

1. SCHIZOPHRENIA AND THOUGHT INSERTION

Schizophrenia is a complex disease arising from different causes. The communicative abnormalities observed in patients with schizophrenia have traditionally been categorized as aberrations of content (delusions and hallucinations) and aberrations of form (abnormal ways of organizing and expressing ideas, even when those ideas have normal content). **One of the most interesting and unclear elements of schizophrenia is the phenomenon of thought insertion.**

Thought insertion:

for any subject with thought insertion **S**, there is some belief **B** such that: 1) **S claims to have B and**
2) **S claims that B is not her/his belief**

Some examples of thought insertion:

1. 'Thoughts come into my head like "Kill God." It's just like my mind working, but it isn't. They come from this chap, Chris. They're his thoughts' (Frith, 1992, p. 66)
2. 'I have never read nor heard them; they come unasked; I do not dare to think I am the source but I am happy to know of them without thinking them. They come at any moment like a gift and I do not dare to impart them as if they were my own' (Jaspers, 1963, p. 123)
3. 'I look at the window and I think that the garden looks nice and the grass look cool, but the thoughts of Eamonn Andrews come into my mind. There are no others thoughts there, only his ... He treats my mind like a screen and flashes thoughts onto it like you flash a picture' (Mellor, 1970, p. 17)

The schizophrenic subject feels that some thoughts (that occur in her/his mind) are not generated by herself/himself. What does this mean? Is it possible for a subject to have a thought that is not his/her own?

2. THOUGHT INSERTION, I-SENTENCES AND THE IMMUNITY OF ERROR THROUGH MISIDENTIFICATION

One of the most important abilities of a human-animal is to recognize her/himself as such and to be able to utter sentences like the following: "I believe this...", "I remember that...", etc. This ability is defined as the First-person perspective. It is integrated in the **self-consciousness** modality and represents the linguistic articulation of self-consciousness.

This psychological notion is supported by linguistic analysis of first-person sentences based on "I-thoughts" which, according to several authors including Wittgenstein, Castaneda, Shoemaker, Strawson, and Higginbotham, are **immune to error through misidentification**. As a matter of fact, the same denotation is irrefutably associated to the pronoun "I" in every "possible world". Moreover, there exists no world where the pronoun "I" denotes nothing, that is, where it has an empty denotation, as may happen, for example, with the proper noun "Pegasus".

Some philosophers have argued that the phenomenon of thought insertion could provide a counterexample to the view that introspection-based mental self-ascriptions are logically immune to

error through misidentification. If we follow the definition of thought insertion, it seems that the schizophrenic subject can assert that some thoughts are not her/his own.

To try to avoid this problem, several philosophers including Coliva, Graham and Stephens, Gallagher following theoretical framework of Frith's comparator model, distinguish between the **ownership** of a thought and the **sense of ownership** or **sense of agency** over one's thought:

Coliva	Graham/Stephens	Gallagher
Ownership	Sense of subjectivity	Sense of ownership (retension)
Sense of ownership	Sense of agency	Sense of agency (protension)

Introspective awareness of a thought is the criterion for the ownership of that thought, while the sense of ownership is the “default” feeling linked with the production of a certain thought (which makes it possible for the subject to experience the thought as her/his own).

In accordance with this distinction, during the phenomenon of thought insertion the schizophrenic subject loses the sense of ownership of her/his thought but this loss is not sufficient to make her/his thought someone else's. This leads to the conclusion that the first-person perspective (and the immunity of error through misidentification) is not “suspended” during thought insertion. Consequently, the problem to be investigated is how to take account of the ownership over one thought and the sense of ownership linked with that thought.

Autorship/agency	Ownership
Origin of that thought	Introspective access
Active thinker	Conscious experience
Thought fits intentions	

Further empirical research question:

1. Which brain areas are involved in the articulation of the sense of ownership/agency ?

“[...]Disorders of self-reference, such as those that are common in schizophrenia, might be important for understanding the degree to which ‘insight’ is critical for some of the brain effects that have been observed in normals. Modern neuroscience has demonstrated that within the brain of schizophrenics there is a disconnection syndrome, especially one where cognitive and affective representations are no longer well integrated. One's sense of ownership of experience is often disturbed, and feelings and thoughts are no longer well coordinated, leading to delusions and deficits in insight.”¹

¹ Northoff (2006)

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