

PHIL 3923H: Deception and Delusion
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Stephens and Graham, Chapters 1 & 2

- Normally introspection leads to awareness, not only of one's thoughts, but of one's thoughts *as one's own*. This book is about exceptions to this rule.

...it is about what happens when people think like the above:
when they have the sense that someone else speaks or thinks
within their minds. (1)

- This book examines the nature of self-consciousness. The authors argue that this nature is (or, at least, can be) better revealed by studying abnormal cases than by studying normal cases.

However, as William Bechtel and Robert Richardson note in *Discovering Complexity*, unstressed or orderly psychological activities often conceal their component structures or elements. Over-taxed or disturbed activities, by contrast, may be more revealing of their constituents. (3)

- Delusions of thought (or inner speech) alienation or insertion:

To persons undergoing delusions of thought insertion, the experience of thinking is not "I think" but "Someone else is putting their thoughts in my head". (4)

- Two sorts of questions concerning verbal hallucinations and thought insertion:

1. What are these experiences like? (Phenomenological)
2. What implications do they have for the nature of self-consciousness?

- Sense of subjectivity:

So, what is it for me to have the sense that a thought is mine?
One answer to this question is that for me to sense or experience a thought as *mine* is for me to recognize that I am the *subject* in whom, or in whose psychological history, the thought occurs.

The issue here is distinguishing what occurs in me — within the “boundary of my ego” — from what occurs outside of me.

My sense that something occurs in me, within my ego boundary or psychological history, rather than outside me, is what we call my *sense of subjectivity*. (7)

So, one hypothesis for explaining verbal hallucinations:

Thus, it is tempting to believe that verbal hallucinations and thought insertion involve a split, as it were, between introspective awareness and the sense of subjectivity. (8)

But Stephens and Graham will argue against this. There isn't a loss of a sense of subjectivity for such hallucinators. Rather, such people have lost a sense of agency over their thoughts.

- It seems that “hearing voices” is simply failing to recognize your inner speech as your own. Such experiences lack the appropriate environmental cause.

Indeed, it is not unusual for subjects to report hearing voices even when they know that no one else really is talking to them. Knowledge of its hallucinatory character rarely silences the voice. (16)

- One prominent account of verbal hallucinations is the self-produced but misattributed (SPM) conception:

(i) that subjects generate or produce the message expressed by the voice and (ii) that they misattribute the voice to another person or agent. (17)

- Q: But is it legitimate to accept/posit inner (private) speech?

◦ A further hypothesis: whispering. Those who experience verbal hallucinations literally talk to themselves (with their mouths) and listen to themselves (with their ears). Some fascinating empirical support for this hypothesis is presented on p. 23. These results were not duplicated in a later experiment, however. Stephens and Graham also suggest testing the necessity of *hearing* (as opposed to simply uttering) the voices for generating such hallucinations.

- Dennett offers another explanation: Reports of verbal hallucinations are confabulations used to justify the otherwise inexplicable information that the agent possesses. But, such confabulations would have to be extensive — subjects often pinpoint a time and manner in which the voice spoke. Stephens and Graham opt for agnosticism on this issue.