, but it could also be used to support an ontological claim about the kind of relation that obtains between the experience and the experiencer. Again, while these are closely related, they can come apart conceptually. I will be using the phenomenological reading in this paper when I discuss first-person givenness, as this is the reading that is often implied when philosophers write about mineness (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2014; Kriegel, *forthcoming*; López-Silva, 2017). However, this distinction is ultimately less important for the purpose of this paper than the wider distinction between first-person individuation and first-person givenness.

First-person givenness has also been described as the prereflective awareness of self. This is characterised by Shaun Gallagher in this passage coauthored with Zahavi:

“The notion of pre-reflective self-awareness is related to the idea that experiences have a subjective ‘feel’ to them, a certain (phenomenal) quality of ‘what it is like’ or what it ‘feels’ like to have them [...] there is something experiential that is, in some sense, the same, namely, their distinct first-personal character. All the experiences are characterized by a quality of mineness or for-me-ness, the fact that it is I who is having these experiences” (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2014, p. 3)

As suggested above, what is notable is that this passage is describing something about the phenomenal quality of an experience. For the experiencer, the experience has a characteristic “quality of mineness”, or the feel of belonging to the experiencer.

Importantly, the ontological notion of first-person individuation does not entail the phenomenological notion of first-person givenness. For example, López-Silva (2017) suggests that some animals may not perceive their experiences to have specific feelings of belonging to them, but the experiences are nonetheless respectively individuated to them as subjects. Similarly, Uriah Kriegel writes:

“I do not mean to imply that the subject must be somehow aware of *herself*, or of some ‘me’, in having

her experiences. Rather, she may be aware just of the experiences, and it is this awareness that makes these experiences for her. If we use the label ‘mineness’ to designate the more robust phenomenon of awareness of oneself in addition to one’s experiences, we could put the point by saying that for-me-ness need not amount to mineness” (Kriegel, *forthcoming*, p. 11)

Hence, it is conceptually possible for an experience to present in the first-person to a particular experiencer and yet for the experience to lack the distinctive phenomenal feel of belonging to the experiencer.

This distinction allows us to be clearer about what is demonstrated by Zahavi’s (2014) aforementioned thought experiment featuring Mick and Mack, who are both gazing at a white wall. The experiences of Mick and Mack may resemble each other with respect to their phenomenal whiteness, but are distinct from each other insofar as they present to different experiential subjects. One experience presents in the first-person to Mick, while the other experience presents in the first-person to Mack. This is an ontological fact about first-person individuation. Of course, Mick and Mack may also experience their respective experiences as belonging to them, but this is a further phenomenological fact about first-person givenness that does not necessarily follow from the ontological fact about first-person individuation. And so, the thought experiment indicates that first-person individuation is a necessary feature of consciousness, but first-person givenness is only a contingent feature.

In light of the above, we can arrive at a clearer analysis of what comprises minimal selfhood. As noted earlier, Zahavi’s (2009) thesis of minimal selfhood defines the self as the minimal form of subjectivity that is essential to conscious experience. It is analytically true that consciousness necessitates that the self exists, insofar as the self is defined “in terms of subjectivity” and “subjectivity amounts to selfhood” (Zahavi, 2009, p. 554). The question, then, is what comprises this minimal form of subjectivity that is essential to consciousness. The above philosophical analysis indicates that the defining feature is the first-person individuation of the experiential subject. While first-person individuation is entailed by the subjectivity

of consciousness, first-person givenness is a further claim about the phenomenal quality of an experience that is not entailed by first-person individuation. This indicates that the ontological feature of first-person individuation is a more basic feature than the phenomenological feature of first-person givenness. Accordingly, Kriegel notes that “it is only the thinner phenomenon of for-me-ness that constitutes the mark of the conscious, the substantive commonality among (and peculiarity of) all conscious states” (Kriegel, *forthcoming*, p. 11). In the following section, I relate the above back specifically to the relation between thought insertion in schizophrenia and minimal selfhood.

#### 4. APPLYING THE DISTINCTION

In the debate about thought insertion and minimal selfhood, as well as in the literature on minimal selfhood more generally, the ontological notion of first-person individuation and the phenomenological notion of first-person are often conflated. For example, sometimes when Zahavi describes minimal selfhood, he is describing self-individuation, such as when he states that “as long as we focus on the first-personal mode of givenness of the stream of consciousness, we are dealing with a kind of pure, formal, and *empty individuality*” (Zahavi, 1999, p. 165). This emphasis on empty individuality suggests that he is referring to an ontological feature of conscious experience, rather than a particular quality within the phenomenology of the experience. However, sometimes when he describes minimal selfhood, he is describing self-givenness, such as when he claims that “[e]very conscious state, be it a perception, an emotion, a recollection, or an abstract belief, has a certain subjective character, a certain phenomenal quality of ‘what it is like’ to live through or undergo that state” (Zahavi, 2005, p. 119). This is describing the phenomenological feature of what an experience feels like for the experiencer.

Similarly, when Henriksen and colleagues discuss minimal selfhood, they sometimes seem to be discussing first-person individuation. For example, in the following passage, they deny that they are describing a particular phenomenal

quality associated with minimal selfhood:

“The idea is not that consciousness is populated by some kind of ‘self-object’ or that it contains some pervasive ‘I-qualia’. Rather, experience, in virtue of its very subjective givenness, necessarily involves a fundamental for-me-ness” (Henriksen et al., 2019, p. 1)

However, in the following passage, they seem instead to be discussing first-person givenness as a phenomenal quality:

“William James famously argued that our own present thoughts are characterized by a quality of ‘warmth and intimacy’ [...] the for-me-ness in question seems to lack the very features James was referring to. Already at the pre-reflective level, the self-presence, the for-me-ness, is impaired and disturbed” (Henriksen et al., 2019, p. 7)

And so, Henriksen and colleagues equivocate between the ontological notion of first-person individuation and the phenomenological notion of first-person in their paper. At one point, they disavow the idea of “some pervasive ‘I-qualia’”, which suggests that they are not discussing the phenomenological notion of first-person givenness. Rather, they are discussing the “fundamental for-me-ness”, or first-person individuation, of experience. However, at another point, they characterise minimal selfhood in the healthy case as a phenomenal “quality of ‘warmth and intimacy’”, which suggests that they have switched to discussing first-person givenness.

By instead acknowledging the distinction between first-person individuation and first-person givenness, I argue that we can arrive at a clearer analysis of the relation between thought insertion and minimal selfhood. As I showed in the previous section, the ontological notion of first-person individuation and the phenomenological notion of first-person givenness come apart conceptually. Hence, a disturbance in first-person givenness does not necessarily amount to a disturbance in first-person individuation. I suggest that the example of thought insertion presents a case where they come apart in actuality.

To illustrate this, let us revisit those scholars who suggest that thought insertion presents a case where selfhood is lacking. What becomes clear is that the claims that these scholars make about the lack of minimal selfhood apply specifically

to the phenomenological notion of first-person givenness. For example, Sass and Parnas write:

*“Ipseity refers to the experiential sense of being a vital and self-coinciding subject of experience or first person perspective on the world [...] As we analyze it, this ipseity disturbance has two fundamental and complementary aspects or components. The first is hyperreflexivity, which refers to forms of exaggerated self-consciousness in which a subject or agent experiences itself, or what would normally be inhabited as an aspect or feature of itself, as a kind of external object. The second is a diminishment of self-affection or autoaffection — that is, of the sense of basic self-presence, the implicit sense of existing as a vital and self-possessed subject of awareness”* (Sass and Parnas, 2003, p. 428)

Here, the aspects of selfhood that are suggested to be disturbed in schizophrenia are the “experiential sense” of being a subject, the way in which a “subject or agent experiences itself”, and the “implicit sense” of being a subject of awareness. All of these describe aspects that occur within the phenomenology of the experience. They concern the phenomenal quality of one’s awareness of oneself, rather than the ontological fact about one’s individuation as a subject.

Likewise, Metzinger suggests that instances of thought insertion involve patients being “confronted with conscious, cognitive contents for which they have no sense of agency or ownership” (Metzinger, 2003, p. 445). The feature that is described as disturbed or absent is the “sense of agency or ownership”, which again is a feature that occurs within the phenomenology of the experience. The phenomenal quality of first-person givenness is lacking, but it is still the subject who is “confronted with” the experience, which indicates that first-person individuation is still present and undisturbed. Lane claims that thought insertion shows that an experience is “not stamped with a meish quality”, which again suggests that the feature that is lacking is the phenomenal quality of first-person givenness (Lane, 2012, p. 281). While he argues that the sense of “owning” a thought is lacking or disturbed, he seems to suggest that first-person individuation is retained insofar as he concedes that the subject is still “hosting” the thought. As we have seen, López-Silva (2017) explicitly states that the “sense of mineness” is disturbed or absent in thought insertion, but states that

“the most minimal form of subjectivity entailed by phenomenal consciousness” remains present (López-Silva, 2017, p. 332).

The above suggests that Henriksen and colleagues concede too much to the above critics when they suggest that thought insertion does not “support the view that there is something like an innermost core of for-me-ness that remains intact and unchanged” (Henriksen et al., 2019, p. 7). The example of thought insertion reveals that the phenomenal quality of first-person givenness may be disturbed or lacking, but first-person individuation is always present insofar as the experience presents to the point of view of a first-person subject. Indeed, Henriksen and colleagues recognise that “anomalous and psychotic experiences do remain characterized by for-me-ness in the sense of being given to the experiencer first-personally”, which might seem to suggest that they take first-person individuation to be conserved in thought insertion even though first-person givenness is disturbed (Henriksen et al., 2019, p. 7). However, because they run the more basic ontological notion of first-person individuation together with the phenomenological notion of first-person givenness when they characterise the minimal self, they assume that the disturbance of first-person givenness that occurs in thought insertion amounts to a disturbance in minimal selfhood.

When instead we acknowledge that first-person individuation and first-person givenness can come apart, thought insertion can be understood as a case where the quality of first-person givenness is disrupted or lacking, but the most fundamental form of minimal selfhood, namely the ontological fact of first-person individuation, remains present and undisturbed. Accordingly, Michelle Maiese writes:

*“despite the disruptions to self-experience involved in thought insertion, the subject is still capable of subjectivity insofar as the thoughts in question are first-personally presented and have a phenomenal feel (albeit one that is different from ordinary thoughts) [...] In instances of thought insertion, the thoughts are ‘in’ the subject and subjectively experienced, and yet not experienced as ‘hers’. As a result of this breakdown in the sense of ownership, the subject fails to identify the thoughts as her own, and yet she remains aware of where the thoughts occur (i.e., in her own mind)”* (Maiese, 2016, p. 163)



The observation here is that the thought retains a first-person mode of presentation particular to the subject even though the phenomenal quality of the thought differs from that of an ordinary thought in the healthy case. Indeed, first-person mode individuation is so essential to conscious experience that to say that a given thought is not individuated in this way would be to suggest either that it does not present to a subject at all or that it is publicly accessible in objective space. This is noted by Henriksen and colleagues when they observe that “experiences never manifest themselves in the public domain” and that they “are never intersubjectively accessible in the same sense as tables and chairs” (Henriksen et al., 2019, p. 7). Therefore, insofar as the experience in the case of thought insertion still presents in a private manner to the subject, first-person individuation remains intact.

Before I conclude, it is also relevant to note that the disturbance in first-person givenness in thought insertion is often characterised as involving some sort of error in perception or judgement. For example, Lisa Bortolotti and Matthew Broome characterise thought insertion as a “failure of self ascription” and a “failure of endorsement” (Bortolotti and Broome, 2009, pp. 216-222). The term “failure” suggests that something has gone wrong how the subject perceives or interprets the thought. One fails to ascribe ownership and authorship of the thought to oneself despite one’s actually being the owner and author of the thought. As noted by Bortolotti and Broome, “if you suffer from thought insertion, you recognise that the thought is in your mind (spatiality condition), and you can access its content first-personally (introspection condition), but you don’t think the thought is yours (failure of the self ascription condition)” (Bortolotti and Broome, 2009, p. 218). Here, “the thought is in your mind” and “you can access its content first-personally” support the view that the first-person individuation of experience is retained. However, the “you don’t think the thought is yours” suggests that the thought lacks the phenomenal quality of first-person givenness, such that the subject mistakenly judges that the thought does not belong to the subject. Again, first-person individuation comes apart from first-

person givenness and the mistaken judgement that arises from the disturbance in latter does not indicate that the former is affected.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Is schizophrenia a disorder of the minimal self? Herein, I have shown that attempts to address this question in the philosophy of psychiatry tend to conflate two different readings of minimal selfhood. The first is the ontological notion of first-person individuation, which is a necessary feature of consciousness. The second is the phenomenological notion of first-person givenness, which is a contingent feature concerning what the quality of an experience is like for the experiencer. Conflating these two readings givenness results in scholars overstating the influence of thought insertion in schizophrenia on minimal selfhood.

By minding the distinction between first-person individuation and first-person givenness, we can better understand the extent to which schizophrenia is and is not a disorder of selfhood. I have argued that the ontological notion of first-person individuation is more basic than the phenomenological notion of first-person givenness, and so the minimal self is better identified with first-person individuation. While thought insertion in schizophrenia may present a case where first-person givenness is disturbed or lacking, first-person individuation remains present and undisturbed. Therefore, we may consider schizophrenia to comprise what Sass and Parnas call a distortion of “the sense of self” and a disturbance of “self-experience”, insofar as these suggest that the phenomenal quality first-person givenness is disturbed (Sass and Parnas, 2003, p. 427). We may also consider schizophrenia to comprise a disorder of more peripheral aspects of selfhood, including scaffolded selfhood and narrative selfhood (Krueger, 2020; Phillips, 2003). However, given that the first-person individuation that comprises the most fundamental form of minimal selfhood remains intact, it follows that schizophrenia is not a disorder of the minimal self.

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