

'The Unreliability of Naïve introspection' (2006)

1. Introspection

- a species of attention to currently ongoing conscious experience (ii.248)
- self-conscious, efforts-required (ii.248 fn.7)
- nothing hinges on the particular account of introspection, as long as it is the primary method by which we make judgments about our ongoing conscious experience
- introspection is unreliable even in favourable circumstances with careful reflection
  - o Two kinds of unreliability: (1) frequently yields wrong results (2) fail to yield any result. Introspection is unreliable in both ways (vii. 265)

[ Is 'introspection' adequately characterized?

The claim that introspection is unreliable in both ways looks incredibly strong. Perhaps a weaker thesis would be more plausible.]

2. Emotion (general)

- We are in general ignorant about the nature of emotion & emotional states (iii.249)
- The problem of self-ignorance lies with introspection. It is not a conceptual/linguistic failure. (iii.250)

[ Is there any support for his claim in this section apart from the rhetoric?

Is the kind of things Schwitzgebel claims we fail to know (e.g., whether emotional experience consistently located in space), really part of our current conscious experience?

Even if we are ignorant about such things, why should we think the failure is due to introspection?

Is Schwitzgebel right to dismiss the conceptual/linguistic hypothesis so quickly? Consider the experience of suddenly understanding your feelings/emotions and being able to articulate them after a therapy, reading literature or even just talking with friends.]

3. Emotion (particular)

- Our introspective judgments of a particular instance of current emotional experience is not infallible (why does Schwitzgebel changes the claim to infallible from unreliable?)
  - o we are uncertain about what to say when asked to introspect about our current emotional experience. (iv.251)
  - o someone else may be in a better position to judge your emotional experience (e.g., anger) than yourself. (iv.252)

[ I suspect nobody would claim that introspection is infallible. Do arguments in this section show that introspection is unreliable?

We have little to say about current emotional experience should not be surprising, after all, I might not have any particular emotional experience at all.

Is Schwitzgebel's description of the anger case convincing? (iv.252) If, after sincere reflection and taking account all the factors that might distort my judgment, I still judge that I'm not angry, in such case, why should we side with Schwitzgebel that I'm mistaken with my judgment?]

#### 4. Vision

– Sceptical arguments: given the possibility of dreaming and mad scientist manipulating our brain, there is no 'absolute security and immunity to skeptical doubt' (254)

[Why again fall into infallibilism, given the topic is the unreliability of introspection?]

– Most introspectors are mistaken about the clarity and stability of their visual experience. They think the visual experience consist of a broad stable field with precise details, but in fact the centre of clarity is tiny and rapidly shifting.

[Why does the fact that we are mistaken about one important aspect of our visual experience lead to unreliability of ordinary introspective judgments of our visual experience such as I'm seeing a blue cup (suppose that it is at the centre of my visual field)? ]

#### 5. Thought

– People widely disagree about the phenomenology of thought, whether it is entirely imagery, accompanied by feeling or whether there is a distinctive phenomenology of thought.

– 'If introspection can guide us in such matters—if it can guide us, say, at least as reliably as vision—shouldn't we reach agreement about the existence or absence of a phenomenology of thought as easily and straightforwardly as we reach agreement about the existence of the table?' (vii.258)

[Is this the right analogy? The disagreement is not about whether I'm having a particular thought, but rather whether thought has certain phenomenological feature. The right analogy in perception should be whether people disagree about phenomenological features of perception in general, I suspect that people do disagree about such things. ]

#### 6. Pain, inner speech

– Our introspective judgments about pain, e.g., whether one is in pain, the intensity or location or the pain can be mistaken. (259)

[Can one really be mistaken about pain-judgments? Perhaps we can be wrong about the location of an injury, but can we be wrong about the pain sensation? Does the possibility of error lead to unreliability of introspection? ]

– We are also pretty ignorant about features of 'inner speech', e.g., whether it only

involves something other than ‘auditory imagery’, whether there is a distinction between inner speech and inner hearing. (260)

[But are these generalizations about structural features of ‘inner speech’ belong to the proper domain of introspection?]

- Lack of corrective feedback inflate our confidence about our introspective judgments.

#### 7. Self-fulfilling thoughts and judgments about appearance

- Self-fulfilling judgments such as I’m thinking are infallible, but they are infallibly true regardless how they are formed (so they do not lend any particular support to introspection). Schwitzgebel thinks there are very few infallible introspective judgments about our conscious experience.
- Judgments about appearance are not immune to errors. If you think one cannot misjudge appearance, that’s because you equivocate between epistemic and phenomenal appearance.
  - o Epistemic appearance: it epistemically appears... meaning I’m not certain about...
  - o Phenomenal appearance: it phenomenally appears... meaning I make a judgement about my phenomenology...
  - o Schwitzgebel thinks that judgments about epistemic appearance might be infallible but not with phenomenal appearance, e.g., mistake about Müller-Lyer illusion.

#### ‘Self-Ignorance’(2012)

- We are ignorant about our ongoing conscious experience and mental attitudes.

[How to understand ‘ignorance’ here? Is the claim that we are prone to errors, or is the claim that we know little or nothing about some of our experience and attitudes? What are the reasons for our self-ignorance? Is it the method (e.g., introspection) by which we come to know? Or is it the complexity of the subject matter itself that leads to our failure?]

#### 1. ongoing conscious experience

- Schwitzgebel concedes that we are unlikely to go wrong with judgments about pain and colour experience in canonical conditions. But he pushes the thought that they are not representative cases of how good we are in judging our ongoing conscious experience. There is widespread failure in judging imagery, emotion, visual sensory experience and thought.
- Schwitzgebel invites us to visualize the front of our house and then fires a string of questions which he claims are substantial questions about our imagery experience. (p.3)

[How many of these questions (e.g., 'how stable is it?') are really questions about our ongoing experience? If Schwitzgebel thinks that our success in judging colour and pain experience are not representative, then why should we think our failure in judging these structural features are representative?]

- Discrepancy between self-reports about mental imagery and their performance on cognitive tasks that would presumably be facilitated by imagery.

## 2. attitudes

- Schwitzgebel is in favour of the transparency account of knowing our beliefs (he also includes other 'attitudes' without specifying what they are). He thinks this mechanism works fine for 'fairly trivial attitudes or attitudes connect fairly narrowly to our actions', but he quickly dismisses them on the ground that they aren't the attitudes critical to our self-knowledge. He then claims that the important attitudes are 'central values and your general background assumptions about the world and about other people' (p.10), and we know very little about them.

[I doubt that we can easily make a distinction between trivial and 'critical' attitudes, and Schwitzgebel gives no argument for his claim. If he thinks my preference of pistachio flavour ice cream is a trivial attitude, what about my preference of doing philosophy over boxing? Self-knowledge about books we like to read, music we like to listen is not trivial. Furthermore, is it true that we are so bad at knowing our central values?]

- Three examples: Ralph's sexist attitude, hypocrites' faith, Schwitzgebel's family-work balance. Schwitzgebel takes the discrepancy between one's behaviour and one's avowals as a reason to believe that we are ignorant of our attitudes.

[This assumes a behaviourist/interpretationist view about belief, but Schwitzgebel gives no support for this underlying assumption. Besides, how convincing are the three cases?]

## 3. Other features of mentality

- We are good at personality and skills attributions with regard to 'narrow concrete and measurable' cases such as whether I'm an introvert or whether I'm good at scrabble. But we are poor about evaluatively-loaded attributions, such as laziness, creativity, moral characters and intelligence.

[Why are skills like playing scrabble features of mentality? It is probably true that we tend to have an inflated self-conception and perhaps only depressed people have a realistic self-image (Brown and Taylor (1988)). But is this a unique problem to self-knowledge? Don't we also tend to have inflated views about friends and loved ones?]