

On the Phenomenology of Introspection
For Introspection and Consciousness, Smithies and Stoljar, eds., OUP
DRAFT January 29, 2012
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1. Introduction

What is the special way in which we each know our own minds? “Introspection,” we say. But this word may seem too theoretically loaded—suggesting a faculty of “inner sense” whereby we turn attention away from the “external world” to perceive what’s inside. And that picture of how we get self-knowledge cannot be taken for granted. However, while the term ‘introspection’ seems practically inevitable, we can elect to use it—as I will—without committing ourselves to the existence of an “inner sense.” I will in fact reject inner sense views. But I also want to do justice to what I think makes them attractive. This means explaining how consciousness and attention to experience make first-person “introspective” knowledge possible.

My approach will be phenomenological. Phenomenology, as I see it, aims at a reasoned and unified understanding of philosophically or theoretically salient distinctions, by examining cases in which we judge (or imagine judging) about our own experience with a distinctively first-person warrant or authority. I have argued for its legitimacy elsewhere.¹ To rely on such judgments is not to accept self-reports uncritically—as correct portrayals either of experience, or of beliefs about it.² On the

¹ Siewert 1998 (Chapters 1-2), 2007a, 2007b, 2011a.

² On my approach it is wrong to assume that criticism can proceed only by abandoning a “first-person” perspective for a “third-person” one. For we need not assume that all warrant for your judgments about your experience ultimately derives from some theory justified as an explanation of observations of your behavior. And my way of using first-person judgment to criticize itself need not assume infallibility in stating our own beliefs, since it can also yield a correction of our belief reports. As I explain in Siewert (2007a), in these respects my phenomenology differs from what Daniel Dennett (1991) calls his “heterophenomenology.”

contrary, what I propose is that, by means of self-examination, we clarify concepts in terms of which we understand our mental lives, in a way open to criticism and engaged with argument. How this works and why it matters I hope to make plain by what follows. I will first engage in this sort of phenomenology to see how it can help us evaluate the notion of inner sense (or higher-order perception). I will then proceed to criticize two prominent contemporary incarnations of that idea, in William Lycan (2004) and Peter Carruthers (2004).³ Finally, I will explain how my rejection of inner sense leads to a positive account of introspective knowledge.

2. Generic Introspection and the Idea of Inner Sense

We should distinguish inner sense from (what I'll call) generic introspection. It's enough to accept the latter if you agree: you have warrant for first-person judgments about your own experience that is distinct in kind from what others have for speaking about it. In short, you judge of your own experience with a special sort of right. Well, do you accept this?

Suppose I ask you what color a shirt looks to you. Or I ask you whether it smells to you like something's burning in here, or whether this milk tastes sour to you. Or I ask you to picture the face of an American politician—and then want to know which you imagined. Or you may ask yourself these or similar questions. In such cases, it

³ On Lycan's view some of our mental states are "...the object[s] of a kind of internal scanning or monitoring by a quasi-perceptual faculty" (2004, 95)—where this "quasi-perceptual" scanning is distinct in kind from representation in higher-order *thought*. And Carruthers maintains: "it is because it proposes a set of higher-order analog—or 'experiential'—states, which represent the existence and content of our first-order perceptual states, that the theory deserves the title of 'higher-order *perception*' theory..." (2004, 118). (Carruthers finds the mark of *perception* (as distinct from thought) in the possession of "analog" or "nonconceptual" representational content.) It is true that Carruthers calls his a "higher-order *perception*" (as distinct from "inner sense") theory—while Lycan (like me) uses the terms interchangeably. But the convictions just noted are enough to make both Lycan and Carruthers "inner sense" theorists, as I interpret this.

sometimes happens that you just don't observe yourself doing what others would ordinarily need to observe, to be warranted in giving the same answers about your experience as you have warrant to give. That this is so might be clear in various ways. Maybe you are lying to them. (So what you offer others to see and hear is at odds with what you know about yourself.) Or maybe you have simply remained silent. (So others just don't have enough to go on.) Or perhaps you are just not then in a position to observe about yourself what others can—e.g., your eye movements, your facial expressions, your brain scan. Still, often enough, your lack of what others would need in order to render warranted judgment about your experience would not destroy your capacity to do so. Thus what warrants you in your judgment differs from what would warrant others in theirs about you. If you agree, you agree there is generic introspection. Whatever gives you a distinctively first-person warrant for your judgments about your experience—that counts as introspection in this non-specific, catch-all sense. (Whether there are in fact a number of different “introspective” ways of knowing can initially be left open.)⁴

What counts as “experience” here? Clearly, from my examples: your imagining something, or things looking or tasting somehow to you. But generally, for me, “experience” is the same as “phenomenal consciousness”—that which there is, essentially and non-derivatively, “something it's like for one to have” (Siewert 2011b). And I am liberal about this category—I don't restrict it to some “raw,” or even “non-conceptual” sensory aspect of mental life. Wondering whether the milk has gone bad,

⁴ See Schwitzgebel, this volume.

judging that Nancy Pelosi's smile is strangely strained, and wishing she wouldn't smile like that—all these can be experiences.

Even if my liberality makes you unhappy, you'll likely admit what matters here: often there's nothing beyond at least some of what I call "experience," the explanation of which you can plausibly cite to justify first-person judgment about it. I judge that this shirt looks (not quite purple but) blue to me, that the milk tastes sour to me, that I'm imagining the smiling face of Nancy Pelosi. If I ask myself: "In explanation of what further fact do I offer such judgments?" at some point I come up empty handed. And just here we may reach for something like inner sense. "To know what I myself am experiencing, I don't need to get at it by trying to explain something else; I just directly perceive it happening!" The idea may be elaborated by analogy with vision. You are looking into a box whose contents it happens only you can see. Maybe we should similarly say, only you can now sense or perceive (and thus know about) what's in your mind. But while the box may be turned to give me the same sort of view you had of its contents, nothing can be turned to allow me to "look into your mind" as you do.

Some friends of inner sense may hasten to disclaim any such visual analogy. And they may insist (like David Armstrong (1968)) that some other mode of sensing (such as proprioception) actually furnishes a better image of the faculty by which one "scans" the "contents" of one's own mind. (Much as only you proprioceptively feel your own body, only you "innerly" sense or perceive your own states of mind.) Exploring variations on the theme of inner sense could send us on some long detours. I will simply proceed by spelling out the core notion of inner sense I want to examine. That is this. First, whatever the sensory modality, we can distinguish between: (a) your sensing

something (e.g., what's in the box looks somehow to you, or you feel the position of your own limbs); and (b) your thinking about it (e.g., you wonder whether the item in the box is a tooth, or judge that your ankles are crossed). Second, sensing performs an epistemic service—it somehow furnishes you with either knowledge of the item sensed, or warrant for thinking what you do about it. Finally—and here is the crucial point—this sensing/thinking distinction can somehow be iterated. It can be drawn not only where something “without the mind” is concerned, but also with respect to events in, or states of one’s mind—for instance, one’s own sensing. So there is both first-order sensing (of, e.g., colors, shapes, smells and sounds) and also—distinct from this in kind—a sensing of such sensing (and perhaps of other mental states/occurrences). Importantly for my discussion: some versions also maintain there is a distinctively sensory form of attention to experience. Sense—whether “outer” or “inner”—brings one knowledge via attention to its proper objects.

The key distinctions here (sensing/thinking, first-order/higher-order) need more explanation. However, I hope it is clear enough that we can accept the reality of “generic introspection,” while withholding judgment on inner sense. But we also now may glimpse its allure. A solely self-directed “inward” mode of sensing would seem to informatively specify the mode of access first identified generically, and would make this—appropriately—distinct from explanatory inference, and exclusively first-personal.

Please bear this firmly in mind throughout. I do not assume that the iteration of a univocal sensing/thinking distinction commits the inner sense theorist to an extra layer of the “qualia” supposedly found in “sensation.” (Qualia, I take it, are the seemingly “non-relational” (or “intrinsic” or “monadic”) components or aspects of sensory

experience, commonly thought to be somehow “ineffable,” such as the “raw feel” of a color shade, a trumpet note, or some migraine agony.) Nor do I invoke some other idea of “sensory quality” here. These notions will play no role in my understanding of what sensing is, or in my criticisms of inner sense. And my argument will not depend on the (for me, utterly distinct) assumption that wherever there is sensing, there must be some state with a distinctively sensory phenomenal character.⁵

I will, however, ask whether higher-order sensing (and not just thinking) is—as I’ll put it—“phenomenologically discernible.” But I do not here adopt the recent usage on which ‘phenomenology’ is but another term for ‘phenomenal character.’ Unless otherwise indicated, ‘phenomenology’ here names a style of inquiry—one involving the critical use of first-person reflection to clarify distinctions. Thus I am asking what phenomenology, so understood, has to say about inner sense.

3. First-Order Thinking and Sensing

There will be inner sense only if a sensing/thinking distinction iterates beyond the mind’s ground-floor. So to address this issue at all, we must be able to distinguish sensing from

⁵ To clarify: I distinguish my case from Rosenthal’s (2002) “no extra quality” argument against inner sense, not because I would grant Rosenthal his conception of sensory qualities at the first-order level, and just don’t see why all sensing (even higher-order) should need them. Rather, my point is (in part): I don’t recognize the qualities that figure in his story. They are to be that by which we ordinarily introspectively distinguish our sensory states—but at the same time they are said to belong to pains that don’t feel anyhow, and to characterize blindsighters’ vision. However, I do not ordinarily introspectively think of the differences among my own states with reference to *such* qualities. Rather, I do so precisely in terms of how certain states *feel* (as they would not, to the anesthetized), and with respect to how colors and figures *look* to me (as they would not, to a blindsighter). I would also make no demand that inner sense display its own “qualia,” partly because I cannot endorse all that term often drags in with it. (I *do*, however, endorse notions of *phenomenal character*, and of *phenomenal features* (as described in Siewert 1998, ch. 3 and 4, and in Siewert 2011b).) Now admittedly, in previous argument for the indiscernibility of inner sense I did appeal to the absence of inner sensory phenomenal character (Siewert 1998, 212-213). But I now see that as unfortunate, both because the confusion of sensory qualities with phenomenal character facilitates conflation of my complaint with Rosenthal’s, and because I thereby obscured the fact that my crucial point really had to do—not with an absence of phenomenal character—but (as I try to explain better here) with the phenomenological absence of perceptual constancy, and of objectual sensing, beyond the first-order level.

thinking. But then we need to understand how this distinction applies at least at the first level. You may want to describe the difference by saying something like: thinking (but not sensing) has “propositional” (or perhaps “conceptual”) “content.” But I don’t think theoretical claims like these or professional jargon like “sensory qualities,” “qualia,” “representation,” or “content” provide us a good place to start. Let’s first cultivate some concrete understanding of what we want to distinguish. Otherwise, I fear we won’t adequately understand what we are talking about.

I begin with this elementary point: some things are sensed when others are only thought of. For instance, staring at the mess on my desk, I am absorbed in thought about someone I plan to meet this afternoon. But I certainly do not now sense her here, and in this way “sense her presence.” However, we cannot simply understand what’s special about sensing by speaking of the “presence” of what or whom is sensed. What is not sensed may still be thought present.

Suppose I am now looking at the very person I was waiting for. I may contrast her looking to me as she does with my continuing merely to think about her, and confidently think of her as still present, when I close my eyes. The former state (eyes open) will constitute a kind of “first-order” sensing, whereas the latter (eyes closed) will not be sensing—but only thinking about her presence. The sensing (and thinking) here are “first” (not “higher-”) order, because here what looks to me somehow (and what I am thinking of) is not my own sensing (or some other mental/cognitive state).

I trust you can make similar observations. And we could make analogous points about sensory modalities other than vision. The shape or texture of what I feel, I still judge to be there unfelt when I withdraw my touch. The scent or odor in the air no longer

smells any way to me, when I pinch my nose, though I think it is still there. And when I am no longer tasting the ice cream, I can certainly think it's still coconut. As for hearing—I cannot so effectively shut my ears against the leafblower racket outside. But if I plug my ears and shut the window, it may no longer sound any way to me—though still (I think) it blares on there undiminished. In all these ways we may make ourselves stop sensing what we are still thinking of, and thereby exhibit to ourselves the difference between sensing and thinking.

Can we do just the same with the feeling that belongs to proprioception? To make this sort of feeling “go away,” while the thought of what is felt remains, I can shut no bodily organ, nor withdraw from this body, the position and movement of which I feel. (How can I move my entire body away from itself?) Nevertheless, it seems bodily feeling can diminish when my attention is directed or drawn away from my body or some part of it: away from my body as a whole when, for example, I am absorbed in something I am reading; away from one part to another when, e.g., I follow the instructions: “Attend to your left foot...attend now to your legs...now attend to your breathing...now to your face.” Such shifts in attention permit me to recognize that a prior feeling of my body can “recede” and be “swallowed up” in the background of my experience, even if I happen to be still thinking of my body, or the part of it formerly distinctly felt. In the reading case: what I am thinking about with such concentration may be my medical report, describing this very body or part—my own—my feeling of which has faded into the background. Also: I may think of my feet before I think of my face, when, for instance, I am answering questions about my “distinguishing marks”: “I have no scars on my feet...I have two on my face”. But this may well not coincide with a change in how my feet and face feel to

me (of the sort that may be invoked by my attention instructions). Now maybe it's unusual that I think of my body, when I have no feeling of it whatsoever—not even of a marginal sort. Still the cases just mentioned reveal independent variation in how one feels and how one thinks of one's own body, and that is enough to highlight the contrast between them. Anyway, cases of local anesthesia and severe nerve damage show you can think about a part of your body while no longer feeling it. And for a “whole body” case, consider: I might intelligibly (and correctly) think to myself, as I float in a sensory deprivation tank: I can no longer feel my body.

If you agree, then you and I both recognize—for each commonly accepted modality by which we sense something other than our own sensing—a contrast between merely thinking something is present and sensing its presence, which demonstrates our grasp of the sensing/thinking distinction.

A more exotic demonstration may be found in “blindsight.” As is well known: subjects suffering from damage to the visual cortex deny that they see anything where, prior to the damage, they would have claimed they did. Nevertheless, forced choice tests reveal some can still discriminate (verbally and otherwise) shapes, orientations and movements caused by optical stimuli in that region of purported deficit. One way to interpret this: using the notion of ‘look’ illustrated above, suppose the stimuli the subjects deny seeing do not look any way to them (any more than what you look at looks anyhow to you after you shut your eyes). There is a form of sensing—the kind reportable by something of the form ‘That looks...to me’ which we may intelligibly suppose such blindsighters lack. Nonetheless we can say their “guesses,” their responses to verbal “forced choices” (“Was that an X or an O?” and so on) express

thoughts—thinkings as distinct from sensings as were your “shut eye” thoughts about what you had been looking at.

Analogous reflections seem available with other standard modalities of first-order sense. It is at least conceivable that you may discriminate in thought the presence of a sound that doesn’t then sound any way to you (“there was just a beep”), or an odor that doesn’t then smell any way to you (“this one’s coffee, that one’s lemon”). We may even imagine something like this happening in proprioception: eyes closed, I cannot feel my arm being raised and lowered by the experimenter, but when required to say whether I think it’s up or down, as it happens, I answer correctly.

The contrast at issue reveals itself in another noteworthy way—not, as just now, because thought persists as sensing withdraws—but because sensing persists in the face of thought’s opposition. Even as I affirm that the lines of the drawing in my psychology text are straight (because a moment ago, they looked straight against a ruler), now that the ruler is removed, they again look curved to me. And two green patches look different to me against different backgrounds, though I think they are the same shade (due to their appearance when their background is the same). Disturbingly, it still sounds to me as if someone is murmuring my name, but I think there is really no speaking I hear (for I see no one there, and the voice sounds the same even as I try to approach or flee its source). That illusion and hallucination may thus persist against our better judgment again displays the difference between sensing something and thinking it’s there.

More should be said about this distinction. But by applying this contrast as indicated, we exhibit the basic grasp we need if we’re to think clearly about these

matters. I will later return to such concrete demonstrations, to consider whether they also are available, where what is thought of and ostensibly sensed is one's own sensing, and so whether sensing can be "iterated"—as a "sensing of sensing."

4. Do Sensing and Sensed Sometimes Coincide?

It may seem this iteration can be easily confirmed—and with it, the reality of inner sense. Take ordinary nausea. This is a feeling. And it is something you feel. So it is a feeling that you feel. And to "feel" here is—not to think—but to sense. So does it not follow that you sense your own sensing? But then wouldn't this be a more-than-first-order sensing—the very inner sensing we seek? Let's consider this more closely.

What I just said about nausea seems to hold for "bodily sensations" generally—e.g., feeling an itch, feeling dizzy, and feeling pain, and (not to be so negative) feeling relaxed, feeling warm, and feeling sexual pleasure. In each case we may say some feeling is felt (thus "sensed"). We may take this to say that here something felt is identical with the feeling of it. Sensed and sensing "coincide." I don't mean to say that all that is felt in these cases is the feeling itself. Someone may, for example, hold that when you feel pain, we can also take the pain felt to be something other than a feeling felt—some "object of awareness" felt to be "in" a body part. Though puzzled by such talk, my aim here is not to reject it. Nor do I wish to deny (something I actually believe) that, in feeling pain, I also ("proprioceptively") feel something that isn't a feeling or a pain (in any sense): the movement of my foot, for instance—which feels painful when it hurts to move my foot.

Right now I just want to point out that we can truthfully speak of “feeling our feelings” in the way just indicated, and so (by taking feeling to be a kind of sensing) call this “sensing of sensing.” This, what I’ll call “coincident” sensing is reported by means of an “internal accusative.” That is, its report is like dancing a last dance or laughing a hearty laugh, living a long life)—the dance is not distinct from the dancing of it, the laugh laughed is none other than the laughing, and the life lived is the living of it. Just so: the feeling (sensation) felt is none other than the feeling (sensing) of it.

Coincident sensing contrasts markedly with that earlier exemplified by the visual appearance of what’s in my box. When the tooth it contains appears to me, when it looks somehow shaped (e.g., like an incisor, like a molar) and colored (yellowish, gold, or pearly white), what I sense is what looks/appears to me somehow: the tooth. But then what is sensed is distinguished from the sensing of it. The tooth with its color and shape is distinct from its looking as it does to me. So here, in this case of what I will call “objectual sensing,” it seems sensing and sensed do not coincide. (More on this later.)

I have introduced coincident sensing by reference to feeling bodily sensations. But could we maybe extend this notion to visual and other sensory experience generally, even while keeping the contrast with “objectual” sensing? Yes. When the tooth (or the flower, or the cloud, or the contents of my desk drawer) look somehow to me, I suppose I could also say I “sense” them to look somehow to me, or (better, and more idiomatically) that I experience their visual appearance. But in this case—I may equally suppose—the “sensing of the looking” (i.e., my experience of the appearance) is none other than the looking sensed (the appearance experienced). This goes to show ‘experience’ can display the same ambiguity that we allowed ‘feel’ (and consequently, if

awkwardly) 'sense.' I may be said to experience the appearance when that appearance (the appearing) is an experience—and what is experienced is none other than the experiencing of it. By contrast, sometimes what I experience is not an experience: the tooth that looks somehow to me. I “experience” this in a different sense—objectual, not coincident.

5. Inner Sense: What We're Seeking

Why dwell on these distinctions? We need them to see better just what is this inner sense we seek on the way to understanding introspection. Inner sense would be a higher-order sensing of sensing. To confirm its reality we would then need to find sensing being sensed in a manner that takes us beyond the first-order. And that means: to a non-coincident sensing of sensing. For any sensing of sensing that is simply coincident with—that is not distinguished from—the sensing that is sensed is clearly of no higher order than it.

Thus the idea recently aired—that bodily sensations exemplify inner sense—was confused. Neither feeling your feelings nor experiencing sensory appearances will count as inner sense—as long as no distinction opens up between the feeling felt and the feeling of it (the appearance experienced and the experience of it). While no difference has clearly emerged for us between sensing and sensed, we have as yet no license to speak of sensing of a higher-order sort. And that is what we mean here by inner sense.

This talk of “orders” needs comment. When I ask whether we can find a non-coincident “sensing of sensing,” This is not the same as asking whether there are two numerically distinct states or events of sensing: one of color, say, and a second, which

is “of” the first. For, to have what is sought, we just need two distinguishable features— e.g., the property of being a sensing of a color, and the property of being a sensing of that color-sensing. If someone says that it is numerically one and same state of mind that “doubles back and senses itself,” that still counts as second-order sensing. The basic question of inner sense then is whether there is some way to clearly distinguish and attribute two features—the sensing, and that sensing’s being sensed.

I do realize that, on a certain usage, there is “higher-order” sensing, only where there is a higher-order state numerically distinct from a lower-order state. Thus on that view a “self-representing” state would not exhibit higher-order-ness. But for my purposes, if you say a single state sensorily represents both: a specific color, and itself representing that color, you would be saying there’s a more than first-order, non-coincident sensing—an “inner sensing.”⁶

But isn’t all this funny talk of coincident sensing absurdly redundant? (“I feel a feeling,” “I experience an experience,” “I sense my sensing.”) No, not really. For such locutions would permit us to speak—not just of the sheer fact of feeling/experiencing/sensing—but also of differences in how the feeling feels, or how the experience is experienced, or (as we may now say, albeit with some strain) how the sensing is sensed. We want to recognize, for instance: how pain is experienced by someone differs from how nausea or an itch is experienced by them. The seemingly redundant forms of expression give us a means for saying this. That is to say, they give us devices for speaking of the “phenomenal character” of experience, of what it’s like for

⁶ Kriegel (2009) understands “higher-order” thought and perception as implying a distinctness of states. Carruthers, however, distinguishes higher-order perception from inner sense partly in virtue of the fact that the former does not assume such distinctness: “it is one and the same set of states that have both first-order and higher-order analog/nonconceptual contents.” (2004, 118) My use of ‘higher-order’ is thus more like Carruthers’.

you to have it. For it seems right to identify this with how you experience an experience (e.g., how your feeling feels to you).

Note well: even so, it is just not clear that with any of this we have gone a hair beyond first-order sensing or experiencing. For when you speak only of how the experience is experienced, it's not clear you've marked any difference between a feature of the experience and the manner in which you experience it. And only then would you have the distinction between manner of sensing and features sensed that is required for higher-order sensing.

To sum up: we now recognize a form of sensing (as distinct from thinking) that is not a sensing of our own sensing or mental state—visual appearance, for example. And we can recognize a sensing that is of our own sensing—feeling a feeling (an itch, for example). But so far we have no license to take this latter in something other than an internal accusative sense. And such “coincident” sensing would not rise above the first order, either as state, or as property. Your sensing is first-order just when what you sense (if anything) is not your own sensing (or any other mental state)—unless this is merely coincident sensing. By contrast, your sensing would be higher-order just when what you sense is your own sensing (or other mental/cognitive state), and the manner of sensing does not simply coincide with, but is distinguishable from, what is sensed. There is a way to allow that you have coincident sensing (that is, experience) of your own first-order sensings across the board (in vision, hearing, tasting and so on). But this would not be to admit inner sense.

6. Objectual Sensing

We are now clearer about how inner sense calls for a sensing/sensed distinction above the mind's ground-floor. But we still need to understand better what, if anything, allows us to draw this distinction even at the first-order level. So far I have taken for granted a contrast between "objectual" cases (like the tooth visually apparent) and "coincident" cases (like nausea felt). But now—just how is it that I can identify cases of the first sort, in which I distinguish between (e.g.) that which looks somehow to me, and the manner of its appearance—i.e., how it looks to me?

We need to take into account how closely this is bound to the direction of attention. In vision attention is "directed" ("overtly"), when I look at something, whether I direct my attention to it, or my attention is "grabbed" or "captured" by something—"drawn" to what I look at. As I look at different things the way things look to me—how they appear—changes. And yet, often enough, what I'm looking at does not appear to change (in color, shape, size, location). More generally, I may draw a distinction between two kinds of change in how I sense.

(1) I sense something to change.

(2) How I sense something changes, but I do not sense it to change. (Or how I sense some feature of it changes, but I do not sense it to change in that respect.)

When how I sense coincides with what I sense, type (2) change is not phenomenologically discernible. For instance, if what I feel is nausea, when I judge

introspectively that there is change in how that feeling feels to me, I cannot also say that what I feel does not change at all. Nor can I identify a feature of what is felt (a feature of the nauseated feeling), with respect to which it feels just the same, or is sensed as just the same—even through a change in the way it feels to me. Though the feeling may constantly feel “like nausea” (that type of feeling) even as it varies, say, in felt intensity, the specific type of nausea-feeling is not felt to be completely the same throughout. Though the feature felt or sensed remains “nausea,” still different variants of it are felt—there is a sensed change (if only slight) in what type of nausea is felt, if indeed the way it feels changes. With each kind of bodily sensation I would say the same: the feeling felt—the pain, the itch, the ecstasy—feels different (I sense it to change) as the way it feels varies.

By contrast, in the case of what I have called objectual sensing, type (2) change is phenomenologically discernible. I can identify instances where how something looks to me (or how some aspect of it looks to me) changes, though it does not thereby appear to change—it does not look as if it’s changing (in that respect). How something’s shape looks to me changes as I simply look at different parts of it, but it does not appear to change shape at all. Running my hand along a curved surface, I touch it, and so may attend to its shape or texture: how it feels varies, though no change in its shape is felt. Moreover, I can (in the examples just offered) discern type (2) cases that also constitute the positive sensing of constancy. The object I am looking at appears to me to stay the same shape or color during a change in its manner of appearance: it looks the same in shape and color throughout. What I touch feels the same shape as I run my hand over its surface.

Note that illustration of type (2) is not confined to cases where the object is sensed to change in no respect whatsoever. So: a cup is tilted towards me, so its rim appears constant in shape, even as the way that shape looks to me somehow changes. It does not affect my point if we say here that this change in appearing is to be understood entirely in terms of the rim's appearing to change with respect to some feature other than its shape—say, its position: it appears tilted towards me just so. For still: this is not a sensed change in what type of shape appears to me.

Wherever this “sensing of constancy” condition is met, sensing is “objectual.” So, when you can determine introspectively that what you sense is sensed to remain just the same in some respect (such as color or shape), even as how you sense this alters (how its color or shape looks to you changes), you are entitled to regard this as a case of “objectual”—and consequently, as “non-coincident”—sensing.” Here what is sensed does not simply coincide with how it is sensed, precisely because what is sensed is sensed as totally constant, apparently unchanging in some respect, even while how it is sensed varies. And, as I use the term, a mode of sensing is “objectual,” only if it admits of sensory constancy—only if, in this mode one senses features (or their instances) to remain the same even as how they are sensed changes.

We may wonder just what modes of objectual sensing are phenomenologically discernible. What about hearing? I listen to something (say, the music on the radio), and in doing so attend to this. And then, as my attention slips away, I start to listen to something else (or just stop listening), and the way the music sounds to me alters, as it “shifts into the background.” But the sound does not itself thereby appear to change (in volume or proximity, for instance): this difference in how the music sounds to me does

not constitute its sounding to me as if it's changing. More: it sounds the same loudness and distance throughout. What about proprioception? Sitting here typing, I start to notice my hunched shoulders so that how they feel to me changes. But I do not thereby feel my posture to change; I feel how my shoulders are hunched—I did not feel myself hunching them. And when I began to notice how my shoulders are hunched, did their position not somehow feel the same to me as it already was? Though only now prominent in my feeling, my hunched shoulders fit into and do not contrast with the overall posture I had already at least vaguely and marginally felt my body to occupy. If this is right, there is sensory constancy here too—my overall posture feels constant, though the way it feels changes when I notice how I am holding part of my body.⁷ What about when I smell a scent or odor? In attending to it, the way it smells to me somehow changes—but I do not then smell something changing its scent. May I not say it continues to smell the very same scent to me, even as how it smells to me intensifies or diminishes with attention? Finally, taste. When I taste some chocolate, how it tastes to me may also alter somehow—as I attend to it more, or as it melts in my mouth. But that is not to say I taste it becoming more or less chocolate-flavored. Does it not taste the very same flavor throughout?

We may still see significant differences within objectual sensing. Do you want to say that, much as a visible object may appear to change shape or color (“before your eyes”), something tastes to you to be changing flavor (“upon your tongue”)? Probably not. It seems vision exhibits a more advanced form of “objectuality” than taste—what is visually sensed as constant in some respect can at the same time be visually sensed to

⁷ We can still recognize that even if, in my minimal sense, we “objectually sense” our own bodies, there are important ways in which we do not experience them merely “as objects.”

change in some respect, and then, to change in the very respect in which it first appeared constant. But, however exactly we want to interpret, extend and subdivide objectual sensing, we should distinguish a further form of non-coincident sensing. We might call this “registration.” To illustrate: consider another way to interpret the nausea case—different from (but consistent with) that earlier suggested. When we feel nausea, we sense, not just this feeling (nor just this and the—vaguely bounded—region of the body nauseously felt), but also a separate bodily condition that such feeling “registers”: inflammation of the stomach, for instance, or (more momentously) pregnancy. Similarly, one might say that when one feels pain one does not just sense this (painful) feeling (nor this plus the painfully felt part of one’s body); one senses (registers) tissue damage of some sort in that area. This is not coincident sensing of what is registered, because the condition registered does not coincide with the sensing of it. But neither is it objectual sensing. For when I feel nausea or pain, it doesn’t seem right to say that, as how it feels to me changes (perhaps with gain or loss of attention), the registered state is nonetheless felt to remain just the same. To be sure, I may, for some reason, rightly think the registered condition remains invariant even as the feeling-intensity waxes and wanes. But that would not mean that, as the feeling of nausea intensifies, I am feeling my stomach to remain equally inflamed, or that as the feeling of pain diminishes, I am feeling the tissue to remain equally damaged). And while you may be “no less pregnant” as your morning sickness subsides, this would not be because you are then feeling the “degree of pregnancy” to remain constant—but simply because (and only in the sense that) you can’t be just a little bit pregnant.

Now some may doubt that sensory constancy is discernible in all of the modalities. And classical empiricist accounts may deny the phenomenological reality of objectual sensing—of sensory object constancy—altogether. On such views, considered subjectively, the “how” and the “what” of sensing always simply coincide, except perhaps where what is sensed is merely “registered.” I do not propose now to go further into the phenomenology of object perception. For present purposes, it is enough to say this. If we can phenomenologically discern, at the first-order level, sensing other than the coincident kind, this will be either objectual sensing or sensory registration. And for objectual sensing, we need something more than a lack of sensed change in what we variantly sense: we need positively to sense it then staying the same in some respect.⁸

7. Is Inner Sense Phenomenologically Discernible?

I do not doubt that higher-order thought occurs, and is phenomenologically discernible. We can talk about (hence express thoughts concerning) our first-order sensing and thinking. But is there also, distinguishable from such thought, a higher-order sensing of what it’s about? At the ground-floor, what is phenomenologically distinguishable from thinking is either coincident sensing, objectual sensing, or sensory registration. If we look for an analog at the higher-order level, we don’t want coincident sensing—that would be no ascension in “orders.” So we need to ask whether either objectual sensing or sensory registration are found beyond the first-order.

⁸ Readers may find that my story about objectual sensing and registration parallels to some extent Tyler Burge’s recent (2010) theoretically rich account of what he calls objective representation and registration. My understanding of the notions I explain here was arrived at independently, and I will not try here to examine the relationship between my view and Burge’s. However, it may be helpful to note that my account (by contrast with his) is phenomenologically based and concerned specifically with conscious experience.

First, consider whether we may discern an objectual sensing of sensing. For this what we would need to find is a change in the way some feature of, say, a visual appearance is sensed, even while that visual appearance is sensed as itself quite unchanged with respect to that feature. We would need something like apparent shape constancy at the second order level. For example:

First-order case. Consider the change in how a stable figure looks to you as you shift attention while it appears unchanged. This allows you to distinguish what is (visually) sensed from how it is (objectually) sensed.

Second-order case. Now repeat the same sort of operation on the visual appearance. Without changing the way the figure looks to you, shift your attention with respect to this (constant, stable) appearance, so as to alter how that appearance is sensed by you.

In the first-order case the operation seems, again, easy enough. But in the second-order case I am drawn up short. How do I even try to follow these instructions? How could I vary the way the visual appearance is experienced or sensed by me, without changing the figure's visual appearance to me? If I cannot do this, then I just can't find, in first-person reflection, an objectual, higher-order sensing of sensing. We may, as earlier suggested, extend the notion of "sensed sensing" beyond "felt feelings" of bodily sensation, and speak, e.g., of sensing how something looks—that is, of "experiencing its visual appearance." But the same points then apply to each. Just as

the feeling felt does not remain, for first-person reflection, discernibly and completely constant in respect of some feature, while the way it feels changes, so the visual appearance experienced does not stay completely fixed for me in some respect through variation in how it is experienced.⁹

But what about the other non-coincident sort of sensing recognized: registration? This seems no more discernible in second-order form than objectual sensing. Consider: in the nausea case, I would need to find a sensing of that feeling, distinct in kind from the feeling itself or any thought about it—a separate sort of sensing that registers this feeling, as that feeling registers the condition of my stomach. But I find nothing meeting that description—no such additional sensing, distinguishable from a coincident feeling, is discoverable to first-person reflection. Where the feeling of nausea is concerned, such sensing as I find is none other than the very feeling to be registered. And similarly for something's looking somehow colored, or feeling somehow shaped. But for inner sense, I need to find a sensing that is other than that which is to be registered.

This reveals the ultimate futility of trying to demonstrate concretely to ourselves a second order sensing, as distinct from thought. For consider, in the light of what has just been said, how we might attempt to do this, appealing to the ways of distinguishing sensing and thinking at the first-order level earlier articulated. That some of these are non-transferrable to the second level should have been obvious from the start. I may shut my eye to what I see, or withdraw my hand from what I feel—though here what is

⁹ My point here bears some resemblance to Shoemaker's (1996, 219), when he says that there is no difference between (a) shifting attention from one hand to another, and (b) shifting attention between your *visual experience* of each—*unless* it is a difference in your *thinking*. But I am trying here to further *support and refine* this sort of point. I claim to support it, by clarifying (with my discussion of sensing vs. thinking, and objectual vs. coincident sensing) what we would need to find, to find something here besides thinking. Because we don't find *that* beyond the first level, we find only difference in thinking. I aim to *refine* the point, by making clear (in Section 8) that these are not just any old differences in thinking, but rather special ones—which help explain why it might have seemed there was sensing here as well as thinking.

“out of sight” (or feeling) is not thus “out of mind.” But I cannot similarly contrast inner sensing with reflective thought by shutting some organ of (inner) sense to (or withdrawing it from) the sensing I still hold in my thought. But subtler failures of the analogy now become evident, once we appreciate the absence of sensory object constancy beyond the first-order. I cannot hope to demonstrate an inner sensing/reflective thought distinction by analogy with the (motionless) withdrawal or direction of attention found in proprioception. The disposition of my limbs feels unchanged, even as how this is felt alters with attention—and this difference in feeling may be no difference in thought. But I cannot then ascend a level, and similarly keep my own sensing constant, even while the manner in which it is sensed shifts with attention. For no shift in attention that alters the manner in which the sensing is experienced by me can be distinguished from a change in the sensing itself. Thus, pace Armstrong, making proprioception (rather than vision) the favored analogy for “inner sense” doesn’t really help. Relatedly, pace Carruthers (2004, pp. 118-119), the problem with inner sense is not removed by saying (along with Armstrong) that sensing (or perceiving) does not always need a special sense organ. For the root difficulty remains: how to demonstrate to ourselves independent variation in sensing and sensed.

Furthermore, I cannot find some analog of blindsight for inner sense that would enable me to separate second-order sensing and thinking. I may conceive of the stimulus not looking any way to me (as ordinarily it would), even as I am prompted by its effect on my eye to think it’s there. But now how am I to iterate this operation, and conceive of an “inner blindsight”? I would need to conceive of something’s still looking somehow to me (in the sense thought to be missing in ordinary first-order blindsight),

and of my still thinking this visual appearance remains, even while I no longer sense or experience its looking this way to me. I could perform this conceptual feat, only if I already had some way to pry apart, not just my thought about how it looks to me from its looking to me as it does, but its looking this way to me and my experience of its looking this way to me as it does. I would need some way to make it clear to myself that my experience of something's visual appearance does not simply coincide with the manner of visual appearance itself. And just that is what we do not find, when we find neither sensory constancy nor registration at the second level.

Notice now also how this discredits the notion that a postulated inner sense could play an epistemic role like that of attention in first-order sensory appearance. I have said there is no (phenomenologically discernible) way to experience one's own sensing as remaining quite unchanged in some respect as one's manner of sensing it alters. This failure to find sensory object constancy at the second level is also a failure to find any additional, distinctively sensory form of attention in operation there. If there is none to be found, it follows that one cannot attend more closely to one's own sensing by sensing it better, by "getting a better look at it." But then there is no sense-like way to confirm and correct our judgment about our own sensing, through making it better apparent by directing attention upon it. Thus nothing like first-order sensory attention is to be found at a higher level. So we can rightly assign no epistemic role to an inner sensing, parallel to the role of first-order appearance.

This in turn helps explain why it is also no use trying to exhibit to myself a second-order thinking/sensing distinction by appeal to some analog of first-order sensory illusion or hallucination. For how will I recognize a case of "inner illusion"? Can I

find myself confirming a judgment that how I actually feel, or how things really look to me, conflicts with how I (falsely) experience my feeling or visual appearance? I could, if I found myself sensing (and not just thinking of) the feeling or appearance as staying quite constant in some respect, even while my manner of sensing it changed for the better, so that my thought could favor the improved “appearance” of my sensing and oppose the defective one—now exposed as illusory. But this is just the sort of constancy found missing. Similarly for “hallucinating an experience”: it seems I might recognize a case of this, if I could identify or reidentify as constant some sort of “setting,” “field,” or “space” of feeling or appearance (distinct from that in which my body is situated), wherein I sensed/experienced some feelings/appearances incompatible with others arising in the same (mental) “place.” But again, the unavailability to reflection of second-order sensory constancy seems to preclude this. We are left with nothing then, but the suggestion that illusions or hallucinations in second-order sensing would be some sort of “mis-firings” of mere sensory registration. But this will be of no avail, if still we find only sensings of sensings that simply coincide with what is sensed.¹⁰

¹⁰ With this in mind, we can see why attempts (as in Lycan) to offer illustrations of “illusions of inner sense” are so problematic. He asks us to consider a fraternity prank, where the victim anticipates having something burning hot applied to his body, only to have this covertly switched at the last moment for something icy cold. A brief experience ensues, Lycan tells us, which comprises an illusion of inner sense. “[T]he fraternity pledge mistakes the cold sensation produced on his bare skin by the ice cube for burning heat.” (2004, 96) But is this clearly an illusion of *inner sense*? We might well suppose the intense, fearful expectation of being burned occasions a different sort of mistake. For instance: (i) there was in fact something cold, which for a mere moment, the victim somehow fleetingly (and mistakenly) felt to be hot (or at least: he felt it in some startling way, but not yet as clearly either hot or cold). Or: (ii) he mistakenly, and fleetingly *thought* it felt hot (or at least: not-cold) to him. But these would yield *at most* (in case (i)) a *first-order* sensory illusion, or (in case (ii)) a mistaken second-order *thought*. But Lycan needs an illusion of *higher-order sense*: (iii) it definitely *felt cold* to our miserable pledge as soon as it felt anyway at all, but for the merest moment, this *feeling of cold* was also just as definitely (not just falsely *thought* to be but) mistakenly *sensed or experienced* by him as a *feeling of burning heat*. But how is one to determine (iii) happened, rather than just (i) or (ii)? The problem is we do not here have, phenomenologically, a feeling of cold sensed as invariant through a change in *how* it is sensed/experienced, so that the initial tiny time slice of (first-order) sensing cold (initially wrongly sensed as a feeling of burning heat) can be subsequently sensed as it (allegedly) really was: merely part of a constant feeling of cold. And we also still do not find a *sensing* of feelings of cold and warmth, clearly distinct from the feelings we might then want to suppose such sensing may “misregister.” So it is hard for me even

My argument thus far can now be briefly stated. Inner sense will be phenomenologically discernible to us, only if we can find, in first-person reflection, not just thought about our experience, but either a form of objectual sensing, or a form of sensory registration of our own sensing. Otherwise we will not distinguish what is sensed from how it is sensed, and the only “sensing of sensing” we will discern is coincident sensing (experiencing) of first-order sensing—which is not, as inner sense must be, “higher-order.” But the sought-for objectual constancy is elusive: I find no change in how I sense my sensing while sensing it to stay just the same. As for registration: I find no sensing—as distinct from thinking—concurrent with the first-order feelings and appearings to be registered, which is clearly other than they. Thus phenomenologically I find none but coincident sensing of sensing. If, on working through the distinctions and examples I have presented, and engaging with the questions they allow us to pose, you obtain the same results, then you also find inner sense phenomenologically indiscernible. (And if you don’t seriously try to take this journey, you shouldn’t conclude anything at all about the phenomenology.)

I don’t suppose that simply closes the case. For one thing, like everyone, I am a fallible phenomenologist, and phenomenology is an open-ended, ever provisional, never finished enterprise. It is, after all, a form of philosophy. And maybe, even if my phenomenology is basically right, we are still justified in postulating inner sense because that would explain something we cannot otherwise account for. In line with

to understand what it would mean for it really to *feel icy cold to me*, and yet experience *this* feeling as one of burning heat. Carruthers, for his part, agrees there are no illusions of inner perception (2004, 119). But I believe he does not appreciate how this is to due to the phenomenological elusiveness of the higher-order perceiving/perceived distinction that his own theory requires.

such concerns, I will consider in turn two sorts of criticism, inspired by two recent, prominent accounts of introspection and consciousness. My own positive account of introspection will emerge from this.

8. Attending to Experience

Has my phenomenology gone wrong? At least Lycan's (2004) would seem to be at odds with mine. He holds that, going by the "phenomenology" (implicitly meaning this term, it seems, in both a "way of inquiry" and a "topic of inquiry" sense), there is an introspective form of attention that begs to be understood in sensory terms. He concludes that some of our "higher-order representations" are "outputs of an attention mechanism" that makes them more perceptual than thought-like in character. Thus he thinks phenomenology supports inner sense.¹¹ Now I would agree with Lycan about this much—unlike defenders of "transparency" claims about consciousness (such as Michael Tye), I think we can, in a non-trivial and epistemically significant way, attend to the character of our own experience.¹² But now how can I say this, while siding with philosophers like Tye (and Fred Dretske 1995) against Lycan—who say that, phenomenologically, there is no inner sense?

My negative thesis, I hope, is now plain enough. We do not attend to our own experience, as we attend visually to what's before us, or proprioceptively, to our own bodies—via an objectual sensing that allows us to make something differently but stably apparent—so that it reveals its constancy through this difference, becoming more and

¹¹ Under the heading "Phenomenology," Lycan writes: "When we attend to our own mental states, it feels like this is just what we are doing, focusing our internal attention on something that is there for us to discern." (2004, 101) That some first-order states are "there for us to discern" he links to the notion of "presence": they are, he says, "phenomenologically *present* to our minds and not (or not just) represented by them" (102).

¹² I take Tye's 2002 defense of transparency to deny this. (See Siewert 2004.)

better apparent to us. But what is my positive claim? And just how do I respond to Lycan's phenomenological defense of inner sense?

We may start by remarking that we can attend not only to things that appear to us—but precisely to how they appear as well. “But,” it will be replied, “this in itself is no admission of attention to the experience, to the appearing and the manner of that appearing. To attend to how something looks (e.g.) may be simply to attend to its color or shape.” Yes, and certainly I would say that when you look at something's shape, or listen closely to a sound, you are attending to how it looks or sounds, but you are not looking at a manner of visual appearance, or listening to its sounding to you as it does. But consider the form of thought you may employ with regards to how something looks, smells, sounds, etc. to you—where you have not yet informatively classified to a desired degree of specificity the color, shape, odor, sound, etc. that is apparent. With vision: you think of what color or shape something looks to you, in consideration of what general color or shape term to apply to the specific color or shape you're thinking of. You may, prior to such classification, articulate a thought of just what color, shape (etc.) it appears to you, with a phrase like ‘that color,’ ‘that shape,’ ‘that smell,’ and so on.

Now you could also speak of the apparent, demonstratively identified feature in question by speaking explicitly of its appearance to you. So you could say: ‘the color this thing now looks to me’; ‘the shape this thing now looks to me’; ‘the way this now smells/tastes/feels to me.’ (Maybe also: ‘this way of looking colored’; ‘this way of looking shaped’; ‘this way of smelling (sounding/tasting/feeling)’.) In such cases, there is no alternative formulation of the thoughts expressed that dispenses entirely with appearance words, while distinguishing these thoughts from others I might have. For I

can say, ‘that color,’ ‘that smell,’ and so on, of colors, smells, etc., and demonstratively speak and think of these, in the absence of their looking (smelling, etc.) any way to me. And when I do, I may not be thinking of them as: the color that this looks to me (the odor that this smells to me, etc). But when I do in this manner think of color, smell, and so on, then it seems I can mark the difference by my thoughts’ expression only in something like the way just suggested, by introducing, “appearance” words (‘looks,’ ‘smells,’ etc.), which I may in various ways combine with demonstratives (or indexicals) in complex phrases to identify certain features. Since appearances in this sense are, by my reckoning, “phenomenal features,” I will label these thoughts “phenomenal-demonstrative.”¹³

Now, as I’ve hinted, we can see these thoughts playing what we might call an “anchoring” role with respect to further thought about experience, in which we seek informative classification of what we first fasten onto in a demonstrative manner. For example, when I feel somehow, I may think to myself a thought that could be expressed in some such fashion: “The way this feels to me, is it really nausea? Maybe it’s just a form of anxiety that isn’t quite nausea. Or maybe it’s both nausea and anxiety—yes that’s it: anxiety lightly tinged with nausea.” “The color this looks to me—what color is that? Green...bluish-green...milky bluish-green.” “The shape this looks to me—what shape is that? Kind of circular...squashed or stretched...elongated...an elongated ovoid.” As my dentist pokes my gums, he asks: “Does it hurt?” “Uh-uh,” I grunt—but I am

¹³ Roughly speaking: appearances (i.e., appearings) are “phenomenal,” on my view, because they are features essentially suited for one to claim or desire a subjective knowledge regarding *what* features they are, *undervived* from other such knowledge—that is, there’s essentially and non-derivatively “something it’s like for one” to have them. (See Siewert 2011b.) Note also that the expression of “phenomenal-demonstrative thoughts” in my sense does not necessarily (though it *can*) attach the demonstrative to the term for a phenomenal feature (e.g., ‘this way of feeling’). (Compare Gertler’s (this volume) discussion of “introspective demonstratives.”)

thinking to myself what I might express by saying: “what is this feeling? It’s not painful exactly, but it feels irritating, a little in the way a tickle does, but it really doesn’t feel like a tickle.”

We should also note, however—such phenomenal-demonstrative thoughts can be had, even when they anchor no such classificatory reverie. Back home, in happier times (before my dental excursion), I perhaps had occasion to think (articulately or not—and with zero interest in taxonomy) what I might put by saying: “This feels fantastic!” And by ‘this’ I understand: feeling this way. Also: in those everyday aesthetic moments that help keep life bearable, I may simply be “struck” by, e.g., “the way that looks” (to me, now, from here)—thinking, say, of the aloe plant by the window “thrusting its tentacles” into space, or of the smooth sunbleached patterns of fading paint on the side of the wall. Or—less agreeably—I may simply “be struck by” some strange odor: “the way that smells” (to me, now). When one is so struck, one takes up in thought some manner of appearance—which one could (but needn’t) go on to try to classify or characterize by analogy or metaphor.

To understand this better, we need to examine more closely the way in which thought can “anchor” questioning. Another way of describing this: in thinking the thoughts at issue, I “identify for recognition” what I am thinking of. I do this only if I think of something in a way that enables me to recognize the correctness or incorrectness of how I go on to classify what I am thinking of, provided my understanding of these classifications is not defective. So, I want to say: when I think of the way it now feels to me, or the color this now looks to me, I identify the feeling of which I am thinking or the color of which I am thinking, in a manner that enables me then to recognize the former

as, say, itchy (not dizzy), and the latter as, say aquamarine (not royal blue)—provided that there is no defect in my understanding of ‘itchy,’ ‘dizzy,’ ‘aquamarine,’ or ‘royal blue’ that would impair my capacity to make these classifications. (Note: when I say “I identify the color I am thinking of,” I do not mean that I come to think that I am thinking of this color. I identify the color I was in fact thinking of—though I don’t, necessarily, in so doing, think of it as “what I’m thinking of.”)

That some such thoughts play this role is not guaranteed by the fact that they are expressed with definite descriptions embedding demonstratives or indexicals. I may think of “the color of the first pair of socks I purchased” while having, in a sense, no idea what color that was, that is, without thereby identifying what color I am thinking of, in a way that would put me in a position to recognize blue as a correct, brown as an incorrect classification. And that’s so, even though there is no relevant defect in my understanding of ‘blue’ or ‘brown.’ Similarly with ‘the color of these socks,’ uttered as I am holding up the very socks to which I refer, in a light too dim for me to see their color. But it’s hard to understand how I could express a thought with the phrase ‘the color this looks to me now’ or ‘the way I now feel,’ and thereby think of some color apparent to me, or some manner in which I feel, without identifying these features for recognition, in my sense. In any case, I can, as illustrated, in some contexts think such identifying, phenomenal-demonstrative thoughts.

Notice too now that the thought involved in this “identification for recognition” is distinctively first-personal. That is, in such contexts the way I understand: ‘the color that this looks to me’ is not the same as the way I understand ‘the color this looks to you.’ (Though I can indeed think thoughts expressible by both phrases.) Moreover, the

difference does not simply lie in the difference in my understanding of ‘me’ and ‘you.’ For it may be both true and informative that the color this thing looks to me = the color this thing looks to you. But that’s not because I may come to find out that I am you.

I would go further, and say that, when I do identify for recognition some feature in first-person phenomenal-demonstrative thought, I can’t fail to actually experience the appearance identified, insofar as I successfully form the thought at all. (I mean ‘experience’ here in the coincident sense.) That is to say, if I identify the way of feeling of which I am thinking, by thinking of the way it feels to me now, I do in fact feel the very way I am thinking of. If I identify some color of which I am thinking by thinking of the color this now looks to me, then the color this now looks to me is in fact the color I am thinking of. By contrast, I may think a thought I would express by saying ‘the color (or shape) this thing now has,’ and in so doing identify for recognition which color (or shape) I am (in fact) thinking of, even though the color or shape the thing actually possesses is not the color or shape I am thinking of.

At least, I cannot make out in what manner I could identify for recognition a specific way of appearing, in phenomenal-demonstrative first-person thought, without actually experiencing that way of appearing. I find no inner sense, so I cannot, by appeal to a false “inner” appearance of appearances make intelligible how, for example, I could identify what shape I’m thinking of, as the shape this looks to me, even though the shape this in fact looks to me is not the shape I’m then thinking of. And—although this bears more looking into—I don’t think there’s any other good way to make out how such a scenario could arise in relevant cases.¹⁴ Assuming that’s right, this aspect of

¹⁴ Notice we won’t do this by reference to the sort of cases Schwitzgebel and Smithies (this volume) both discuss, in which an intense, anxious expectation of pain leads one to think, momentarily, that one feels pain. Perhaps, in a

first-person “identifying for recognition” thought makes for a contrast with the corresponding second and third person cases. When, for instance, I think of the shape this looks to you, either I simply have not identified what shape I am then thinking of (“the shape this looks to you...whatever that may be”), or else, if I have, it could easily happen that the shape this actually looks to you is not the specific shape I have identified in my thought.¹⁵

If this is correct, then the sort of first-person thoughts that can anchor reflection on experience are essentially appearance-dependent. I mean: one has these first-person, phenomenal-demonstrative thoughts that are suited to the identification of features for recognition only if one actually experiences oneself the very appearances identified. Since for me, to “experience an appearance” is to have a phenomenal feature, I will also say: one has first-person thoughts that require one’s possession of the very phenomenal features they are thoughts of.

Pulling all this together, we can see how by means of first-person reflection we can demonstrate to ourselves the reality of what we may now fairly call introspective cognitive attention to experience. First, what I’ve termed “thinking about experience” is indeed rightly called thinking (hence cognitive) because it is verbally expressible in the manner of thought (e.g., I say, ‘the color this looks to me’)—and it can function in reasoning. Second, what you are thinking of here (hence attending to) is indeed your experience, because you think not merely of what appears to you, but of (an instance

panic I briefly think I feel pain, though I do not. It does not follow that I can *also* then entertain a phenomenal-demonstrative thought of the form *the way this feels to me*, which enables me to identify a specific way of feeling of which I was then thinking, even though in fact that is *not* the way this feels to me.

¹⁵ One way this could happen: I identify for recognition that shape I’m thinking of, by wrongly assuming that the shape this looks to me = the shape this looks to you. Another possible way: I wrongly believe the shape this looks to you is the shape I assume it *would* look to me *from there*, where you are.

of) its appearing to you as it does—i.e., an experience. (This is shown by the need for appearance words when trying to distinguish such thoughts from others, and by the unavailability of such thoughts in the absence of your actually experiencing the manner of appearance they are about.) Third, when you think of experience here, you do indeed attend to it—and not simply because you might be said to “attend” to whatever you (consciously) think of. For this is thought capable of “anchoring inquiry”—of initiating the identification of a continuing common topic for subsequent, otherwise varying cognition—say, a series of questions and answers. (And if something does that, it is not attention in some merely lax or trivial sense.) Finally, this attention is specifically introspective, because it is a form of thought of one’s own experience, distinct from any in which one may consider another’s. If what I’ve just said is supposed to be at odds with the idea that experience (or consciousness) is “transparent,” then so much the worse for that doctrine.

Later I will say more about how this helps us explain the special sort of warrant with which we may judge of our own experience. But I now want to say how it helps explain the appeal of inner sense. If you accept my phenomenology, you accept that there is a kind of first-person thought about experience which:

- a. Is demonstratively expressible;
- b. Anchors inquiry so as to enable one to recognize correct classification of what it’s about (it enables “identification for recognition”);
- c. Involves attending to what it’s about; and
- d. Is appearance-dependent.

Note now that features (a)-(d) can be found, not just in a special sort of thought about one's experience, but also in thoughts about the objects of first-order appearance. There too—when, e.g., I am thinking about the thing that I see—I employ a thought that: (a) is demonstratively expressible ('that shoe'); and (b) anchors questioning and allows me to recognize correct classification of what it's about ("What sort of shoe is that? A loafer—isn't it?—yes, that's what it's called.) And clearly, in thinking about this shoe, I am (c) attending to it. And lastly, since I think about it by means of looking at it, and in looking at it, it looks some way to me, we may say the perceptual thought is (d) appearance-based. That is, I understand what thing I mean here by 'that,' through its visual appearance to me.

How does this explain the appeal of inner sense? Since (a)-(d) applies to first-order thought about perceived objects in virtue of our sensing the objects of such thoughts, we are tempted to suppose that it must also apply to reflective thought about experience in virtue of our sensing the objects of these thoughts. So we are tempted to think there must be two levels of sensing, one for each object of thought. But this is one temptation we should resist. We can explain why the same description (a)-(d) can apply to thoughts about one's experience, and to thoughts about the things one experiences, without appeal to some higher-order iteration of sensing. The same description applies to both simply because some first-person thoughts about one's experiences are also thoughts about the things one experiences. 'The shape this looks to me' can be used in the expression of such a thought.

But what do I say to Lycan's claim that we need inner sense theory to account for the phenomenology of attention? We can now accept, as a phenomenological matter, that when, for example, one looks at a red thing, and one thinks about its looking to one as it does, the acts of attention are somehow similar—or at least, there is something they share. But this requires no extra layer of sensing. Rather: the thought of the appearance of the red object, which thought constitutes attending to that experience, essentially involves the same manner of visual appearance that also constitutes attending to—that is to say, looking at—the red object. In other words, the visual appearance—this first-order sensing—can do a sort of double duty. It can comprise an act of attending to a visible object, even as it helps constitute a cognitively attentive phenomenal-demonstrative thought about itself. That is what is “shared” between the two modes of attention.

We would have reason to reject this perspective in favor of something more like Lycan's, if the phenomenology of attending to experience revealed a higher-order objectual sensing. But we have seen that it does not. So I maintain the phenomenology of introspective attention supports the “double duty/cognitive attention” view I have outlined, as against an inner sense alternative.¹⁶ Please note: to speak of “double duty”

¹⁶ Maybe my criticism of Lycan will make me seem close to something like Dretske's 1995 and Tye's 2002, “displaced perception” views of introspection. (See also Byrne's defense of the “transparency proposal” in this volume.) Tye, for example, says: “We attend to one thing—the external surfaces and qualities—and yet *thereby* we are aware of something else, the ‘feel’ of our experience” (51-2). Isn't it also true that on *my* view, *by attending to* (looking at) *a colored surface*, I am (in thought) *aware of its looking* to me a certain way—since the former “helps constitute” the latter? Yes, you could put it that way. But for the following reasons I do not think of this as displaced perception or indirect awareness. (i) Sometimes I think of the colored surface, and of what color or shape it has, by thinking of (and thereby attending to) its *appearance* to me (in the phenomenal-demonstrative manner indicated above). In that case I do not think of the color or the shape *more directly* than I think of their appearance to me, since I conceive of the color/shape in terms of their appearance. (ii) I do not think of the appearance, only by means of being in some *other* way aware of the *appearance*. (There's no other “mediating awareness” of the appearance.) (iii) I would not say that I tell from (what I believe to be) the *actual* color or shape of the surface how its color or shape *looks* to me. For (again) my phenomenal-demonstrative grasp of what I take the actual color or shape to be is precisely in terms of its *apparent* color or shape (“the color/shape this looks to me”). Also, I might believe the actual

here is not to say that visual appearances, in addition to “representing” visible objects, also somehow “represent” themselves. I myself do not really understand how the visual appearance I enjoy—which is not itself part of what is visually apparent to me—can “represent itself.” To my mind, if visual appearances “represent” anything, what they represent is what they are appearances of—that of which they are objectual sensings, that of which they are either accurate or inaccurate appearances. But the visual appearance is never then somehow “of,” or “about” itself, it does not “refer to” itself. Nor for that matter does it “present” itself to you—either just as it is, or as other than it is. For the visual appearance you experience is never an object of appearance to you—as distinct from an object of your thought.¹⁷ However, it can figure essentially in a thought about itself. In this way it can be “present to you” (or, as some say, be “given” to you) in the sense that it is (as Lycan says) “there for you to discern” first-personally, and not merely be “thought of” (represented). And this can be a matter of phenomenology. But this does not mean it has to be presented to you in the sense of: be sensorily apparent.

9. Do Recognitional Concepts Require Inner Sense?

I turn now to an objection suggested to me by reading Peter Carruthers: whether or not phenomenology can support belief in inner sense, we should posit such a faculty,

color or shape of an object to *diverge* from its (merely) apparent one, because I have resolved the question of what its actual shape/color is, by taking other of its appearances to me to better reveal this. But then I am determining how the object is from its (favored) appearances, rather than determining how it appears from how it is. (iv) It may be true that the surface’s actually *looking* to me as it does reliably makes me *think* it looks to me that way. But I am unpersuaded this has to be mediated by some inference from the belief that content of the visual appearance is correct, to a belief that I experience this visual appearance.

¹⁷ Though my views are in some respects close to Horgan’s (this volume), on this point I seem to part ways with him. (See also note 21.) Here I take myself to agree with Husserl when he says: “The appearing of the thing (the experience) is not the thing which appears (that seems to stand before us *in propria persona*). As belonging in a conscious connection, the appearing of the thing is experienced by us, as belonging in a phenomenal world, things appear before us. The appearing of things does not itself appear to us, we live though [i.e., experience] it.” (Husserl [1900/01], Vol. II, 83) More generally, I should acknowledge here how much my thoughts in this essay are indebted to my reading of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*.

because that best explains something we should in any case admit—namely, that we form “recognitional concepts” of our manner of experiencing the world.¹⁸ I do not want to endorse all that may be linked to the idea of a “recognitional concept.” Still, I take it that sensory recognition gives us a way of conceiving of kinds, which requires little or nothing in the way of a “theoretical” account specific to them. Loar (2002) offers the example of a kind of plant, a succulent you come across in the desert for the first time, about which you frame a concept of the form, ‘one of that kind,’ which you can successfully apply to a range of instances perceptually encountered, though you apparently have little or nothing more to say about what that kind is, beyond, perhaps, it’s a kind of plant.

I am wary of supposing that we really have concepts, strictly speaking, that are radically independent of discursive abilities—so called “pure” recognitional concepts that don’t require any relevant abilities of inference and analogy, to be exercised in thinking about real and hypothetical cases. But I do accept there are appearance-based conceptions of features possessed by objects of (first-order) sensing. And I would say we have concepts of the types of appearances themselves (phenomenal features) through experiencing them (in the coincident sense), which concepts (due to their experiential provenance) can be had without a properly “theoretical” understanding of what the conceptualized features consist in, or even anything but fairly minimal capacities for inference and analogy, using the concepts concerned.

This bears some similarities to what Carruthers says about recognitional concepts. He also accepts a thinking/sensing distinction—though he interprets this in

¹⁸ Carruthers 2004 (121ff.). Lycan 2004 (109) also endorses this type of argument for higher-order perception.

terms of a difference between a kind of “mental representation” that is “coarse grained” (“digital,” or “conceptual”), and one that is “fine-grained” (“analog,” or “non-conceptual”), and he does endorse the idea of “pure recognitional concepts.”¹⁹ Setting aside for the moment whether we should, and whether “fineness of representational grain” can explain the thinking/sensing distinction (which I also doubt), let’s focus on this idea that we are justified in thinking that distinction iterates, because this would explain how we have (some sort of) recognitional concepts, of both first and second order objects. This case for inner sense, as I understand it, depends on roughly the following line of thought.

- i. Our first-order sensing of objects accounts for our having recognitional concepts of them.
- ii. We also have recognitional concepts of our ways of first-order sensing.
- iii. What makes first-order sensing explanatory of first-order recognitional concepts (as in (i)) can also explain our having the recognitional concepts acknowledged in (ii).
- iv. More specifically: positing a distinct second-order sensing that shares the features relevant to making first-order sensing explanatory (as in (i)) provides the most satisfactory way of explaining our possession of the recognitional concepts in (ii).

¹⁹ Carruthers 2004 (121): “...we have, or can form, recognitional concepts for our phenomenally conscious experiences that lack any conceptual connections with other concepts of ours...”

I myself would accept (i)-(iii), rightly understood. But I reject the move to (iv). A second level of sensing seems to me unnecessary and unable to do the work it's asked to do.

First, why it's unnecessary. Consider the "recognitional concept" I have of a certain flavor. I may be helpless to say much about what this flavor is, or even to classify it informatively, beyond saying what things I find it in—ripe figs, let's suppose. Otherwise I may simply identify it as "that flavor." The sensing that accounts for my possession of this concept of the fig's flavor is its tasting a certain way to me. And so I might also articulate my way of understanding 'that flavor' by saying something like 'the way this [paradigmatic fig] tastes to me.' But this certainly doesn't mean that, unless I can form such thoughts, and articulate concepts in this way, I can possess no appearance-dependent recognitional concept of, e.g., a flavor, at all. As a child, still pre-reflectively toddling around, I first learned to recognize a flavor—and think of it ("It's yucky!")—through the way it tasted to me, even when I was as yet unable to think of it as a way of tasting. I may have these appearance dependent concepts, even though (lacking the cognitive maturity to distinguish, in thought, things from their appearance), I do not as yet also have concepts of appearance.

But now to make this developmental advance to reflection, and go from merely having a first-order ("recognitional") concept of a flavor, to having a second-order ("recognitional") concept of the way of tasting on which the first concept depended, what more do I need with respect to sensing? Do I need, in addition to the tasting, a separate sensing of the tasting, to enable me to think of the way it tastes to me? On my account, that way of tasting itself can and must figure in the formation of such a thought. But then I want to ask, what more could an inner sensing of the tasting furnish to the thought,

which it could not simply get from the tasting itself? The postulated, phenomenologically indiscernible extra “volley” of sensing is supposed to somehow reproduce a representational fineness of grain found in sensing’s first round. But no useful work is done by this covert intermediary that somehow representationally matches the first-order representation it is supposed to join with reflective thought. For such a hidden proxy apparently has nothing relevant to offer the thought, which it would not just be able to get more directly from the original manifest appearance—the taste experience, say. And we certainly do not want to suppose, on pain of regress, that to get a representation of a representation, one always needs a third representation as a go-between. All the sensing I need can be found at the first-level. The same appearances that first provided me with a first-order recognitional concept (by being appearances of objects) also provide me with a second-order one (by helping to constitute reflective thoughts about them). Again, since sensory appearances do a kind of double-duty, they don’t need to be doubled. Thus we can accept that what makes first-order sensing explanatory of our recognitional concepts of its objects also explains our having such concepts of these very ways of sensing—but without introducing a second level of sensing, an inner sense.

Suppose this is right. Does there still perhaps remain this place for inner sense? You say: “Granted there are these phenomenal-demonstrative thoughts that enable ‘identification for recognition.’ But what do we call the tie that binds phenomenal features in such thoughts? Why not ‘inner sense’?” I allow that you can use whatever label you like for this intimate relationship of experience and thought. You might also suggest: ‘intuition,’ ‘inner perception,’ ‘self-givenness,’ or ‘acquaintance.’ And maybe

you can explain what you mean by these phrases, so as to add to what has already been said regarding how first-person thought about phenomenal features is possible. But I fear such terminology will obscure the problems with inner sense I have been at pains to point out.²⁰ Anyway, if we do speak in such terms, I would still resist the idea that it licenses us to believe in a more-than-first-order mode of “intentionality,” “mental reference,” or “representation,” distinct from and underlying essentially appearance-dependent first-person thoughts.²¹

I have now argued that the claim of an additional stratum of sensory intentionality or representation is unjustified, on the grounds that it is phenomenologically indiscernible and explanatorily superfluous. Now I want to add why I think such a posit would not be up to the explanatory job for which it was introduced. First consider: brain damage might leave intact some sort of vision without phenomenal visual appearance—as in blindsight. And there is reason to think non-phenomenal differences in visual detection modulate our actual motor responses. But, with nothing but that kind of vision,

²⁰ I should note however, that there are ways of spelling out an “acquaintance” view that would overlap significantly with mine. For Gertler (this volume) holds that “some introspective knowledge consists in judgments that are directly tied to their truthmakers.” My own view about appearance-dependent thought and how it figures in self-knowledge would seem to be in agreement with at least this aspect of her “acquaintance approach.”

²¹ One may say that what I’m calling “identification for recognition” suffices for *perception* in a very broad sense—perhaps matching Husserl’s broad use of ‘*Wahrnehmung*.’ And so, with some terminological adjustment, I could allow for “higher-order perception” after all. Also, what I have said so far does not address the (also Husserlian) idea—in the background of Smith’s (2005) and Zahavi’s (2005) accounts—that there is a special *non-objectual* form of intentionality, exemplified in (but not exhausted by) the primitive way experience always *anticipates* experience to come and *retains* experience just-past, wherein consciousness is always “pointing at” itself. And I still need to address directly the kind of proposal found in Kriegel (2009) and Willford (2006) that consciousness *is* ubiquitously “its own object” (always “self-representing”), though this may be properly neither a form of *sensing* nor a form of (propositionally articulable) *thought*. But I think my remarks prepare a challenge to these views. How can we *phenomenologically* distinguish this allegedly ubiquitous self-pointing of experience from the *coincident* “experiencing of experience” that—since it admits no distinction between *what is experienced* and *how it is experienced*—admits none between either (non-objectual) “pointing” and “pointed at,” or (objectual) “representing” and “represented”? Moreover, how does it really help me to judge about my own experience that it is constantly “pointing at itself” in this rarefied way? How does its *pointing at itself* get my thoughts *pointed at it*? Is it supposed to be *drawing attention* to itself? Wouldn’t we then need to objectually *sense* the self-pointing object’s *display*, to *guide* our thoughts to it? On my view, we obviate these problems when we see that the form of cognitive attention involved does not need to be *guided* to experience, since it cannot even arise without it.

I would not have the recognitional concepts of shape and color that I do. So I could not have the recognitional concept of that shape (or color) that I actually get from vision, if that shape (color) did not look anyhow to me, where we interpret 'looking somehow to me' to be sufficient for phenomenality. (Notice we can accept such an interpretation, while remaining neutral on the question of whether some kind of self-representation is buried within the "looking," and responsible for its phenomenality.) Now we have been urged to accept inner sense on the grounds that, to account for our second-order recognitional concepts, we need to posit at the second level the concept-supplying sensing we needed at the first. But if that's so, then it seems we will also need this second-order sensing to be phenomenal, for only this yielded us recognitional concepts at the first-order level. If non-phenomenal sensing would not account for first-order recognitional concepts, we have no right to think it could account for recognitional concepts "higher up." However, it is admitted that second-order sensing eludes critical first-person reflection; it is phenomenologically indiscernible. In that case then, the proposal in question will tell us that we ourselves have—ubiquitously—phenomenal features that are actually undetectable by our own first-person reflection. Oddly then, there is supposed to be (non-derivatively) something it's like for us to have these features—even though we can't know what it's like; we can only wonder what it's like for us to have this hidden inner sensing of our own sensing, over and above what it's like for us to sense at the first level.

Now it's not clear to me it's inconceivable I could have such features—phenomenal but stubbornly unintrospectible to me. Still, if there are features I (at least allegedly) have, but I can't tell what it's like for me to have them, and—as they are

introspectively inaccessible—I can't even learn to tell what it's like for me to have them, that seems to be a good reason to conclude there just isn't actually anything it's like for me to have them. For what would prohibit me from knowing or learning this, were it there to be known? But if there isn't anything it's like for me to innerly sense, if this has no phenomenal character of its own, then inner sense would be no more suited than blindsight to supply me with recognitional concepts of what it senses.

10. Introspection without Inner Sense

I have offered a view concerning introspective attention and recognitional concepts that abjures inner sense while honoring its appeal. This is also intended to provide the basis for an alternative account of introspective knowledge. It is not possible to develop that fully here. But I want to say enough to indicate its promise.

One traditional theme in discussions of introspection is the question of its fallibility. It may now seem I am poised to say that the phenomenal-demonstrative thoughts central to my account enjoy a kind of infallibility—for didn't I say that I can have these thoughts only when I actually have the features they are about? So it seems if I have such thoughts at all they can't fail to reach their target, so to speak. This is a reasonable gloss on my view—but the talk of infallibility can be misleading, so let me try to be precise. Because there is no inner sense, there is no erroneous inner appearance that might allow me to understand which phenomenal features I think I have, even when I don't actually have them. And I am often not in a position to be led to such mistakes by faulty or misconstrued observations of what I am doing, as can happen when I'm

considering another's experience. So it seems I could somehow "go wrong" in thinking, for instance, what I would express as 'the color this now looks to me,' when I putatively identify a feature for recognition, only if either: (a) there is just nothing answering to my 'this'—perhaps because I have a (first-order) hallucination; or (b) I do not understand what I am saying (in which case I would not so much have a failed thought, as simply failed to form one). In the (a) case, I would say that I would still understand what I mean by the italicized phrase, and would still have succeeded in thinking of some phenomenal feature I possess—some visual appearance. And if we insist that the reference failure should make us say otherwise (or at least view the expression of the thought as defective), it seems there are reformulations that could reduce my propensity to make an error here while still understanding what I am saying. I might speak instead of 'the color it looks to me as if something there has,' or 'this way of looking colored to me,' or 'the way this color looks to me.' I will not try to deal now with the questions this raises. For now, I just want to say it seems plausible that, once we get our focus on the sort of phenomenal-demonstrative thoughts that can play an anchoring role in first-person reflection, then we will have focused on a kind of thought we cannot conceive of as an erroneous or mistaken thought about experience as long as we understand its expression.

Now whether one does understand—and does not seriously misunderstand—the purported expression of such a thought, is open to question. This is why talk of infallibility here can be misleading. Even if there are certain judgments you cannot make falsely, *you* may remain fallible about just when you have made one of these. However, this needn't lead to skepticism. Consider: a presumption that you understand what you

are saying is a condition of rational verbal thought. You have to presume an understanding of what you are saying, absent some reason to think otherwise—or else you can't even get in the verbal reasoning business. Now, if what I said earlier was right, there are thoughts I can have about certain (phenomenal) features at all, only if I am thinking about some such features I actually have. If I am not thinking about one I actually have, when I purport to speak of, e.g., a certain color now appearing to me, via an expression like 'the color this now looks to me,' I don't know what feature I am thinking of, and thus wouldn't understand what I meant by this phrase on this occasion. Since I am entitled to presume I do understand what I mean by the expression of my thought, I am warranted in thinking I do have the feature I took myself to speak of. Thus the conclusion is that I have some special warrant in thinking I have identified certain of my own phenomenal features—a warrant I don't have for taking myself to have identified those of others.

Just how might I express this identification of my own phenomenal features in a complete judgment? To be sure, 'the color this now looks to me' does not do the trick. It seems I would need to say something like: the color this now looks to me is...well, the color this now looks to me. Or: the way this feels to me is the way this feels to me. Of course, this has the absurd appearance of an empty tautology—but that is misleading. For in the relevant contexts, what would lie on either side of the identity judged is my identification of some specific feature I actually have. And if there is some specific feature I have warrant for judging myself to have, I do not merely have warrant for an empty tautology.

Nevertheless, the judgments in question are still pretty meager. But we can get farther if we add this. The warrant we have for the judgments at issue is not globally independent of the warrant we have for others. We cannot reduce our phenomenal-demonstrative thoughts to some epistemically self-standing, bare demonstrative core, stripped of all informative classificatory terms. I would not be able to think of my experience of color if I could not classify it somehow—e.g., as a case of something's looking somehow to me. In other words, I don't think we are endowed with some power to think of our own experiences purely demonstratively ("This is this"), independently of any ability to correctly classify them. For I don't think one could understand what such a 'this' would refer to—an experience, not just an object experienced—without some prior competence in the use of "appearance" vocabulary. Now further: there is no warrant to be had for thinking someone has come to understand the terms of that vocabulary ('looks' and so on) without being able to form correct judgments joining it with other types of predicates (e.g., for colors). Neither you nor I have call to think I have acquired an understanding of 'looks' in the absence of having come by a capacity to join it with other, for example, color terms, and truthfully say things like, 'That looks blue to me.'²² More generally, nothing would warrant ascribing to me the acquisition of competence in using 'looks' in the face of total incompetence in deploying color, shape, and other terms with which to fill the blank in 'looks...' phrases. (Though there may be weird dissociations through a pathological deterioration of prior competence.) Thus if the presumption that I know what I mean by 'looks' yields some presumption of warrant for judgments about myself that employ this term, it will yield some presumption of warrant

²² For these reasons, I find it hard to accept the notion of "pure phenomenal" beliefs or concepts, detachable from a competence in "labelling." (Compare Gertler's and Horgan's discussions, in this volume, and Chalmers 2003.)

for more specific judgments about how things look to me, even if, in a particular case, I might reasonably doubt whether I am correct in my classification of how they look to me.

If this is right, we can start to account for our first-person warrant for judgments about sensory appearance. When I judge that I feel an itch, or that this looks blue to me, what makes me warranted in so judging is the fact that I could (even though normally of course, I do not) think a phenomenal-demonstrative thought—expressible using some such phrase as ‘the way this feels to me now,’ or ‘the color this looks to me now’—which could not fail to pick out a manner of feeling or looking—a phenomenal feature—that I have, on pain of not being intelligible to me. Now presuming, if defeasibly, that I do understand what I would mean by such phrases, in an “identifying for recognition” use, I have warrant for judgments like ‘the way this feels to me now is the way this feels to me now,’ or simply: ‘I feel this way now.’ And since my presumed competence in speaking thus of feeling cannot be utterly detached from my competence in further classifying some feelings more specifically as, say itches, I am also entitled to judge that the way this feels to me is itchy (or this way I feel is itchy), if I am so inclined to classify it, absent a specific reason to doubt this. (Though I could, in some (not all) cases, given special motivation, entertain a doubt about my classification, and retreat to the “way that this feels” thought.) And if I have warrant for judging the way this feels to me (this way I feel) is itchy, I have it for judging I feel an itch. Similar remarks would apply to ‘looks’ and predicates of color or shape.²³

²³ Why all these complications? Why isn’t it enough simply to say that the fact that I feel an itch makes me warranted in judging that I do? (Compare Smithies “simple theory” of introspection in this volume.) It’s not that I think this simple statement is wrong; I add the complications I do to explain *why* (e.g.) my feeling an itch warrants my judgment that I do. My proposal is that it does because the kind of cognitive attention that can underlie such self-descriptions, though it cannot *guarantee* correctness, can function at all only against a background of competence with the terms in which it is expressed that entitles me to a *presumption* of correctness, which may in specific cases

This gets us a little further. But now we may ask: what might strengthen our warrant as our self-reports become more adventuresome, and it becomes less clear that errors would reflect defects in basic semantic competence? What if I want to pronounce introspectively on some of the questions that have figured in philosophical and psychological disputes—and indeed, on the very issues that have emerged here? Consider this. It has been alleged that “naively” we are subject to some introspective illusion about the detail and richness of our visual experience. One way Dennett (2005, 45) puts this is that people think “their visual fields are approximately as detailed and fine grained all the way out.” (See also Dennett 1991, 68.) Suppose one were actually to make some such (naive) claim about one’s own experience, with no ostensible basis other than (generic) introspection. And let us grant that such a claim would be mistaken. How are we to understand its fallibility? Are we to say perhaps that we fall into error here because we venture into topics where first-person reflection simply dare not tread? Perhaps we’ll declare the whole issue off limits to responsible introspection, which we should confine to the blandness of “baby judgments” like ‘that looks orange to me,’ and ‘I feel an itch.’

Such confinement would be almost as intellectually self-mutilating as behaviorism. We would more fruitfully use first-person reflection by considering how relatively general pronouncements on the character of experience have implications for the description of more specific cases, which emerge through questioning that renders explicit distinctions that might otherwise be ignored. In this way we might ground the

be overturned by an examination of my understanding of what I say or would say about my experience. Moreover, only once we see this, can we see how introspection can be something other than just a detection mechanism, how it can be self-correcting, and how it can function in phenomenological investigation, where our questions go beyond ones like, “Do you feel an itch?”

inquiry by moving to cases where the warrant for our judgment is closer to the sort illustrated just now with reference to color and itch experiences—where it is harder to entertain the hypothesis that we are in error, without throwing our understanding of what we’re saying into doubt. And in this way introspection can check itself. This doesn’t assume that I can isolate, once and for all, some privileged class of propositions that cannot be intelligibly expressed without being regarded as true, just that, in the context of inquiry I cannot see how to maintain an understanding of a certain distinction I have ostensibly employed, if I am misapplying it. I may still be open to the suggestion that in fact my grasp of the distinction is seriously defective, or that the prospect of misapplying it here does not really undermine my grasp of it. But I need some positive reason to think one or the other of these is the case in the instance in question, before such doubts are warranted.

Let’s see how this procedure would work in the sort of case Dennett discusses. In the face of a claim to have a “nearly uniformly detailed and focused visual field all the way out,” we may say, “Granted that when you look at the words on a page, even if only briefly, in some sense, they all appear to you to be uniformly detailed. But when you look directly at, say, just one of the words, do the rest of them appear to you in nearly as much detail as the word you are looking at? When you shift from looking at one word to another does it appear to you in more detail? Is there no big difference between the way the words that you’re looking at look to you, and the way the nearby words you’re not just then looking at look to you?” By pursuing such questions, one could correct a carelessly formulated or interpreted introspective claim, partly by appeal to first-person reflection on specific cases, guided by distinctions at first neglected—like that between

an area's looking to you equally detailed throughout, and every part of it appearing to you in as much detail, a distinction whose comprehension I don't, as it stands, see how to divorce from its successful first-person application.

My proposal then is that, as we get beyond questions like whether you feel an itch, a pain, or a tickle, the strength of the warrant to be had for first-person reflection will depend on assiduously seeking out, asking, and answering in good faith questions that make explicit pertinent distinctions and implications, and on our sustaining coherence in our replies under persistent, wide-ranging, and honest examination. I have been trying in this very essay to do just that, eliciting responses that allow us to construct a reasoned view on topics of central theoretical concern—the reality of inner sense and the character of introspective attention. (So for example, the more ambitious claims about this are evaluated in light of a distinction between something's constant shape appearing to us and its shape appearing to change.) By means of this open-ended (“dialectical,” “Socratic”) use of introspection we can responsibly address questions about the mind. And I would venture: if—whether from sloth or prejudice—we refuse such reflection, then in a sense, we are just not taking responsibility for ourselves.

I realize that many issues still face my account. A big one is whether my sort of introspection is limited to knowledge of sensory appearances. I believe it is not, and my approach can be extended to elucidate our introspective knowledge of thinking as well. This is partly because, on my (Siewert 2011b) view, thinking is as phenomenal as sensing—so that something like the way phenomenal features figure in the account of

introspection I'm proposing can carry over to the cognitive case. But that is another story.

I have tried to say enough here about introspection and sensory appearance to rear a plausible positive proposal on my critique of inner sense. This preserves traditional ideas associated with talk of introspection, insofar as it accords important roles to consciousness and to attention to experience in accounting for the special right with which we judge of our own minds. This right is rooted in a special access we have to our own conscious states—that is, instances of our own phenomenal features—since our cognitively attentive, distinctively first-person thoughts about experience would not be possible, did we not identify, without sensory mediation, such instances as we actually enjoy.

However, my account does not tie the epistemic role of (phenomenal) consciousness to its allegedly self-referential or self-representational nature—and here I part with certain currents of tradition. Moreover, I do not accept the usual opposition of “inner” and “outer.” Attention to experience is not some sense-like turn of a “gaze” to the “inside,” away from the “outside”—it is no withdrawal from the “outer” to the “inner.” But that is not to say we are somehow condemned to attend solely to “external” qualities and objects. Rather: with a special form of first-person thought we can attend at once both to what lies around us, and to our way of experiencing it. (We need respect no demand to carve this attention up and distribute it between an “inner” and an “outer.”)²⁴

²⁴ Compare Tye: “Our attention goes *outside* in the visual case...not to the experience *inside* our heads.” (2002, 51) This seems like it's supposed to be an introspective remark. But I don't think I can tell *introspectively* that my visual experience is contained entirely in my head—if this is even the right way to think about its boundaries. So when I say one can tell introspectively that one attends to one's own experience (and not just to its objects) I am not quarreling with the claim that introspection *doesn't* reveal us turning our attention away from the world to “something inside our heads.” Generally I reject the notion that we attend to our sense experience only if we *shift*

And the form of thought concerned indeed arises only through the “presence” (one’s actual possession) of what it concerns—namely, a specific manner of experience. But this is not to say that experience is presented to us for being thought about, as something sensed is presented for consideration—though what is “in the mind” (unlike “external reality”) is somehow presented in its entirety, hiding nothing. That would be confused. It is true that we cannot attend better to an experience by sensing more of it (as when we attend more closely to what we see). Still, we can—in another way—introspectively attend better to experience, so as to discover more about it: we can attend “more closely” to experience by asking more (and better) questions about it, which reflect finer, more articulate, and more integrated distinctions—that is, by practicing as well as we can what I call “phenomenology.”²⁵

our attention *away from* perceived things (“outside”) *to* our experience of them (“inside”). (Consider also Byrne’s remarks on introspection and attention in this volume.)

²⁵ For their helpful questions and criticism, I would like to thank members at the audience at three conferences in which some of the ideas in this paper were presented: Philosophy of Mind Conference at East Carolina University (2004); Maribor/Ohio State/Rijeka Conference on The Philosophical Significance of Attention, Dubrovnik (2009), and the Tucson Consciousness Conference (2010). For instructive feedback on these topics and on earlier drafts, I particularly want to thank Steve Crowell, Imogen Dickie, Terry Horgan, Uriah Kriegel, Bill Lycan, Fiona Macpherson, David Pitt, Anna Christina Soy Ribeiro, David W. Smith, Declan Smithies, Daniel Stoljar, Sebastian Watzl, and Dan Zahavi.

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