

## IMMUNITY TO ERROR AND WHAT IT IS LIKE TO EXPERIENCE THOUGHT INSERTION

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The psychological life of an individual with schizophrenia is extremely difficult to understand. Because a schizophrenic person behaves in ways that are so radically unlike what we think of as normal behavior, we can be easily puzzled by what such a person's experiences are like. In order to understand a schizophrenic person's psychology, we must try to conceptualize it in familiar terms but much of the behavior characteristic of schizophrenia is so foreign that it is not easily captured by psychological concepts. If we believe that a person with schizophrenia is, nevertheless, a subject of psychological states, which is plausible, her behavior can raise very serious questions about the adequacy of those concepts.

To take one example, puzzles surrounding schizophrenia present serious problems for the traditional philosophical conception of self-knowledge. Our ordinary way of knowing about our own psychological states seems to be special in at least two ways. First, it is a distinct kind that is in principle unavailable to others. In order for someone else to know what I am thinking or feeling, they must observe me in some way. They will, for example, have to listen to what I say or watch what I do. But I do not have to observe anything. I have an exclusively first-personal way of knowing my own thoughts and feelings without having to make perceptual observations and without having to base my knowledge on evidence. (e.g. Davidson, 1984) Secondly, this first-personal knowledge seems to be immune to certain kinds of errors caused by misidentification. Although I can be mistaken about the existence or character of one of my psychological states, I cannot be right about

what my psychological state is but wrong about whose psychological state it is. For example, I may mistakenly think that I want to stay at the party when I really want to go home, but I cannot be right about the fact that the relevant desire is one of wanting to go home but wrong about it being *me* who wants to go home. My first-personal way of knowing does not permit mistakes in identifying who has the psychological state that I come to know about in this way. If I come to know in this way that someone has a desire to go home, I know the person is *me*. In the remainder of this paper I, following Shoemaker, will call this last idea the Immunity Thesis. (Shoemaker, 1968 and Pryor, 2001)

These two features of ordinary first-personal knowledge of one's own thoughts and feelings are vividly called into question by the phenomenon of thought insertion. Thought insertion is a relatively common symptom of schizophrenia where an individual experiences her own thoughts as alien, as thoughts that have been inserted into her psychological life by other people. A schizophrenic person seems to know these thoughts in a characteristically first-personal way, she seems to know them via introspection, but she is mistaken about whose thoughts they are. Rather than thinking that *she* is the owner of the thoughts, she believes that the "inserted thoughts" belong to someone else. Thought insertion therefore looks like a counterexample to the idea that an individual cannot misidentify the owner of psychological states she comes to know in a first-personal way.<sup>1</sup>

But do we really have such a firm grip on what is happening in cases of thought insertion? Is it clear that a schizophrenic person is accessing her psychological states in a first-personal way? Perhaps instead she is suffering a very unusual illusion to the effect that another individual is putting thoughts into her mind. Whether or not the phenomenon of is truly a counterexample to the Immunity Thesis depends on precisely how we understand

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<sup>1</sup> The idea that thought insertion poses a threat to the Immunity Thesis was, as far as I know, first discussed by Campbell, 1999.

what it is like to experience thought insertion.<sup>2</sup> Even though the reports of individuals who have experienced thought insertion show instances people misidentifying the owner of thoughts, do they also indicate that these individuals are accessing the allegedly inserted thoughts in a first-personal way?

Some recent theorists have denied that an individual experiencing thought insertion accesses her thoughts in the ordinary first-personal way. They believe instead that such a person has a completely different kind of experience. Thus, anything she does know about the contents of her own thoughts would lack the privilege of immunity to error through misidentification. Although this approach could salvage the Immunity Thesis, I believe it mischaracterizes what it is like to experience thought insertion. This is a serious problem for those of us who hope to better understand the experience.

In this paper, I will argue that a person experiencing thought insertion does access her thoughts in the same first-personal way the rest of us do. This is most in accord with what such a person says her experiences are like. As I will argue, however, this poses no threat to the Immunity Thesis as long as the schizophrenic person does not base her judgments about allegedly inserted thoughts purely on this first-personal way of knowing. Given what we know from such a person's reports, it is plausible that she does not. My proposal will not only vindicate the Immunity Thesis, but it will also shed some light on what an experience of thought insertion is like, hopefully making the phenomenon slightly less obscure.

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that understanding the neurological level is not also helpful. An account of what causes thought insertion at a sub-personal level will have implications for our understanding of what it is like to experience thought insertion. But, the primary challenges to our conception of ordinary self-knowledge arise at personal, psychological level.

## I

The way we know about another person's psychological states is not immune to errors of misidentification. If I am at a party I might hear someone say that she wants to go home and come to believe on the basis of what I hear that Susan wants to go home. Because my belief is based on good evidence, because I directly hear this person say that she wants to go home, I know that *someone* wants to go home.<sup>3</sup> But, I could be wrong that the person I hear is Susan. I could misidentify Sally as Susan. This kind of mistake is possible for all third-personal ways of knowing about psychological states because that knowledge rests on an identity judgment.<sup>4</sup> The same is not true for our distinctively first-personal way of knowing.

If we make a judgment about a psychological state on the basis of our ordinary first-person access, it seems that we cannot misidentify the subject of the psychological state. So, although we can at times be wrong about the existence or character of a particular psychological state, as in the example where I wrongly think I want to stay at the party when I really want to go home, we cannot know on the basis of first-person access that *someone* has a particular psychological state but be mistaken about its subject. Any grounds I have for knowing the existential generalization that someone wants to go home is ground for knowing that I want to go home. Similarly, any consideration that speaks against my knowing that I want to go home is *ipso facto* a consideration that speaks against knowing that someone wants to go home.

To be more precise, I shall render the Immunity Thesis as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> I could also know that *this person* wants go home, which would also be immune to error of misidentification. That is, I could not be right in thinking someone wants to go home but wrong that it is *this person*. cf. Peacocke, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that resting on an identity judgment is what determines whether or not something is immune to errors of identification. It is possible to make identification mistakes even though one's way of knowing does not rest on an identity judgment. This point is discussed thoroughly by Pryor, 2001.

Immunity Thesis: If subject  $a$  makes a judgment on the basis of first-person access, it is impossible for  $a$  to come to know that  $\text{Ex}F(x)$  but be mistaken about  $F(a)$ .

Most contemporary philosophers accept the Immunity Thesis. However, in reports of thought insertion, it seems that individuals have first-personal knowledge of the existence and character of particular thoughts. They seem to know, for example, that the content of a particular thought is to 'Kill God'. But they are clearly wrong about whose thoughts these are. As John Campbell describes the problem, "a patient who supposes that thoughts have been inserted into his mind by someone else is right about which thoughts they are, but wrong about whose thoughts they are." (1999, pg. 620) That is, they seem to know on the basis of first-person access that *someone* has a particular thought but are mistaken about who has the thought.

Here are some examples of a schizophrenic person reporting what an experience of thought insertion is like:

'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)

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)

Sometimes it seemed to be her own thought '... but I don't get the feeling that it is.' She said her 'own thought might say the same thing... But the feeling it isn't the same... the feeling is that it is somebody else's... (Hoerl, 2001)

In each of these reports, the person with schizophrenia attempts to characterize what his or her experience is like, what things are like from her own point of view. (Sims, 2003, pg. 168)

These reports are truly incredible. How could anyone think that thoughts woven into their

own psychological life belong to someone else? What does it even mean to say that "it's just like my mind working" but then disavow that it is? The audacity of these reports might tempt us to treat them as nonsense. But, despite its seeming incoherence, the idea that a person might have thoughts inserted into her mind seems to be something we can imagine. There is no straightforward contradiction to the idea that I am directly aware of thoughts or other mental events that belong to someone else and a large part of the reason thought insertion is so mysterious and intriguing is that what the schizophrenic person reports it is not obviously impossible.

We should try, therefore, to take these reports at face value. A schizophrenic person experiencing thought insertion is alienated from his or her own thoughts. But, she also experiences these thoughts as her own in the following sense: she experiences them as located inside *her* mind. She does not report that she is aware of someone else's thoughts in virtue of something resembling what we might think of as telepathy. For this reason, it is often said that someone experiencing thought insertion has a 'sense of ownership' of inserted thoughts but she does not believe that she is responsible for the existence or character of the thoughts. Such a person is more like a passive bystander who is strangely aware of thoughts that assail her, thoughts that intrude into her life. Moreover, a schizophrenic person feels as if she *could* not exert any direct control over these thoughts; she has a sense that any cognitive effort on her part would be futile. This is why a person experiencing thought insertion is often said to lack a 'sense of agency'.<sup>5</sup> But it is important to keep in mind that she lacks a sense of agency in this very precise way.

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<sup>5</sup> For a criticism of this idea see Bortolotti and Broome, 2009. In their view, lacking a "sense of agency" is not specific enough to distinguish experiences of thought insertion from other mental phenomena. One experiences obsessive thoughts, for example, without having a "sense of agency". But, this does not mean that a schizophrenic person has a sense of being an agent with respect to her thoughts only that she lacks a sense of agency in a very specific way.

As I have presented it, and as it is usually understood, the Immunity Thesis is a logical point about our first-personal way of knowing psychological states. First-person access seems to enjoy this privilege as a matter of principle. But, if a schizophrenic person with thought insertion knows what her thoughts are in a first-personal way, the Immunity Thesis cannot be right. We may therefore have to admit that our ordinary way of knowing our thoughts and feelings is liable to same kinds of errors of misidentification as any other way of knowing them. If we wish to preserve the truth of the Immunity Thesis, it seems that we must explain what it is like to experience thought insertion in a different way, one where the individual experiencing inserted thoughts does not access them in the ordinary first-personal way.

## II

It seems we could reject the notion that there is one mode of access common to both pathological cases of thought insertion and normal cases. Instead, we can take a person experiencing thought insertion to have a completely different kind of experience, one that leads her believe that there are thoughts being inserted into her head. Since a schizophrenic person reports believing that a token thought is being *inserted* by some external agent, a plausible hypothesis is that the content of an experience of thought insertion actually represents a thought being inserted into one's own mind. Pacherie, Green, and Bayne, 2006 call this sort of view an endorsement account:

According to the endorsement account of alien control, the patient experiences their actions and/or their thoughts as being under the control of someone else. The representational content of the patient's experience would be roughly, "so and so is making me do X", or "So and so is doing X (where X involves my body)".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Pacherie, Green and Bayne develop the account as a way of accounting for all forms of alien control. I think this style of account has many things going for it as an explanation of monothematic delusions, even

The endorsement account of thought insertion might hold that a subject has a token experience with the content <so and so is inserting thought *theta* into my mind> or the content <so and so is thinking *theta*>. This way of describing the case allows us to characterize the fundamental pathology at the experiential level. The abnormal experience explains why a schizophrenic person attributes inserted thoughts to someone else--that is how things are represented in the content of her experiences. Someone who reported believing that thoughts were inserted into her head would simply be endorsing the content of very unusual experiences.

Proponents of the endorsement account point out that it helps make sense of a schizophrenic person's reports. If an experiential state has as part of its content a representation of another person being in control of thoughts or inserting ideas into one's own head, the kinds of beliefs a schizophrenic person reports seem far less bizarre. In fact, believing that another individual is inserting thoughts into one's mind can seem like a reasonable response to an experience with this content.

The second advantage of the endorsement account is that it provides a clear explanation of why someone who experiences thought insertion attributes these thoughts to another cognitive *agent*. It is clear that an experience of thought insertion involves a sense of passivity, a sense that one is not in control of the thoughts in one's head. But as the reports from the previous section show, schizophrenic persons always attribute these thoughts to an external agent rather than, for example, to an unknown causal force. An adequate account of what it is like to experience thought insertion must say something about this; it must be able to explain why it is that a schizophrenic person insists that another *agent*

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if it has difficulties explaining thought insertion. A weaker form of this account is endorsed by Gallagher, 2004.



is responsible for her inserted thoughts. The endorsement account has no problem meeting this condition. It proposes quite simply that inserted thoughts are attributed to a different agent because that is precisely how things are represented in the content of the experience.

Perhaps most importantly, the endorsement account allows us to maintain the Immunity Thesis. The content of ordinary first-person access does not represent thoughts as being controlled by a third-party. In fact, it seems that first-person access does not represent one's thoughts as being controlled at all. I am able to know that I am currently thinking about what to eat for dinner this evening but it is not obvious that I represent myself as controlling that thought or that my cognitive agency figures within the representational content of what I am aware of. Regardless of whether or not that is true, the content of ordinary first-person access is clearly quite different from a content representing another agent inserting thoughts. This is enough to dissolve the threat thought insertion seemed to pose for the Immunity Thesis.

Although these are significant advantages, it seems to me that the endorsement account faces some difficulties. First, contrary to what its proponents believe, the account does not actually present a coherent explanation of why a schizophrenic person believes the content of her experiences. It is simply not true that having an experience with the content that P is sufficient to explain why a person believes that P. We do not believe the contents of all experiences. For instance, most of us do not believe that the Muller-Lyer lines are equal even though that is how we experience them. Moreover, if any of us were to have a radically anomalous experience, our background beliefs would normally inhibit endorsing and believing the content of that experience. Suppose, for example, that you were to have an experience of an egg singing and dancing. If this were an isolated experience you would not endorse or believe its content. Rather, you would suspend any inclination you might

have to believe because you have tacit background knowledge that eggs cannot sing or dance. Similarly, a schizophrenic person presumably knows that thoughts cannot be really inserted into another person's head. A significant question facing the endorsement view is why that background knowledge does not inhibit her belief as it would in another person.<sup>7</sup>

More importantly, however, I believe that the endorsement account oversimplifies what an experience of thought insertion is like. It ignores a kind of ambivalence that we can hear in a schizophrenic person's reports. Recall the individual who said that "it's just like my mind working, but it isn't". Suppose his experience had the content of <Chris inserting thoughts into his head>. This might explain some aspects of his report but it will not explain why he also experiences it as "just like" his mind working. Or, consider the woman Hoerl discusses (2001). She reports that, although an inserted thought sometimes seems to be her thought, she does not "get the feeling" that the thought is her own. In her words, "the feeling isn't the same". It seems to me that ambivalence is found in most reports of thought insertion; it therefore seems to be to be a characteristic feature of what such experiences are like. This fact is overlooked by the endorsement account because it packs all the abnormality of thought insertion into the representational content of a person's experiences.

Perhaps a defender of the account could try to capture this ambivalence, but I think an attempt to do so will face additional problems. This is because it is obscure how the ambivalence of a schizophrenic person's report could be represented in the content of her experiences. How are we to make sense of an experience that represents both a thought being inserted and it being "just like my mind working"? These two elements seem to be contraries. How could they both be simultaneously represented in the content of an

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<sup>7</sup> Pacherie, Green and Bayne, 2006 recognize that this is a serious question but seem to think that it can be answered.

experience? It may be that a schizophrenic person has experiences like this but, if so, it will be nearly impossible for us to understand what they are like. The promise of the endorsement account was to make a schizophrenic person's reports sensible, but I think it ultimately obscures our understanding what it is like for someone to experience thought insertion.

### *III*

The endorsement account denied an experience of thought insertion involved our normal first-personal way of coming to know about our own thoughts. This denial may be independently plausible. There may be a more accurate way to capture what is going on with an experience of thought insertion that shares the negative thesis that it does not involve ordinary first-person access. A promising account along these lines has been proposed by Christopher Peacocke.

Peacocke first notices that many of the events in our psychological lives are mental actions. We are fundamentally cognitive agents who act by judging, doubting, intending and forming beliefs. These mental actions share with bodily actions the fact that we have a distinctive first-personal way of being aware of them, what Peacocke calls action-awareness. There is a great deal of sophistication to Peacocke's account of action awareness, but most of it need not concern us here. There are two relevant points for our discussion. First, action-awareness is a distinct mode of awareness through which a person ordinarily comes to know her own actions, including her mental actions. Second, the content of a state of action-awareness is first-personal, it is <that I am doing such and such now>, or <that I am thinking such and such now> (2008, pg. 248). Because the content contains a first-personal element, action-awareness is immune to errors of misidentification; there is no possibility of

a person being right about doing or thinking such and such on the basis of action-awareness but wrong about who is doing it.

According to Peacocke, action awareness is precisely what is missing in a schizophrenic person experiencing thought insertion:

What the schizophrenic subject lacks in the area of conscious thought is action-awareness of the thoughts that occur to him. To enjoy action-awareness of a particular event of thinking is to be aware, non-perceptually, of that thinking as something one is doing oneself. The awareness of one's own agency that exists in normal subjects is missing, in, for example, the schizophrenic experience of 'thought-insertion.' (2008, pg. 276)

In normal cases of thinking with action-awareness, a person is presented with a content that represents her as the one doing the thinking. The first-personal element of this content is distinctive of action-awareness. It would therefore make sense that when action-awareness is absent a person is unaware of herself as the agent of particular thoughts. If a schizophrenic person does not have first-personal action-awareness, there is no reason to think the Immunity Thesis would be true for her. Thus, as I understand Peacocke's view, thought insertion poses no real challenge to the thesis.

A significant advantage of Peacocke's account is that it can explain more clearly how and why a schizophrenic person lacks a "sense of agency" for her own thoughts. As I mentioned earlier, many people have described an individual experiencing thought insertion as someone who has sense of ownership for her thoughts but lacks a sense of agency. Evidence for the former is that she recognizes an inserted thought to exist within her own psychological life and evidence that she lacks the latter is that she does not think she is responsible for the thought. But it is very hard to understand how a person could lack a sense of agency for thoughts she understands as located within her psychological life. Why would a person be inclined to disavow a thought that she herself acknowledges to be located inside her own mind? Merely noting a schizophrenic person lacks some sense of agency

does not answer these central questions. Peacocke's account can help. Plausibly, action-awareness of an action *alpha* is necessary for having a sense of agency with respect to *alpha*. Thus, because a person experiencing thought insertion does not have action-awareness of *alpha*, she does not have any sense of being a cognitive agent with respect to it. This is why she lacks a sense of agency even though she acknowledges the thought is located inside of her own mind.

Peacocke's explanation of thought insertion, like those that attempt to explain it in terms of a missing sense of agency, is primarily a negative explanation of the phenomenon—it is an account of what someone experiencing thought insertion lacks. This means that it is incomplete. Everyone sometimes has thoughts without exercising agency and therefore without action-awareness. All of us are sometimes subject to passing thoughts, intrusive ideas or songs, or unexplained urges but we do not take these to be inserted by someone else. There are also more serious pathologies like obsessive-compulsive disorder wherein an individual regularly has thoughts occur to her that she very clearly cannot control. In both the everyday cases and more pathological ones, there is no action-awareness of mental events but in none of these cases do we find an instance of thought-insertion.<sup>8</sup> Why this difference? Why does a schizophrenic person take her thoughts to be inserted into her head whereas others who lack action-awareness do not? An explanation of what an experience of thought insertion lacks, whether action awareness or a sense of agency, cannot fully explain the consistent attribution of inserted thoughts to another agent. We still require a more positive account of what experiencing of thought insertion is like.

Peacocke recognizes his account is not complete and acknowledges that it will need to be supplemented with some kind of empirical account. In his estimation, "a full

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<sup>8</sup> Bortolotti and Broome, 2009 Langland-Hassan, 2008 and Gallagher, 2004 all register this objection.

understanding has to explain the prevalence of the impression of control by alien agencies and forces. Why an absence of action-awareness should lead to this specific kind of illusion needs an empirical explanation..." (2008, pg. 279)<sup>9</sup> Peacocke himself thinks that the right approach will appeal to similarities between thought insertion and auditory verbal hallucinations.<sup>10</sup> I do not believe pursuing this analogy is the right approach. Although the vast majority of schizophrenic persons do in fact experience auditory verbal hallucinations, these seem to be quite different from their experiences of thought insertion. It is at least true that individuals *take* them to be distinct kinds of experience in the two cases.<sup>11</sup> They may be wrong in this regard but it seems that we have no reason to doubt their reports in this respect.

We could of course supplement Peacocke's view with a different sort of empirical explanation.<sup>12</sup> But, rather than comparing rival hypotheses, I would like stay focused on the question of what it is like to experience thought insertion. On Peacocke's view, we know that it is *not* like action awareness of one's thoughts. But this is minimal description of the phenomenon and it overlooks much of what individuals experiencing thought insertion report. Crucially, Peacocke's account ignores the distinctive tenor of ambivalence that these individuals seem to be expressing. What is the schizophrenic person trying to tell us about her experiences? How *could* an experience be "just like" my mind working and also, at the

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<sup>9</sup> I am not convinced that the explanation of "this specific kind of illusion" must be empirical and, in the following section, I will try to offer a non-empirical explanation.

<sup>10</sup> This approach is also endorsed by Graham and Stephens, 2000 and by Langland-Hassan, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Nayani and David, 1996.

<sup>12</sup> One way to do so would be to adopt a suggestion offered by neuroscientists that two cognitive deficiencies are involved with thought insertion (e.g. Blakemore, et. al., 2002). On this model, the positive attribution of inserted thoughts to an external agent is explained by the neurological malfunction in the belief system. When a schizophrenic person tries to interpret what she is experiencing she comes up with an irrational delusion that some other person inserted thoughts into her head. I think the two-deficiency model overlooks central aspects of the reports offered by individuals experiencing thought insertion. For an accurate criticism, see Bayne and Pacherie, 2006.

same time, not like my mind working? If we want to understand what it is like to experience thought insertion, we must grapple with these questions.

#### IV

On Peacocke's view, a schizophrenic person does not have first-personal action awareness of her thoughts and this is why her self-ascriptions are no exception to the Immunity Thesis; action-awareness just is ordinary first-person access. But suppose instead that a person experiencing thought insertion *does* have first-personal action awareness of her inserted thoughts. This means she has a state of awareness with the content <I am thinking *theta* now>. Peacocke points out that "when you take such an awareness at face value...your judgment is identification-free." (2008, pg. 248) So, if a schizophrenic person is aware of the content <I am thinking *theta* now> but she nevertheless makes a mistake of identification, she must not be taking the experience at face value. Might this sort of thing happen? What if, for some reason, a schizophrenic person believed that her ordinary first-personal action awareness was some other kind of experience? In that case, she would plausibly not take the content of her action awareness at face value. Maybe the phenomenon of thought insertion is unsettling precisely because one's distinctively first-personal way of accessing her thoughts becomes strangely unfamiliar, making it seem that the thoughts being accessed were not one's own.

As an analogy consider Shoemaker's well-known conception of quasi-memory. According to Shoemaker, quasi-remembering an event *e* is just like an experience of remembering *e* except that a person can quasi-remember things of which she was not previously aware. If I remember watching the sunrise this morning, it logically follows that I did watch the sunrise this morning. But, if I quasi-remember watching the sunrise this

morning, it may not have been *me* who saw the sunrise, but someone else. The two experiences, however, are qualitatively indistinguishable; from my point of view, there is not phenomenological difference between quasi-remembering and remembering.

Shoemaker brings up this notion of quasi-remembering in part to make a point about the strength of the Immunity Thesis. He writes:

Suppose that it were possible to quasi-remember experience other than one's own. If this were so one might remember a past experience but not know whether one was remembering it or only quasi-remembering it. Here, it seems, it would be perfectly appropriate to employ a criterion of identity to determine whether the quasi-remembered experience was one's own. (1970, pg. 254)

Authentic remembering is immune to errors of misidentification because it represents oneself in the content of what is remembered. Like first-person action-awareness, a genuine memory has the content of <I experienced such and such then>. If I remember watching the sunrise, I need only take this experience at face value to know that I did watch the sunrise. This secures immunity to errors through misidentification. However, Shoemaker notices that if it were possible to quasi-remember things, we might reasonably stop taking our memory experiences at face value. This is because there would be no way for us to distinguish the content of a memory from that of a quasi-memory. So even in cases where we did "remember a past experience" we would not know whether we "were remembering it or only quasi-remembering it." But if we do not take our genuine memorial experiences at face value, we become vulnerable to errors of misidentification.

I think that something very much like this actually occurs in experiences of thought insertion. More specifically, I believe that the following two things characterize a schizophrenic person experiencing thought insertion:

(A) She has action awareness with the content <I am thinking *theta* now>.



(B) She has a sense that her state of awareness in (A) is *not* a state of genuine action awareness.

Because (B) is true, an individual experiencing (A) does not take her awareness at face value. As in the case Shoemaker imagines, she looks for criteria to determine who is thinking *theta* and comes up with the belief that it is someone else. Although it is true that she comes to know the content of *theta* on the basis of her action awareness, her knowledge that someone is thinking *theta* is mediated by her sense that she does not have ordinary first-person awareness of *theta*. Since the sense in (B) figures centrally in what it is like to experience thought insertion, it can be part of the basis for a schizophrenic person's judgments. In that case, however, the grounds for her judgment that *someone* is thinking *theta* will include more than her ordinary first-personal mode of access. If we accept this explanation, the phenomenon of thought insertion poses no threat to the Immunity Thesis.

Is there any reason to think this is right? Should we believe that a schizophrenic person has first-personal action awareness of her thoughts? First, if we suppose that (A) is true, we have a very plausible explanation for why a schizophrenic person attributes inserted thoughts to an external *agency*. The content of action awareness is not passive, but a mental action, a *thinking*. What a person is aware of in a state of action awareness is <I am thinking such and such now>. So a person who has this type of an experience is directly aware of an action. Since the content of action awareness is belief independent, even if she thinks that she is not the agent, her experience will nevertheless represent a mental action. Since actions require agents, someone who has the experience of an action will naturally look to attribute it to an agent. If we accept (A), we can explain why a schizophrenic person attributes inserted thoughts to external agents.

Second, this way of understanding the phenomenon of thought insertion nicely captures the ambivalence of the reports offered by schizophrenic persons. Other views, as we have seen, have a difficult time accounting for how or why a person experiencing thought insertion says things like it is just like her own mind working but that it is also not like her mind. I argued earlier that this ambivalence is a characteristic feature of what it is like to experience thought insertion. The truth of (A) and (B) capture each side of the ambivalence. Having first-person action awareness that <I am thinking *theta* now> is just like one's own mind working; it is exactly like it. A person has the same kind of awareness of thinking in the non-pathological case. But, having a sense that this state is not one of action awareness makes the phenomenology of the experience very different from that of ordinary thinking. The sense in (B) alienates the person from her awareness of her own thinking in (A) and this helps explain why her experience does not feel "the same" as an ordinary case. This means that what a particular experience is like for a person involves more than what is represented in the content of the experience. The sense in (B) contributes essentially to the phenomenology of the experience of thought insertion without figuring directly in the representational content. In this way, the phenomenology of the entire experience is at once familiar and foreign; the thinking seems to be one's own but also seems to be not one's own. Based on their reports, this seems to be what people are trying to tell us their experience is like.

One might naturally wonder why (B) is true. Why would a schizophrenic person have a sense that her first-personal action awareness was something else? Answering this question is the primary explanatory burden of my proposal. But (B) can be explained by existing neuro-science. The comparator model proposed by Christopher Frith (1992) for understanding schizophrenia has been widely discussed in the literature on thought insertion.

Frith presents the model to explain the missing "sense of agency" in delusions of alien control. But, the model can equally explain why a person has the sense (in (B)) that her present experience is not one of action awareness. Plausibly, whenever (B) is false a person has a "sense of agency" and whenever a person lacks a "sense of agency" but (A) is true she has the sense that her experience is not one of ordinary action awareness, as in (B).

The foundation for Frith's model is the idea that whenever a motor instruction is issued to some part of the body a copy of that instruction (an "efferent copy") is sent to an internal monitor or comparator.<sup>13</sup> The stored copy can then be compared with information accessed in some other way. To take a simple example, suppose that I wave my hand in front of my face. The instruction to wave my hand is copied to a central monitor, which also receives visual feedback of my hand waving in front of my face. This visual information can be compared to the observable consequences predicted by the efferent copy of the instruction to wave my hand. If I see what one would expect given the instruction, there is a comparator match; if not there is a mismatch. It is because of a comparator match that I ordinarily have the sense that I am the agent waving my hand. Without the comparator match, my hand waving in front of my face would not seem to be the result of my own agency.

Frith's idea is that the comparator model can be usefully extended to explain thought insertion. The basic explanation is that a person experiences thought insertion because there is no efferent copy of the instruction to think particular thoughts. This inhibits a comparator match and, on Frith's view, this is why the schizophrenic person's feels that

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<sup>13</sup> Frith's early view posited a central monitor but, in more recent work, he and his colleagues talk about forward monitoring predictors. The precise details of this view need not concern us in this paper. Here I simply want to note how the general model can help explain (2).

thoughts are being inserted by an external agent. John Campbell describes the application of this model to thought insertion as follows:

You have knowledge of the content of thought only by introspecton. The content of the efferent copy is not itself conscious. But it is a match at the monitor between the thought of which you have introspective knowledge and the efferent copy that is responsible for the sense of being an agent of that thought. It is a disturbance in the mechanism that is responsible for the schizophrenic finding that he is introspectively aware of a thought without having the sense of being the agent of that thought. (1999, pg 620)

If we substitute first-person action awareness for Campbell's term 'introspection', we can understand why a schizophrenic person who is aware of <I am thinking *theta* now> may nevertheless have the sense in (B). Because no efferent copy of her instruction to think *theta* is available for monitoring, there can be no comparator match between an efferent copy and her awareness that <I am thinking *theta* now>. For this reason, she has the sense in (B) that what she is aware of is not one of her mental actions. This could explain a schizophrenic person has the sense that her experience is not like an ordinary case of her mind working.

Two objections are frequently raised against Frith's account. First, some have argued that thinking, unlike arm movements, is not a motor process and usually occurs without effort. (e.g. Gallagher, 2004; Pacherie, Green and Bayne, 2006) There is no prior instruction to think and so nothing could generate an efferent copy. But an efferent copy need not be generated by an intention or instruction temporally prior to the act of thinking. Consider another of Peacocke's ideas: "To be a mental action, a mental event must constitutively involve a trying." (2007, pg.) This does commit us to the principle that a mental action must be caused by a temporally prior trying. An efferent copy can be simultaneously generated by an act of thinking or perhaps by a trying but it need not be generated by anything temporally prior. Moreover, when it comes to mental action our successes seem to depend in part on certain subpersonal conditions. (cf. Peacocke, 2007) If I try and fail to believe that P, this will

be explained by a breakdown in neurological processes. Since trying is, in this way, connected to other neurological events in the brain, it may be that trying to think generates an efferent copy that can then be compared to one's state of action-awareness.<sup>14</sup>

The second, more serious, objection to Frith's account is that the comparator model cannot sufficiently explain why inserted thoughts are attributed to external agents. A lack of a comparator match cannot, by itself, fully explain why individuals believe that another cognitive agent is responsible for her inserted thoughts. By now this should be a familiar idea. But, Frith's model does not need to explain this. On the view I am proposing, the phenomenology of thought insertion is explained by both (A) and (B). The truth of (A) explains why inserted thoughts are attributed to another agent. It is because the schizophrenic person has awareness of a mental action, as an action, that she looks for an agent to attribute the thought to. Complaining that the comparator model alone does not explain this attribution is a *non sequitur*. On my view, the comparator model only functions to explain the sense in (B). Since a great deal of empirical research supports the comparator model, it is useful to appeal to for this explanatory task.

My suggestion in this section is only a hypothesis about what it is like to experience thought insertion. It may be that future empirical work in cognitive science and neuroscience vindicates a different account of the phenomenon. Therefore, it may not ultimately be true that a schizophrenic person experiencing thought insertion has first-person action awareness of her thinking. However, I think that currently it is the most plausible conception of what it is like to experience thought insertion. It offers us a way of understanding the ambivalence expressed by those who experience thought insertion and it also allows us to reconcile what these experiences are like with the Immunity Thesis.

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<sup>14</sup> Campbell, 1999 also adequately addresses this objection to Frith's view.

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